FOCUS
A Film Review
(Incorporating—“Catholic Film News”)
Organ of the Catholic Film Society

Received from Miss E. Ollier
the sum of ........................................ pounds
Six ..................................................... shillings and ........................................ pence
May '48 - August '48
for Catholic Film Society

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With thanks

FOCUS
A Film Review
(Incorporating—“Catholic Film News”)
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Received from Miss E. Ollier
the sum of ........................................ pounds
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Jan. - April '49
for Catholic Film Society

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THE CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY
(Affiliated to the Office Catholique Internationale du Cinema)

PRESIDENT:
His Eminence Cardinal Griffin, Archbishop of Westminster.

AIMS AND OBJECTS:
1. To encourage the development of Catholic criticism of films with the object of influencing, as far as possible, the type of films publicly exhibited.
2. To promote the organisation of discussion groups for the study of films.
3. To establish a library of films of Catholic interest.
4. To organise a Summer Film School.
5. To encourage the production of entertainment and documentary films calculated to demonstrate the Christian cultural heritage of Europe, in its arts, crafts, religious life, agriculture, architecture, etc.
6. To establish when and where possible, Cameo Repertory Cinemas where films of permanent interest and value may be seen.

Annual Membership: 10s., (which includes monthly copy of Focus).

Hon. Secretary:
REV. J. A. V. BURKE, Mayfield College, Tunbridge Wells.

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EDITORIAL

THE POWER AND
THE RESPONSIBILITY

CINEMA is no longer merely a pastime; it is a power. Films have ceased to be toys; they have become tools: two-edged tools which are able to create or destroy. The responsibility of those working in the film industry is a grave one. One of our more enlightened film makers, to whom I was talking the other day, described this responsibility as almost frightening; he pointed out that if a man corrupts a child he is sent to prison, yet he may make a corrupt film with impunity.

Cinema derives its power from man's innate love for stories. All the world loves a story; particularly a picture-story; throughout history picture-stories have been used as a medium of expressing ideas. What are the parables of the gospel but beautiful picture stories? In using moving-pictures as a medium of culture, enlightenment and education, the Catholic Church is following the footsteps of her Founder: Our Lord Jesus Christ. Cinema has access in unique and subtle ways to the faculties of sight and hearing: main gateways to personality, hence its responsibility. Morally, spiritually, intellectually, a man is what he thinks. "There is nothing in the intellect which was not in the senses first," says St. Thomas Aquinas. Every deed is first a picture in the mind. Good mental pictures bring forth good deeds. Evil mental pictures bring forth evil deeds. The Catholic Church, commissioned to teach all nations, is minding its own business, therefore, in helping to make the cinema a moral, artistic and intellectual force for the benefit of the world.

To a delegation of The International Federation of the Motion Picture Press, in 1934, Pope Pius XI said: "It is necessary to apply to the cinema the supreme rule which must direct and regulate the great gift of an art, in order that it may not find itself in continual conflict with Christian morality and even with simple morality based upon the natural law. The essential purpose of art; its raison d'être is to assist in the perfection of the moral personality which is man and for this reason it must itself be moral."

Focus believes that by encouraging criticism, analysis and appreciation it can help the cinema to become a medium of expressing Christian ideas.
FILM REVIEWS


Like the man who said that Shakespeare invented the quotations that are found in the Bible, one is in danger of attributing to Oscar Wilde the discovery of the epigram. This is his primary claim to literary distinction. His dialogue sparkles and scintillates, but when one examines the structure on which the epigramatic edifice is erected, one finds all too often that it is the merest stucco.

An Ideal Husband, as a play, is a flimsy affair, a routine piece of stage work. Unfortunately, like all such plays, it will not bear translation into the language of film. Not even Sir Alexander Korda’s elaborate production can save it from seeming to be a museum piece tricked out with finery for the sake of the effect.

It goes without saying that Korda has given it the best possible mounting and frame, and the acting for the most part, is easy and flowing, due as much to the talent of the players as to the excellence of the dialogue provided for them. Only Paulette Goddard, whose performance was stilted, gave the impression of having learned some interesting things to say. The others in the cast let the polished phrases drop from their lips as if they were born with epigrams in their mouths.

The story of a blackmailing adventuress who tries to induce a Cabinet Minister to corrupt himself has a certain topicality due to the fact that recent events have proved that a high degree of integrity can still be expected from Cabinet Ministers who are trained in the ways of honour and decency. Another topical note was struck by the inclusion of the Household Cavalry in the film, a happy accident which had much to do with brightening up the Royal Wedding. The elaborate settings and the evocation of an age that, with its rigid traditions and narrow conceptions of life is gone for good, forces a comparison with the Technicolour film of the Royal Wedding. In this we had the splendid trappings and glorious settings of life in High Society, but there can be no question as to the usefulness of the life of Royalty today compared with the pampered idleness of the people who walk through Wilde’s dated play.

The cast are uniformly magnificent. Sir Aubrey Smith was in his element as Lord Caversham. Hugh Williams, Diana Wynyard and Michael Wilding are all distinguished and competent. Glynis Johns delightfully fin de siecle.

The Technicolouring is breathtakingly exciting, more successful, perhaps, in the true interiors than in the studio “exteriors”.

V.

Sciucia, the original title of this Italian film, is simply an attempt on the part of the youthful bootblacks of Rome to reproduce the "Shoeshine" of American soldiers. The picture is a tragedy, with little comic relief, and that mostly in dialogue, not very clearly heard in the Italian and not too effectively put across by the very American sub-titles. It deals with the lives of these boys in terms of black market activities, arrest, imprisonment in the Regina Caeli prison, escape and death. It should be seen by students of the cinema and of juvenile delinquency and prison reform, and also by those who imagine that the arrival of British and American soldiers in a country relieves the population of all discontent. But I cannot recommend it to the normal audience because I consider that its merits as cinema, though by no means negligible, are not sufficient to counteract the depressing effects of a onesided presentation of life devoid of any vestige of Christian hope. I came out feeling that I had been sitting under a grey, cold, wet blanket. The only consolation is extraneous to the picture; a special apostolate is being organised by the Church for these boys.

Q.


This is an ambitious film which tends to fall between two stools: those of passion and psychology: the first somewhat standardised, the second definitely "popular". From a moral point of view it is a serious warning, to both women and men, of what can come of not knowing that real love is always rather more a giving than a taking. And perhaps also, more subtly, of not knowing that no human being can "possess" another: that even the greatest love, as Coventry Patmore wrote:

... is o'er a gulf of difference
Time cannot bridge nor death remove.

The director, however, was either unaware of this moral to the plot, or perhaps was not willing to underline it. In the film the title word Possessed is merely "biblical" for schizophrenic! The acting of Raymond Massey is very good indeed, and the better for its restraint. The Dean Graham whom he presents is the only unselfish lover in the piece. Joan Crawford, who has an almost impossible task, acquits herself of it with great resource. The film has a grim ending in which the only gleam of light has to be gathered from the Story on the back of the programme, not from the screen. The hospital shots (Psychopathic Department) are not very convincing, though the acting, here again, is fully competent. Both lighting and sound seemed to be pitched in parts a little too low; but the photography is admirable.

This is a re-issue. And worth a re-issue for its mirth. Quite crazy. Quite unusual. In a crazy sense it is quite clever.

E.


Last month, Osservatore Romano, the official Vatican paper, discussed the disquieting popularity of films dealing with violence of one kind or another. At the same time one of Hollywood’s Producers, Dudley Nichols, was commenting on the same subject in the New York Times and said: “Hollywood is a fisherman with an expensive rod, and it will not sit all day and bait its hook with what the fish don’t want. And this fisherman has found that the abundant fishing is in the troubled waters of adolescence and all its concomitants: violence for sake of violence . . . physical action for sake of physical action . . . glamour that is not beauty. . . Don’t blame Hollywood for all this: blame yourselves.” With this in mind I wondered whether I Walk Alone was going to be just another tough gangster film with sidelights on the seamy side of underworld life. It is something more than that. It is a gangster film, which is coherent in its plot, efficiently produced, and enlist the audience’s sympathies all the time. Frankie Madison returns from prison after a fourteen years stretch: Noll Turner, his former partner in boot-legging, has double-crossed him and set up a prosperous night-club where Kay Lawrence (Lizabeth Scott) is a singer and in love with Turner. The prospect of still greater money from the wealthy Mrs. Richardson leads him to double-cross Kay as well. When Noll tries to make Frankie responsible for the murder of his friend Dave, the club book-keeper, Frankie and Kay team up together and see that justice is done. Burt Lancaster, Kirk Douglas and Wendel Corey deserve high marks for their acting in this film. Lizabeth Scott should be given a more exacting rôle in films than that of an attractive night-club singer to see if she has the makings of a great actress instead of remaining in the glamour-girl class. In these austerity days, there may be some vicarious pleasure in noting that Kay wears twelve different dresses in twenty-four hours.

It is difficult to draw the line between the technique of stage acting and that of acting before the camera. All the main characters of this film have had stage experience and this may be the reason why in some instances their acting is on the slow side, as if giving the emotional atmosphere of the story time to register in the mind
of the audience. To sum up: in this film we have good acting, a reasonable story, and a surprise ending which you can find out for yourselves.

M.


It would not be fair to make too much fuss about this film adaptation of the novel by Robert Nathan about the Episcopalian Bishop who, having lost touch with his poor parishioners, finds himself engulfed in a project for building the biggest cathedral ever. He prays for guidance and is sent an angel who proceeds to take charge of his life . . . and wife.

The film is most entertaining, but one cannot help thinking how much better they did these things in the ages of Faith when bishops did not have wives and people believed that bishops and angels were all part of the providence of God and acted accordingly.

You are not likely to see this film until the Government comes to some agreement with America about the tax on films, but it is useful to mention it here because it is an example of how, even when the producers want to make a film that might be called a Protestant counterblast to Going My Way and Bells of St. Mary's they make the same mistakes in assuming that religion is synonymous with sentimentality, and that it is adequately symbolised by a series of humanitarian gestures such as helping blind men across roads, lame dogs over stiles, by wide-eyed choir boys in surplices, and a kind of spiritual blackmail by means of which, tough, moneyed men and women are made to recant their previous hardness of heart and disgorge their wealth for charitable purposes.

Do not think that I am decrying the use of clerical collars and kind actions in films destined for our amusement. But I must insist on warning you against too easily accepting the sight of a favourite actor framed in Gothic, or a charming actress in a coif as an authentic expression of "religion" in films. Such appurtenances no more justify the film being called "religious" than do the handling of a stethoscope or the wearing of a nurse's veil turn a film into a "medical" film.

There are a few films that can be safely recommended for their religious content, just as there are one or two that have the right to be thought of as adding to our respect for medicine. The function of most films of this genre, apart from their qualities of entertainment, is one of breaking down certain prejudices about the manner of acting of priests and nuns, though it must be admitted that this is not always a safe guide!

David Niven is a personable bishop, complete with neat
moustache. Cary Grant’s angel has rather more of the quality of an Irish leprechaun than a genuine Christian Messenger. Loretta Young is suitably demure as Mrs. Bishop. Gladys Cooper gives a strong performance as an over-wealthy and over-bearing woman whose designs on the bishop and his cathedral are rectified when the angel conveniently finds an incriminating document in the lady’s private bureau!


This excellent film faithfully follows Nigel Balchin’s book. The book is about a non-medical psychiatrist faced with the distrust of the medical profession in his work and unable, while resolving the difficulties of others, to solve his personal problems. These two aspects of his life are brought into focus in a striking way by the suicide of a patient, who is suffering from split personality.

Anthony Kimmins has made a first class film out of this fine book assisted by good acting from the cast. It is adult stuff, very entertaining and not without a moral or two.

The psychiatrist, beautifully acted by Burgess Meredith, is neither omniscient nor infallible. His patient, Kieron Moore, suffers from split-personality because of a guilt complex connected with revealing war secrets under torture. He is treated by analysis, but it is not enough. A Catholic seeing this film cannot help feeling that the sacrament of Confession is the only treatment for the guilt complex, or bad conscience, which psychiatrists frankly admit is at the root of many a neurosis. Guilt can call up strange phantoms in the hinterlands of the mind, which all the skill of psychiatry cannot dispel. But often in Confession the sacramental hand of Christ arrests and heals the mind.


_Monsieur Verdoux_ was called a comedy of murders. **Monsieur Alibi** is a comedy. There, with a similarity of title and a similarity of genre, the connection ends. **Monsieur Alibi** has Louis Jouvet, one of the most talented actors in France to give a veritable screenful of characterisations, each convincing and each different. Chaplin becomes rather a bore when he preaches and one feels that it is in bad taste to make a comedy of crime. But when Jouvet does the same thing, there is no question of bad taste: it is perfect. I wonder why? Perhaps because Jouvet never forgets that he is an actor and so gives us good entertainment without embarrassing us.
Comedies, in any case are so rare these days, that it is a pity to spoil them. I recommend everyone to see Jouvet. Even if you are not accustomed to French films, it will be worth your while to see this one.

Jouvet plays five parts, which, in reality, are reduced to two. He is a master crook with a gift for impersonation who discovers a double. The double is an inoffensive traveller in buttons, who is bullied into providing alibis for the crook. Curiously, the two parts are played so differently that one feels that everybody ought to notice that they are two and not one. This is surely a tribute to Jouvet's powers of artistry.

The wit is truly Gallic and sometimes broad but never in bad taste.

V.


First Singapore, now Saigon. The ex-servicemen of the U.S.A. would seem to be making quite a business of Far Eastern smuggling. Fred MacMurray dealt in pearls, Alan Ladd is involved in currency smuggling in a big way. It is to be hoped that the habit does not spread.

Saigon is a routine boy-meets-girl story, the only difference being that the boy does not know that he is doomed to die from war injuries and his two "friends" will not tell him. There are other amoral elements in this sentimental film, such as the habit of lying and cheating for the sake of friendship. There is also, when the inevitable death of the boy takes place, a touching version of the Protestant Burial Service which the mourners, of course, do not bother to follow but wander off in the middle of "I am the Resurrection and the Life". It was asking too much of them to be there, anyway.

It is one of those films that enable you to say exactly what the characters are going to do or say at any given moment. This has a certain advantage as you do not have to bother to keep awake.

V.


Ingredients: 1 cinematographico-symphonic melody, 3 neurotic females, Cornish cliffs, Tom Walls garnished with dialect. Hardly a dish for the jaded palate. But the culinary art lies less in what things are made of than how they are prepared, cooked and served. And without going so far as to suggest that this is a good film,
I must admit that it might have been served up worse. No fresh ground is broken by the dominating lady who believes in reincarnation and divorce and the semi-classical composition which the seasoned filmgoer can now be relied upon to tolerate, if not to whistle. But at least one does not always know what is going to happen next.

You may remember Patricia Burke as the very feminine leading lady in Lisbon Story, liable to shed a charming tear or two on occasion. Here she plays equally well quite another part, that of a matter-of-fact Land Girl with as little time for such weakness as for Cornish uncanniness.

The picture would not be good for such adolescents as are liable to nightmares, so I have put it in Category A. Q.


I recommend this film as a piece of entertainment in the grim sense of that word. One is not really entertained by the sight of the predicaments in which men find themselves as a result of ignoring or being unaware of the rules that govern our sojourn in this world. But there is a certain satisfaction to be gained in watching an artist paint the common scene, with its greys and drabs, its light and humour. And in this sense Robert Hamer is an artist.

It reminds me of three other films that used the same ideas: Waterloo Road; Odd Man Out and None but the Lonely Heart. It does not come up to the high poetic level of Carol Reed’s film, but only because Robert Hamer is a reporter rather than a poet. It has, nevertheless, the acute sense of actuality which is the secret of good reporting, from the first rainy-sodden sequence to the last misty fade-out. In this it easily surpasses the phoney, fantastical gesturings of the American film. It does not, I think, quite capture the warmth and camaraderie of Waterloo Road, though it is a nearer piece of work.

One notices here the same accurate observation of the London scene that made Waterloo Road so outstanding. It may exaggerate the degree to which this type of life is normal but it cannot be said that the picture is untrue. Some critics have said that it is out of focus. With that I do not agree. The East End of London is a mixture of good and bad, of clean and dirty. In this it differs from none of the other quarters. The main noticeable difference is that those who built the other quarters provided for large-sized families aided with adequate domestic help. Those who planned the East End appear to have been thinking of rabbits.
The story, of a married woman who gives shelter to an escaped convict who was once a sweetheart of hers, involves the reactions to life east of Aldgate Pump of a host of other persons; children and adolescents, Jew and Gentile, honest and criminal. They do not all come into the main story, but they are all part of the kaleidoscope which Michael Balcon turns for our interest.

Every actor and actress in this film achieves something like distinction. Even the juvenile players manage to make us think they are real. The honours are divided between Googie Withers, Edward Chapman, Sydney Tafler and Jack Warner, with Googie taking the largest share.

A special mention must be made of Hermione Baddeley for a perfect vignette of a doss-house keeper. After her fine performance in *Brighton Rock*, this should do much to impress the pundits of Wardour Street with the fact of her outstanding talents.

Morally, the film is indifferent. Life is as it is and we are merely observers. Each must decide for himself the pros and cons of the issues raised. The Catholic, being equipped with a basically sounder set of rules, is in better part than some others and thus is in greater control of the film.


Few actresses are skilful enough to depict the part of a nun or a mother with anything approaching conviction. These two, seemingly disparate rôles have this in common, that they demand great depth of sympathy and understanding to enable the actress to project herself into the requisite state of mind. That is why nuns on the films seem always so amateurish. It is why Patricia Roc is such a signal failure in *When the Bough Breaks*, in which she has to play the part of a mother who discovers on the day of her baby’s birth that his father is a bigamist. She leaves the baby with another woman who has lost her own child, until, when the boy is eight years old and she has found a husband she tries to get the boy back again. The excitement about the business of adoption seems somewhat forced because Patricia Roc never succeeds in convincing us that she really loves the child.

The film is timely in that it focuses attention on the problems of child adoption, now much more acute as a result of the misery which the chaotic wartime evacuation schemes has brought to so many children.

It will have a success with the general run of people who like a sentimental story, but it is not a film to which one can extend a very sincere vote of congratulation. Bill Owen scores most of the acting laurels as a suburban grocer, and Brenda Bruce
follows a close second. Cavan Malone, a twelve-year-old who has to pretend he is eight, has a most unpleasing rôle as the little twirp who causes all the trouble.


The publicity department boasts that this film was banned when presented in the United States. I am not surprised. Such an unflattering production could hardly do any good to the reputation of America as the land of freedom and opportunity.

It tells of a farmer who, as a result of seasonal, economic, biological and other misfortunes has arrived at a state of utter degradation and penury. He seems to have produced a family of morons and to be himself not far removed from stark, raving lunacy.

If the film is to be taken seriously, it is an insult to a great country. If it is intended as a comedy, it is in appallingly bad taste. What John Ford, that distinguished director, was trying to say when he made the film, he alone can tell. Particularly objectionable is the blasphemous manner in which some of the characters make use of the antics of prayer.


One man’s humour is another man’s boredom. There was a good sprinkling of children at the Press show of this film, and there was a lot of laughter. I strike my breast and confess that I was bored. One long series of boyish pranks is not my type of fun; but then, I should confess also, that it is many years since I graduated from kindergarten. I am wondering whether an adult is the proper person to review a film for children. I am also curious to know what children really think of this film. For my part (I hope that I am not being priggish) this type of film seems to set up a not very high standard. Boys will be boys as we say, but is it good to glorify mischief?

There seemed to me to be an atmosphere of artificiality about this film. I could not help comparing it with the films made by Mary Field. I should say that the Mary Field type of film is what children like and want; whereas Just William’s Luck is the type of film that adults imagine children like and want.
GRAHAME GREENE AND "BRIGHTON ROCK"
A REVIEW AND AN INTERVIEW

I. REVIEW


The title derives from Ida Arnold's (Hermione Baddeley) homespun philosophy: "Human nature's like those sticks of rock; bite it all the way down, you'll still read Brighton!"

Brighton is sensitive about its underworld. When I left an attaché case in the station cloakroom not long after a "trunk murder", remarking facetiously that it did not contain a torso, the attendant was seriously concerned lest I should have formed a wrong opinion of the local inhabitants. "They're not real Brighton people, those," he said. "They're no class." And so this film (from the novel by Grahame Greene) has a preface to reassure the audience that since the period depicted (pre-war), Brighton has been freed from crime by the police. Which, if true, is very gratifying.
The picture, however, deals with gangsterism almost worthy of Chicago in its heyday. The principal, if youthful, murderer, calls himself a Catholic (that could happen in Chicago, too) and he goes through a form of marriage in a registry office with a hitherto decent Catholic girl whom he afterwards persuades to attempt suicide. That would be quite enough to make a certain school of Catholic film criticism warn everybody off the picture. Admittedly it is not milk for babes. But these characters, however regrettable, are real: the man with some faith and no morals, who despises the very name of love, to whom hell is intensely true but heaven incomprehensible, who has caught some glimpse of what the priesthood means and has no illusions about invalid marriage, and the girl, pious but muddled, swaying like a pendulum between the theological virtues and the consequences of infatuation. These people, who do not live in accordance with their religion, are in fact more skilfully depicted than the person who does; the nun is a puppet. She seemed to be telling the poor girl that the reason why hope is so important is that we can’t know anything about anything. I can think of a much better one, based on what we do know (see Catechism, No. 137). The end of the picture is as surprising as it is edifying.

The Brighton atmosphere is well reproduced—the fun fair on the pier, where one searches for the missing choirboy, the front of the station, where one hopes he will turn up in time to catch the train back, and so on. Hermione Baddeley, as the concert party artiste, might have stepped from the pages of Compton Mackenzie. She “steals the film” when she appears, and it is a well-made film.

II. INTERVIEW

I recently had a talk with Mr. Grahame Greene. My purpose in meeting him was twofold. I wished to ask his views about the films which have been made from his novels, with particular reference to The Man Within and Brighton Rock, and I wanted to discover whether he was at all sympathetic to a project which The Catholic Film Society has for bringing together those Catholic writers and novelists who are interested in films.

The object of this effort to bring Catholic writers together is that they may, by discussion and exchange of views, help to formulate a Catholic philosophy and technology of the film that will be of assistance both to the writers themselves and to the producers who wish to use their stories for film treatment.

I found Grahame Greene most sympathetic to this suggestion and he has agreed to assist us in calling together, some time in the New Year, a group of writers who will help to put our plan into operation.

Mr. Greene said that he thought that Catholics had a special duty of criticism of art. Our line of approach should not be different in essence from the approach of any other good critic, but
The story, a psycho-thriller, concerns Pinkie, a nineteen-year-old boy turned gangster; sadistic, cunning, introspective, Pinkie (Richard Attenborough) is a victim of frustration...

Pinkie senses danger in Rose's (Carol Marsh) innocence. For his own twisted reason he decides to marry her.
the fact that our point of departure was based on the acceptance of fundamental truths concerning man's nature and purpose in life gave our criticisms an added significance which was often lacking in those critics who know not what man is or whither he is going or why. Catholic criticism is valuable precisely because it touches art at all three necessary points, the moral, the artistic, the intellectual. To restrict our approach to censorship was to diminish very considerably our degree of usefulness to the community.

Coming to the question of films, I found Grahame Greene rather pessimistic. There are few film producers with the necessary mental equipment to make films that are works of art and at the same time faithful translations of the minds of the authors from whose work the film is taken. That may mean either that it is a bad thing to have films being made by persons who have not the necessary poetic training, or it may mean that a good novel in its own right does not suffer the change into another medium with much hope of success.

Grahame Greene is one of the most important Catholic writers of the present day. It is the measure of his importance that people are so violently divided in their judgments about him. He is both praised and condemned, held up as a model of one who knows how to describe the pattern of suffering in the life of man and how to relate it to the Mystical Body; denounced as one dangerously depicting the results of original sin.

He is certainly disturbing, but who dare claim that the experience is wholly fruitless? He is one of those novelists with a conscious or unconscious vocation to the pen. He always has something to say, though the way in which he says it may prove shocking to the complacent, the philistine or the Pharisee. One may liken him, perhaps, to a powerful preacher of retreats for the clergy. What he says it is not always desirable to repeat, but even his most scandalous characters point a moral and tell a tale of grace abounding. His novels are not to be recommended, indiscriminately, therefore, but for those who have ears to hear, his message carries much pleasure as well as purification of mind.

Writing about him in La Revue Nouvelle, Paul Rostenne as quoted in Blackfriars says that Grahame Greene, "while depicting a nature that seems to be confidently sure of itself, succeeds, without juggling with appearances, in making us hear faintly that gentle but all-powerful rumour of the supernatural which is ever at work in the shadowy depths of a man. He achieves an almost miraculous union between the metaphysician and the novelist, who come to each other's aid instead of destroying each other. From this union springs the powerful impression of reality which Grahame Greene's novels leave".

To have a writer of this calibre providing material for film transcription is obviously of the greatest importance. Unhappily, he has not been very well served by those who have turned his novels into films. Few of his books are, in my opinion, capable
Ida, a travelling concert artiste accidentally brought into the web of violence and death, pursues a line of investigation of her own

The only present that Pinkie ever bought Rose was a record . . .

(Blocks by courtesy of John Boulting)
of being translated into the language of the cinema. They are far too dependent for their full effect upon the degree of intelligence and sympathy which the reader himself brings to them. Certainly, no American attempt to put his novels on the screen has been very successful. *Stamboul Train, Gun For Sale* and *Ministry of Fear* became pedestrian vehicles for well-known stars, Marlene Dietrich, Veronica Lake and Ray Milland, and completely lost their character in the process.

Two British directors have tried their hand at Grahame Greene stories. Bernard Knowles with *The Man Within* and John Boulting with *Brighton Rock*. Bernard Knowles lost entirely the soul of *The Man Within* and left us only with a fleshly film devoid of subtlety.

John Boulting has the requisite qualities of poetic imagination, individuality, sympathy and a willingness to explore the metaphysical which are needful when dealing with Grahame Greene, and the author thinks that *Brighton Rock* comes closer to expressing what he was trying to convey than any previous attempt to do so. He said that he was disappointed with the ending of the film; and here—it may be, is evidence that John Boulting has not, after all, captured the authentic Greene doctrine.

The book ends with Rose going to Confession and receiving sympathetic counsel and assistance from an old priest. Naturally, the confessional scene could not be conveyed to the screen as it stood. Therefore Grahame Greene agreed that the film should end in a convent nursing-home, with a nun speaking the words of hope and comfort which, in the book had been uttered by the priest. This was legitimate enough, but instead of an old nun who might have had something of the characteristics of the old priest in the confessional, one who was wise with the wisdom of years as well as with the grace of God, John Boulting provides a characterless individual, lacking both years and experience, to talk about the mercy of God. Whatever that particular Sister knew of the subject, she had obviously only gained from books; whereas the priest in the novel knew what he was talking about.

When I was talking with John Boulting about this film, he expressed a desire to make a film of *The Power and The Glory*. I said at the time (and I am gratified to have Grahame Greene’s assurance that he shares my view) that I felt it to be an impossibility. *The Power and The Glory* is the account of the workings of a man’s conscience, and I know of no film technique that has, so far, succeeded in putting such a novel on to the screen.

*The Power and The Glory* has already been made into a film in America. Grahame Greene told me that the rights of the story passed from his hands to Alexander Korda some years ago, since when he had heard nothing further about the matter. When in New York recently, Mr. Greene heard that a film from his book had been made. He asked a lady at a party, who did not know that he was the author, what she thought of the film; did she not think

(Continued on page 24)
THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CATHOLIC ORGANISATIONS AND THE PRESS WITH REGARD TO THE CINEMA

A CONDENSED VERSION OF A LECTURE GIVEN TO THE Newman Association on November 9TH, 1947, BY Andre Ruszkowski

[Editor's Note.—Andre Ruszkowski is a Polish lawyer, domiciled in France, whose professional connection with the cinema arises from the fact that he is legal representative of the cinema industry for Polish as well as French cinema interests. He has been associated with the Office Catholique Internationale du Cinema for many years and is now its General Secretary for Exterior Relations. He is also Press Representative for the Office Familial de Documentation Artistique. He has written several books on the art of film and was a film reviewer in Warsaw before the war, and writes prolifically for cinema periodicals in France. He is O.C.I.C. delegate to U.N.E.S.C.O.]

TWO LINES OF APPROACH

It is a great pity that people are repugnant to the phrase Catholic Film Action, which is the official title covering the militant attitude of the Church towards the cinema. The fact remains that Catholics, individually and collectively, have a duty to the world of presenting in concrete forms some token of their reactions to the problems, ethical and economical, which arise when the cinema is under discussion.

It is generally recognised that where the written word is concerned, the Church is able, by means of the Index, to safeguard Faith and morals. It is also recognised that the Church, where literature is concerned, does not restrict her function to that of Censor of Prohibited Books. She plays a positive and constructive part in the production of literature as a work of art.

We have the right, therefore, to ask: what is the attitude of the Church when faced with the film as a work of art? Has she no other function, no other duty to her children than to act as censor of morals? The cinema is unquestionably the most potent force in the world of ideas that exists today. Are we then to say that Catholic Film Action is a merely secondary thing? For there are some countries which understand neither the power of the cinema in the world today, nor the function of the Church towards the cinema.

There are two main lines of approach to the problem; the negative one which consists in prohibition along the moral plane, and the positive one which consists in treating the film as a serious contribution to the moral, artistic and intellectual life of man and assessing it accordingly.

It is perhaps premature to speak of the art of film in terms of Science, though there is, at the University of Paris, a faculty
which may be termed the Chair of Filmology, under the direction of M. Georges Damas, a distinguished French cineaste, whose lectures on this subject have long been considered a serious and valuable contribution to the subject.

MORE THAN ENTERTAINMENT

The result of research undertaken by serious students of the cinema entitles us to claim that the film is something much more than a means of entertainment. It may be said to be a new means of expression, a new language which, in company with music, writing and painting, enables man, or could enable him to express himself in a new medium. In saying this it is not suggested that this new language is, as yet, properly used, or even properly understood. It is too new to have acquired a tradition of critical standards by which to assess itself. Nevertheless, it has its part to play and it claims the serious attention of men of intelligence.

The man in the street when he goes to the cinema does not, as he thinks, see objective reality. What he sees is an interpretation of reality. This is important to bear in mind, for it is a dangerous thing if he has no critical reactions to films. He is then the slave of the shadows which he sees in front of him. It is for this reason that we say that, as far as Catholics at least are concerned, it is necessary that the Church should take charge, morally and culturally speaking, of this powerful new means of human expression.

Film, in itself, is, of course, like any other material thing that is used as a medium by man, indifferent, being neither good nor bad. It is the use that is made of it by man that constitutes its danger, morally and culturally speaking, on the one hand, and on the other, its power to be of use to mankind.

Each country has its own special problems when faced with the task of using film. It is clear, however, that such a medium of artistic expression, such a new creative language, needs both an international organisation for its proper control and an objective that is wider than the idiosyncrasies of any particular national group.

THE POPE'S LETTER

At this point it is useful to mention the Encyclical Letter of Pope Pius XI, that unique document that outlined for the Church its proper attitude to the cinema.

It is not unfair to state that, hitherto, the tendency has been to consider only one side of the problems outlined in Vigilanti Cura, at least in some countries. The occasion of its appearance was the setting up of the American Legion of Decency, a Catholic organisation which has performed a lasting service both to the Church and to serious students of the cinema in so far as it has done more than any other organisation to clean up the cinema. We tend to forget the degree of degeneracy to which the cinema was dropping in America in the 1930s. The Legion of Decency did a major work in focussing public opinion and the moral power of the Church on the evils of the situation.
Still, it has to be recognised that, as a result of the Legion’s activities in the field of moral classification of films, it came to be overlooked that this work, important as it is, was only a part of the sum of the problems facing the Church in view of the emergence of this new instrument of expression. This side of the Church’s interest in films, negative though it is, it goes without saying is of paramount importance; for our children and young people must be protected from the poison of films produced by unscrupulous or unsuitable organisations.

Nevertheless, even when such negative influence is efficient, it still remains necessary that the Church should take care to see that the cultural standards are also maintained. Film is such an important instrument that it must be made positively to serve the cause of Christian culture and ethics.

INSTRUCTED AUDIENCES

It is necessary, therefore, that Catholic organisations should learn how to transform their contemporary attitude of indifference and ignorance of the potentialities of the cinema in such a way that it may once be regarded, as indeed it is, as a new and powerful means given into the hands of men for the purpose of helping in the process of the completion of his personality, as is the case with the other arts. “The essential purpose of art, its raison d’etre, is to assist in the perfection of the moral personality, and for this reason it must itself be moral” (Pius XI).

Just as it is necessary to teach people how to listen to music, how to look at pictures, what to look for in the work of the great poets, so is it necessary to teach the public what to look for in film, how to criticise this new art as they criticise the other arts, how to analyse it as they analyse the products of the other arts. In a word, to train people in film appreciation.

Were such a state of instructed audiences to come about, were the public trained in film criticism and analysis in this way, even the frankly immoral film would do less harm because the spectator would be in control of the situation to a far greater degree than he is when he is present as a merely passive onlooker at a film.

A MEANS OF EDUCATION

There is one other important point that must be considered. It is imperative that all persons with influence, all organisations within the Church should recognise that the film is a means of education. It is urgent that clergy, teachers and others should be au courant with the latest developments of the film world as they are with the latest trends and developments of music and the fine arts.

Only when one is oneself mentally equipped with due knowledge can one set about influencing others. So, in order to set about influencing films it is necessary to understand their importance and their function. Catholics are the spearhead of public opinion for
good films. By their attitude they can bring about a wider recognition for worthwhile films.

By this it is not meant that Catholics should concern themselves solely with films of a professionally religious character; the lives of saints, ceremonial, sermons in films and the like. All these have their proper place, but it must be remembered that films are limited spiritually. They can do no more than give the first psychological shock, as it were, after which it is the task of the priest to follow up the lead given by grace through this particular medium.

Commercial films dealing with real life are capable of actually contributing something of value. *Vivere in Pace* (To Live in Peace) for example, which received the award of the Catholic International Cinema Office at the recent Brussels Film Festival, while by no means a pietistic film, is certainly calculated to contribute in a very real manner to the spiritual benefit of mankind.

So, too, will *Monsieur Vincent*, the film made in France under the auspices of the *Office Familial de Documentation Artistique*. This is a magnificent contribution to the art of film, a film dealing with an urgent social problem and, withal, one that is sociologically sound both from the point of view of Church and civil authorities. Ethically and artistically it is destined to start a new trend in the financing of films for it was by means of a national subscription, organised by O.F.D.A. that the money for its production was raised.

**HOW CATHOLIC ORGANISATIONS MAY HELP**

This opens up a new vista of Catholic co-operation in worthwhile films. Catholic organisations might well help to sponsor films that contribute something positive to the Christian spirit. This is one of several ways which suggest themselves whereby Catholic organisations may help to bring a positive influence to bear upon the film.

In France there has been founded the Catholic Union of Cinematographers (Union Catholique du Cinema) which aims at bringing together for mutual discussion members of the profession, with the object of strengthening their moral and artistic influence in the films with which they are associated.

The Newman Association and kindred societies might well find it possible to contact Catholics in the industry in this country with a similar object in view.

Another way in which direct influence might be brought to bear is by encouraging young people to look to the cinema for a way of life, a career; not as film stars—anyone could be a star—but in the more important rôles of script writer, director, cameraman, editor, etc. This might well be a vocation for some young people whereby they will become instruments for the raising of the standard of the films.

With regard to methods of Catholic Film Action: the Encyclical envisages the following means of approach, first on the
national scale, then on the international scale: the erection of National Film Centres which shall be under the direction of the clergy, authorised by the Hierarchy. These National Centres will comprise organisations for moral classification of films, for cultural development and for specialist problems.

Examples of the cultural organisations can be seen in France in O.F.D.A. (Office Catholique Internationale du Cinema) and U.C.C. (Union Catholique du Cinema).

On the international plane we have the Office Catholique Internationale du Cinema (O.C.I.C.) which encourages the work of Catholic Film Action on the international as well as on the national plane. It has organised Catholic Film Congresses, the most recent one being that held in Brussels last June.

It has arranged an international exchange of 16mm. (sub-standard gauge) films which should be of value to projection groups in parishes as well as to educational authorities.

A project which is under consideration at the moment is the founding of an International Film Review. It is intended that it shall, by means of contributions from cineasts of international distinction, help to build up a true philosophy of the cinema.

Another international organisation which has a direct and valuable bearing on Catholic Film Action is the Instituto Pro Deo in Rome which is the headquarters of Catholic Action and concentrates on the critical training of Catholics in all the fields of artistic endeavour, in film as in other departments.

It is necessary that all Catholic organisations should co-operate in the work of Catholic Film Action. How? By making the film and the cinema a cultural subject, having a proper place on their programmes with other cultural subjects. By discussion groups. By Press notices devoted to certain films or film conferences. By arranging special programmes of films. By liaison with the Catholic Film Society. By co-operation in the organisation of Summer Schools of Films.

Catholics are very much behind the times in this country in this respect. The totalitarians have the advantage of us in this matter. The film cannot be ignored with safety. It is said that the film is a drug. If so, we must confess that we have not yet discovered the anodyne.

LEARN BY LOOKING

THE writer is a convert to Visual Aids in Education. It happened some years ago, and in this way: she had been given an explanation of the propagation of waves, rotational, transverse and longitudinal; and being no scientist, she found it completely mystifying—but when she saw the same facts illustrated by a silent film, the processes became intelligible in a few seconds, the more so as the teacher shifted the picture from the screen to the blackboard upon which he was able to trace the movement of the waves.
The possibilities of visual aids in the hands of a competent teacher were revealed in a flash.

A little thought will bear this out. Most people are predominantly eye-minded: and we recognise this in daily life when we want to give them some exact information and ensure that they grasp it. We are not content with telling them: for instance, we try, more or less successfully, to make out a plan when showing people the way; maps and diagrams are the normal accompaniment of the various branches of science; and in the most abstract of them all, a figure is essential.

Then there is the question of interest. What is a book without pictures? Yet we talk and lecture about things that have happened far away or long ago with never a picture to enliven the description or shift the children’s gaze to anything more attractive or illuminating than our own faces. But if we take the trouble to find and put up a picture—an Indian Bazaar, the Quest of the Golden Fleece, or the Last Supper—we all know the difference it makes.

Visual aids enrich our lessons. Small, rare and unique pictures can be displayed, and we can be sure that every member of the class sees them and knows what to look for, without fear of the class disintegrating as it tends to do if the pictures have to be passed round. In this way children can be educated to appreciate contemporary pictures, old prints and illuminations. Microscopic slides can also be projected, and we can be certain that the children see what they ought to see. Processes can be speeded up—a voyage round the world, the growth of a tree: or slowed down—to demonstrate the steps in woodwork or needlework. Sight and sound can be married—not only in the sound film, but by showing the words on the screen for choral work, for example, or using pictures at a sing-song. The writer recalls the instance of a teacher who prepared her children for their First Holy Communion in this way: the pages of the booklet they were to use were shown on the epidiascope, and the teacher explained the pictures and prayers, while each child could follow in its own little book as well. Many similar ideas will occur to readers.

Visual aids therefore help to make learning easier, more exact and more interesting. They save and economise effort, thus liberating energy for further work—in a word, they improve our lessons.

They have their limitations, however. Like all aids they are but means to an end and must be subordinated to it, not used for their own sake (with one exception as will be shown later). The use of the moving picture, in particular, is strictly limited: it should never be used where a still picture would do as well, nor should sound be employed without good reason.

It is time to ask what exactly is meant by visual aids. They can be anything from a postage stamp to television, and include the whole range of pictorial and diagrammatic material: but the term as at present used is applied in particular to the mechanical devices for enlarging and projecting illustrative material. These
include the *diascope* (our old friend, the magic lantern), where the light is passed through the lantern slide, or sometimes today through cellophane or some other transparent medium—the *epidiascope*, which projects the reflection of a picture or other object illuminated by mirrors (these two machines are often combined in the *epidiascope*)—the *ciné-film projector, silent and sound*, the type commonly used in schools being the sub-standard or 16mm. size—and the *film-strip projector*, a modern adaption of the diascope which is gaining great popularity. Its pictures are made up in rolls, or singly, on sensitised film instead of glass plates, and are consequently smaller, lighter, more compact and more economical than the old lantern-slide; and so is the machine itself. As is the case with the lantern-slides, one’s own pictures can be made up, and at far less cost. To complete the list we must add the *micro-projector*, by means of which microscope-slides can be thrown on to a screen large enough for the whole class to see at once.

Every school that wishes to try out the possibilities of visual aids should invest in a film-strip projector at once, and so might enterprising teachers, as it is not an expensive machine. They are being produced in great numbers, and, while other projectors are unfortunately in short supply and impossible to procure for months ahead, there seems to be no difficulty yet about these. And, as every reader of the educational papers must be aware, film-strips are also being turned out in great numbers. Advice as to the choice of machines is available through the office of Focus.

It is proposed in subsequent articles in this section to review films and film-strips new and old, and give information as to how they can be obtained, and from time to time to add other information and suggestions from teachers experienced in the use of visual aids. Suggestions and questions will also be welcomed from subscribers, as well as accounts of their own experiments and the impressions and reactions of children.

Earlier in this article it was suggested that there is a more important aspect of the matter to be considered: we have to educate for the film as well as by the film. It has been said that a revolution as great as that resulting from the introduction of movable type is transforming our social habits through the new instruments of learning that have entered the world. The cinema and the radio have become the greatest educational agencies of the time. By their means vast stores of information are placed at our disposal, experience is enriched, thought is, or should be, encouraged, and standards of value in matters of both conduct and taste are inevitably affected. Moreover, all is conveyed with the wealth of technical skill and often with psychological suggestion in an artistic setting that make its influence almost irresistible.

This demands a reconsideration of educational problems and technique, but it has not been faced by our schools as a whole. Few are equipped with the necessary apparatus: four out of every five homes have the radio but only half the schools—and how many have a film-projector? And, far more important, what of the
teacher? It would hardly be unfair to say that few have fully realised their responsibility in the matter. Some are disposed to blame the cinema for their pupils' misdemeanours, or their lack of concentration—most ignore it, but forget that, though they may do so, the pupils will not.

S. H. C.

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SOME FILMS REVIEWED

NOTE: Category A indicates adults only; B, adults and adolescents; C, family audiences; D, particularly for children.

The figures refer to the pages on which the review appeared in the "Catholic Film News".

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Grahame Greene and Brighton Rock—(Continued from page 16) that a film about a drunken priest was rather an unfortunate subject to put on the screen? "Oh," replied the lady, "it is nothing to do with a drunken priest!"

Grahame Greene considers that there are scenes in the novel version of The Power and The Glory, which, though too sordid and grim to be put on the screen, were a necessary part of the development of the story and without which the characterisation of the priest would lose its significance. Therefore, the story had either to be changed beyond recognition or left alone. He would prefer that it were left alone.

A mind of such integrity and artistic eminence should be of the greatest value in the counsels of Catholic Film Action and we hope that much benefit will derive from any association which may materialise.

John A. V. Burke.
Dear Sir,

The Liverpool Youth Committee recently appointed a Sub-Committee to consider how best to advise the youth of the city regarding current films. They decided to issue a monthly circular of *Film Reviews*, for which they would use any available publications of a helpful nature already in circulation. I placed before them the *C.F.N.* The Chairman, a non-Catholic, who had studied it previous to the meeting, said publicly that he thought it excellent and "just what we wanted". Whereupon the copy was passed round and received general approval. They have since asked for back numbers and I expect they will become regular subscribers.

I think you will like to know this for your encouragement. The Liverpool Youth Committee is a very representative and influential body.

Your recent short article on Cinema Clubs was interesting but seemed to me to be unsatisfactory. We in Liverpool, whilst entirely in favour of good children's films, are opposed to Saturday morning Cinema Clubs. On our recommendation the city magistrates recently refused an application for starting these Clubs in the city and this only after we had heard Miss Mary Field on the subject. She was quite unconvincing on the matter.

Wishing you every success in your devoted work.

Yours,

(Mgr.) T. Adamson.

Dear Father,

I don’t think much of the new name Focus; for it is a very hackneyed one: every week there is a B.B.C. programme called Focus; also I think the change is a great mistake, for the people who buy the magazine at present know it as *C.F.N.* and an enormous proportion of them will cease to buy it, because they will not realise that the new name is the same as the old. It is like throwing away the results of years of effort to get people talking about the *C.F.N.*, and then start getting them to talk about another name which signifies nothing. I think it will be suicidal for the circulation.

F. E. Young.

Dear Sir,

I would appreciate some enlightenment as to the purpose of Children's Cinema Clubs. Last season the Leaders of certain Cinema Clubs in this part of London organised an "Inter-Club Football Competition". During the summer a "Field Day" was organised, and recently Senior Scouts who were prepared to act as stewards at the "Odeon Children's Service" were asked to note that "... the next Service will be held on Sunday, October 26th". What is the reason for these activities, and how do they come within the scope of a Cinema Club?

Yours,

R. P. Scott.
TEN years ago Catholic Film News had the pleasure of featuring a 17-year-old girl named Maureen O’Hara who had just made great success in her first major film rôle in Jamaica Inn. For the first number of Focus, which incorporates Catholic Film News, we have the pleasure of featuring another 17-year-old girl who has made a great success of her first film rôle. This time it is Carol Marsh in Brighton Rock.

There are other points of similarity between the two actresses. They are both Catholics; both were pupils at Sacred Heart Convents; both had stage experience with repertory companies before coming to the screen; both had the advantage of being directed in their first big film-parts by men of unusual ability and intelligence. Eric Pomer and Charles Laughton were responsible for Maureen’s début. John Boulting directed Carol Marsh.

But there the similarity ends: or at least I hope so. For Maureen O’Hara has become the victim of those who saw a chance to capitalise on her undoubted beauty and natural glamour. As a result, most of the parts she has had in the past ten years have given her opportunity to do little more than pose.

With Carol Marsh it is altogether different. When John Boulting advertised for a girl to play the part of Rose in his film version of Grahame Greene’s Brighton Rock, he was looking for someone “naïve and tolerably, but not excessively, pretty . . . a girl with acting ability”. So when a slightly built girl, brown-haired, blue-eyed and reserved, was called from the Rank Charm School into the Boulting Brothers’ office, no one was unduly enthusiastic. But when she read the part with Richard Attenborough, the producers realised that they had discovered a girl with personality and talent. For Carol Marsh has that rare ability of being able to “come alive” when she plays a part.

It is true that in John Boulting, Carol Marsh had an unusually able and persuasive director; but even the most persuasive of directors must have something to direct, and in Carol Marsh, John Boulting was presented with intelligent co-operation. It is a great test of an actress’s ability to be able to show conviction in a humble rôle. She is then deprived of the assistance of glamorous clothes and aristocratic surroundings. She has to depend entirely on her power to create. It is easier to detect the false note in such a part than in the elaborately furnished piece where the staging and mounting itself is apt to distract one’s attention.

As the little tea-shop waitress in Brighton Rock, Carol compels conviction. Fascinated by the sadistic, introverted race-gangster, Pinkie, she becomes just that kind of unsophisticated innocent child who so often falls victim to the wrong kind of man.

If Carol Marsh can only steer her course between those who will want to glamorise her and those who will want to stereotype her, she has all the natural talent which will enable her to become an important contributor to the screen.

JOHN VINCENT.
THE CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY
(Affiliated to the Office Catholique Internationale du Cinema)

PRESIDENT:
His Eminence Cardinal Griffin, Archbishop of Westminster.

AIMS AND OBJECTS:
1. To encourage the development of Catholic criticism of films with the object of influencing, as far as possible, the type of films publicly exhibited.
2. To promote the organisation of discussion groups for the study of films.
3. To establish a library of films of Catholic interest.
4. To organise a Summer Film School.
5. To encourage the production of entertainment and documentary films calculated to demonstrate the Christian cultural heritage of Europe, in its arts, crafts, religious life, agriculture, architecture, etc.
6. To establish when and where possible, Cameo Repertory Cinemas where films of permanent interest and value may be seen.

Annual Membership: 10s., (which includes monthly copy of Focus).

Hon. Secretary:
REV. J. A. V. BURKE, Mayfield College, Tunbridge Wells.

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EDITORIAL

A TIDE IN

THE AFFAIRS OF THE

CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY

THERE are some lines in Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar" which make timely reading for those of us who are interested in the affairs of the Catholic Film Society. In the third scene of the fourth act, Marcus Brutus, imbued with the spirit of adventure, says to the cautious, rather timid Cassius, who hesitates about marching on to Philippi . . . "Our cause is ripe. There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads to fortune; on such a full sea we are now afloat, and we must take the current when it serves, or lose our ventures."

The Catholic Film Society in this country has watched, with gratitude, the flood of interest in its work rapidly rising; on the full sea of sympathy and understanding she has set afloat her vessel: Focus; so strong is the current of enthusiasm that we are confident we shall win our ventures.

What are these ventures? You will find them detailed on the page opposite. All of them may not be attained immediately, but they will be attained ultimately; people from all quarters have written to wish us Bon Voyage; many have signed on for service (one stout fellow writes: I'll do anything you like to help you to win the battle for the better film); up and down the country, centres of Catholic film action are preparing themselves to take part in the Catholic film crusade. Perhaps in our time there will arise an Order of Knights of the Cinema dedicated to the work of using the films as a means of enlightening the world!

In this issue you will read of the splendid work that is being done by the Catholic Film Society in France. Monsieur Vincent has set a standard for England to emulate. This film proves that cinema is an art which may serve the Christian cause.
FILM REVIEWS


To my jaded palate this was distinctly refreshing. In spite of the publicity there is nothing "daring" or "outspoken", in the vulgar sense, in this film of murder in America during the demobilisation period. And there is originality and vividness in characterisation, actualised by good casting, as well as a good sense of camera and lighting.

The story follows the modern trend to depart from the who-done-it form and to make interest centre on how the murderer will betray himself. It avoids the tedium of self-conscious toughness, while presenting a candid study of G.I. types.

There is a moral too, that it is a bad thing to beat up Jews just because they are Jews. This is fair enough. And a corollary is enunciated, that it is a bad thing to beat up Catholics just because they are Catholics. This is positively handsome.

I learned one illuminating detail which I never knew before. In America some cinemas are open all night. Passed to you for comment.

Q.


Women are not such bits of emotional flip-flop as this film makes out. This screen-translation (not well done, I think) of one of Guy de Maupassant's stories, drags down the name of woman to low levels. "All women take to men who have the appearance of wickedness", is the cynical idea (if this can be called an idea) running through this story.

On the stepping stones of a number of broken female hearts, broken by his deceptive love, (if this sort of thing can be called love) George Sanders (Bel Ami) reaches his heart's desire, which is not love, but the possession of power and money. Such a type of man does exist, no doubt, but George Sanders in no way suggests this particular brand of wicked man. Instead of playing the part of a cad, he plays about with it; he is too much the aristocrat about town, too much the dilettante. His death scene (in a duel) is a lovely piece of unreality. The women (particularly Ann Dvorak, Angela Lansbury, Susan Douglas) act with greater sureness and reality than the man who seduces them.

E.

If you read the list of players and instruments it takes to make this film you will understand why I am somewhat cautious in owning that I was unutterably bored by it. I do not want to be denounced as a Fascist or a Nazi, but I cannot see what else the film is getting at. Apparently, only the rich, idle, privileged, money hogs dislike the noises which Louis Armstrong and his Gang produces. The freedom-loving, democratic negroes and Jews all like it. Which is nonsense, if you know anything about music.

It may be that you like Louis Armstrong and His Noises. In that case, far be it from me, to hinder you from a lovely, sticky session of the reddest jam. But even you will have to sit through the story part of the film in order to get to the jam. It puzzles me to know why it should be thought necessary to try to convince anybody that, way back in 1917, poor gentlemen of colour and others endowed with Hebraic features were persecuted by antagonistic and dumb-looking Americans aided and abetted by the police, because they loved the "New Music".

The advertisements of this film describe it as the "hottest show in Town". The legs exhibited on the posters making this claim indicate the kind of heat they have in mind. It is all lies. You need have no fear. Your passion for Louis Armstrong and His Abominations will be undisturbed. It is the dullest, dreariest bit of fake history posing as entertainment which I have endured for a long time.

Bruce Marshall speaks of the wireless "drooling out a turgid ooze of slimy terpsichorean moan". He has described New Orleans for me.

V.


A slick murder story in which the director, Vincent Sherman, as in Nora Prentiss, attempts to put over the moral that truth, understanding and forgiveness are the basis of marital happiness. The setting is Hollywood, luxurious, smart, artificial. But there is no glamorising of infidelity, no painting of immorality in glowing and attractive colours, in this smooth drama of love, murder and blackmail.
Whilst Bob Hunter (Zachary Scott) is serving overseas, his beautiful wife, Chris (Ann Sheridan), meets a sculptor during this period of lonely boredom. Attracted by her loveliness, he wishes to "do" a model of her head and she is induced to visit his studio. Infidelity occurs and she is at once repentant and full of genuine remorse. Bob returns and all is well; the episode fades into the background. Suddenly the calm of the now happily re-united couple is violently shattered by murder. Bob is away on a business trip and Chris, returning home late after a party, is confronted by a figure who looms out of the night. Startled and indignant, she stabs blindly at the intruder. Fearing to tell Bob and attempting to avoid blackmail, Chris now begins to weave a web of lies and deceit. Against the advice of Larry (Lew Ayres) the lawyer friend who has learned her secret, she still lacks the moral courage to tell Bob. Eventually, the truth breaks through the desperate and frantic inventions of Chris; the murdered man is none other than the sculptor with whom she had the rather reluctant affaire! Bob, disgusted and disillusioned, seeks divorce. Meanwhile, Chris is arrested and charged with murder but is saved by Larry who pleads self-defence. Paula (Eve Arden) Bob’s gay divorcée cousin tells him that divorce is not the answer to his problem, citing her own sad and bitter experience. Gradually, the sound counsel of Larry and Paula influence Chris and Bob against a permanent break. A real reconciliation, based on trust and love is inevitable.

Apart from a slight superficiality, this is a good film. The material and spiritual evils of divorce are clearly stressed. It shows the value of the marriage vow and that a great deal of intense and widespread suffering results from breaking them.

R.


In 1939 the Crosby-Hope-Lamour trio started their "Road" trips with a jaunt to Singapore. Since then, at intervals, they have been to Morocco, Zanzibar and Utopia. Now, in the fifth of the series, they hit the trail to Rio.

There are no signs of exhaustion after their previous exploits. Speed is still the keynote. They whirl along from trouble to trouble, from absurdity to absurdity, from song-hit to song-hit with all the customary uproarious, wisecracking energy.

Bob is repeatedly on the verge of heart failure either as a tight-rope bicycle rider, or a stowaway, or as Carmen Miranda doing a fast samba with a 15 pound bowl of fruit on his head. Bing is either making fractious babies for Bob to hold or is bursting into melifluous melody. Incidentally he teams up with the Andrews Sisters and helps them to make an attractive film début. Dorothy fluctuates between misery and melody and is painfully Bobbed and Binged.
The high comedy standard of the “Road” series is certainly maintained in this latest addition. Originality of sequence, wealth of comic incident and keenness of wit make the Road to Rio most acceptable to all who love hearty laughter.

J.


“There is consternation in the Auditing Department of Heaven. An error has been found in the Book of Life. Through an oversight by the Archangel Michael (Robert Cummings) one man is rattling around on earth without a soul.” As I read this and then saw its stupid picturisation I mastered my first impulse to walk out in a temper, and tried to reflect rationally upon just what is behind these incessant celestial parodies. Mr. F. J. Sheed has said that for many people the idea of God seems inseparable from that of a venerable man with a beard. Destroy this conception, and their faith in a personal God is apparently destroyed or shaken. Can we be witnessing, I wondered, a series of attempts, no more naïve than some atheistic propaganda, to undermine the Christian conception of life and its purpose by a reductio ad absurdum of the traditional poetic imagery about heaven? Are those who have hitherto believed in the beatific vision expected to seek membership of the Rationalist Press Association as soon as they leave the cinema?

But as the picture continued (mostly on earth, mercifully, and not in a bogus heaven), as a bad stained glass window of the Good Shepherd inspires religious emotion and Pastor Wainwright pastorises like anything, as the hope of reunion for a bereaved mother is allegorically suggested, it dawned on me that the inspiration of this film, at least, is not the crude blasphemy of godlessness, but the well meant blunderings of Protestantism. Critics of the Group Movement speak of its muddled and inconsistent theology and its quite extraordinary lack of taste and reverence. In view of this and the use on one occasion of the word “changed”, is it fanciful to trace its influence in Heaven Only Knows?

One can sympathise with those who would condemn this picture out of hand, especially as it is quite undistinguished considered as cinema. But I believe that a more mature judgment should be less preoccupied with apparent irreverences, however regrettable, than with the persistent tendency of the cinema to concern itself, amateurishly yet not unsympathetically, with religious issues.

Q.

One is sometimes accused of being a snob because one recommends French films. Here is one which no amount of snobbery could disguise. It is lacking in all those qualities which distinguish the work of the best French technicians. Instead, it has the blundering lack of imagination which one associates with American attempts to deal with the preternatural.

A student, working at a vegetable market to help pay his way, dreams of a lovely girl in white. The girl appears in reality and leads him through a veritable phantasmagoria of magical academies and swindlers' hide-outs before he comes to the conclusion that he is really awake and not dreaming. Naturally, he rescues the fair maid from her predicaments and they both live very poorly ever after.

There are moments of amusement in this film. But it is not to be recommended to one who has not yet seen a French film. Fernand Gravey is adequate to the demands made on him. Micheline Presle is pretty, Saturnine Fabre as the magician does his best as always.


Humphrey Bogart, Alan Ladd, now Robert Mitchum. I vote for Robert. He looks tough, but he also looks real; which is more than can be said for the story. We are told that critics should seek for the theme in a film. In that case we have here a pleasant piece of evidence to support the thesis, already proposed by the makers of Duel In The Sun that lust is stronger than love and is always the victor.

In other words, we are shown an apparently normal man leaving the good, pure and honest girl whom he loves to go away with a woman whom he has proved to be a murderess, a thief and a strumpet. No wonder, if, as someone has said, man, having given up belief in God, is now in the process of giving up belief in man.

Mitchum is impressive as a private detective who, hired by a rich gangster to find his double-crossing "Moll", runs away with the lady, only to meet Nemesis at her hands. Richard Webb is pleasantly menacing as the smooth-faced gangster, but, like most of the unsavoury characters in this dumb story, ends up dead.
I do not, in spite of the charm of Robert Mitchum, think that you ought to encourage producers to repeat this kind of thing by going to see it.

**V.**


This is another full length Disney film. And when you have said that, you have really said everything. There are the touches of the real artist in design, movement and humour, the Disneyised animals, the bloodcurdling moments, the occasional playing to the gallery.

We are accustomed by now to the blending of live action and cartoon. There is less of this than in some previous pictures and less virtuosity in the combination. But there is an interesting new feature. Besides real people (Edgar Bergen and a kind of under-study for Alice in Wonderland called Luana Patten—Dinah Shore is heard but not seen) and cartoon characters (Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse, Goofy, etc.) we see a sort of betwixt and between species in the persons of the ventriloquist’s dummies. Mr. Bergen has been ingenious in bestowing a surname on Charlie—they always have Christian names, of course—and so submerging his own personality that the name of Charlie McCarthy has obscured his own. That is sound ventriloquist technique. Then in addition to Charlie, who is the usual smart, cheeky, get-a-rise-out-of-the-governor type, he has another dummy, far-from-bright Mortimer, an original contrast.

After a brief introduction by Jiminy Cricket (I suppose few people advert to the etymological history of that name and so are spared the shudder it always gives me) the film falls into two independent parts, first the story of Bongo, the acrobat bear who escapes from the circus into the forest, and then “Mickey and the Beanstalk”. But it is not ideally suited to children. They would regard the quite lengthy courtship of Bongo and Lulubelle as “love” and dismiss it with contempt accordingly. And, as so often in Disney’s work, there are in both parts nightmarish elements at variance with the juvenile idea of entertainment.

**Q.**

What is the mysterious connection between feather boas and ratsbane? Between the end of the nineteenth century and death by arsenical poisoning? If this sounds like the sort of problem which G. K. Chesterton might have asked Father Brown to solve, it is certainly one which presents itself to a film critic confronted for the third time in six months with the sight of wasp waists and motor veils in conjunction with poisoned medicine. *Ivy* and *A Man About the House* lead to *The Mark of Cain*, and they all look alike.

Father Brown would have seen a sinister connection between the serpentine coils of fur which ladies began to put around their necks when Queen Victoria ascended the throne and the constricting bands of steel which the railways began to weave around England at about the same time; between the asphyxiating concoctions of the internal combustion engine poisoning the countryside and the noxious vapours brewed by the murdering spouses.

I fear that the only real connection between these three films is one of imitation. It is curious how these things go in cycles, manifesting a lack of artistic imagination on the part of the producers. Alas, Brian Desmond Hurst is not the equal, in this respect, of Leslie Arliss, or, indeed, of Sam Wood. His actors have done their best for him but have received little direction in return. The result is one of confusion. The characters are undeveloped and unconnected as well as unbelievable. Perhaps the Editor must bear some blame for this. In an attempt to achieve speed he has succeeded only in producing a sense of incoherence.

Eric Portman starts off as an ego-maniac in a minor key and ends with crashing chords in C major. He overplays his part. Sally Gray looking curiously like Joan Fontaine as she appeared in *Ivy*, simpers and sighs as she is expected to; Patrick Holt, from a blustering start moves on to a lamb-like ending. Dermot Walsh, as a ne'er do well lordling, contrives to appear at ease in an obviously contrived part. Denis O'Dea, whom you will remember as the kindly police officer in *Odd Man Out*, alone conveys a sense of conviction as the Attorney General in a court scene that, surely, no English Judge would ever have permitted.

The story is of brothers, the elder one of whom causes the death by poisoning of the younger and succeeds in having the wife tried and condemned for murder, intending to save her at the last and so win her subservience.

The publicity department tells us of the pains taken to ensure authenticity in the Manchester Courthouse scenes, and we must own that the Art Director and Production Manager, aided by the Construction Engineer have done marvels for our delight. All the more pity, therefore, that the same degree of care and attention was not taken to make the story credible in the first place.

V.
THE WAY AHEAD

(I)

SUB-STANDARD FILM SECTION

IN addition to the section on Educational Films we intend to devote as much space as possible to the users of sub-standard gauge. There are those who think that Catholics ought to have nothing to do with 35mm. or standard commercial films, not even to review them! This we cannot agree to. The primary function of a National Catholic Film Centre is the information of the public. But it is true that the question of standard films, their various gauges, is of great interest and importance to us.

We shall be glad to hear from those of you who have projectors, whether in schools or in your homes. We hope to be able to be of service to you. We hope to be able to encourage you in the use of your projector both for pleasure and to help in the apostolate of the film. There is much to be done and we need all the help we can get in order to use our opportunities to the full.

The formation of a Catholic Film Library is one of our ambitions. It will take time and money, but it can be done. The Catholic Truth Society has, at present, the distribution of the films made by the members of the Catholic Film Society before the war. You will get all information as to their catalogue of films and filmstrips from the Film Slide Department, Catholic Truth Society, 38-40 Eccleston Square, S.W.l.

We shall provide lists of sub-standard film libraries in future issues.

(II)

CATHOLIC CINEMA UNION

THE Catholic Film Society would like to be of assistance to Catholic members of the Cinema Industry. We intend to organise an association of technicians and others professionally connected with the industry. Such an association could be of considerable interest, both from the cultural as well as the moral point of view. Isolated Catholics sometimes feel at a disadvantage when faced with problems of an ethical nature which would be easier to deal with if one were backed by the moral prestige of an association of one’s fellow Catholics.

In the artistic field, too, there are many things which could be done to put films of positive Catholic interest on the screens, both of the commercial cinemas as well as the non-theatrical halls. A pooling of ideas and resources should result in advantages to all.

If you are interested, send your ideas and criticisms along. Write to The Rev. J. A. V. Burke, Mayfield College, Tunbridge Wells. Tel.: Mayfield 384.
TOPICAL PARS

by

The Gentleman with the Note-book

Those who are keen on opera will have the pleasure of hearing Margherita Grandi singing an aria in the new ARCHERS film *The Red Shoes* which Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger are finishing at Pinewood.

The film is an original story with a background of ballet. It has Anton Walbrook, Moira Shearer and Robert Helpman in the cast. The music has been composed by Brian Easdale, a versatile newcomer to films, who provides both swing and opera for *The Red Shoes*.

* 

Abbot Upson, O.S.B., who is Chairman of the Catholic Film Society, is at present on a tour of the U.S.A. He recently had lunch at the Rank Office in New York in company with Father Masterson, Secretary of the Legion of Decency, Colonel James Francey, President of United World Pictures, and Ed. Dickenson, Vice-President of the same organisation. Both these gentlemen are Catholics, and Abbot Upson was able to give them a graphic description of the state of things in this country in connection with films.

* 

British films seem to be having a topping time in American film polls for the year's ten best pictures. *Great Expectations*, *Odd Man Out* and *Brief Encounter* are among the ten best chosen by several different groups.

The *Film Daily*, which covers 344 newspaper and magazine film critics, as well as 120 radio commentators, gives a special place of honour to *A Matter of Life and Death* and *I See a Dark Stranger*.

Other films which have had successful careers in the Americas are *Frieda*, *Captain Boycott*, *Holiday Camp*, *Jassy*, *Overlanders* and *Seventh Veil*. Some of these one would have thought less than worthy of distinction, but there's no telling with critics!

* 

The cover design of *Focus* which has been praised on all sides is the work of Bruce Cussens, of Campbell George & Co., Ltd., of 34 South Molton Street, W.1.

* 

Another film of interest to Catholics will be the film based on the life of St. Francis of Assisi which is being made in Rome by the well-known Italian director, Augusto Genina. The part of St. Francis will be played by Giorgio de Luulo and St. Clare has been entrusted to a new French actress, Monique Orban, of whom great things are predicted.
FOCUS

A SCREEN LIFE OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

Father John A. V. Burke on an experiment
in the ethics and economics of film-making

A very remarkable film has recently had its première in Paris. It had an unusually enthusiastic reception from all sections of the French cinema press, and it has also had the distinction of winning the Grand Prix at the Venice Film Festival for the best performance by an actor. This was awarded to Pierre Fresnay for his performance in the title rôle of Monsieur Vincent.

I suppose comparatively few people in this country are aware of the extent to which the life of St. Vincent de Paul has coloured the social background of religious activities in France, even to this day. And not only in France, but in other parts of the world and in English-speaking countries too, where the name of Vincent de Paul stands for an order of practical charity, not even excelled by the Salvation Army. Wherever there is a parish large enough to need the benefits of organised charity, there you will find a group of laymen, members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, unostentatiously going about their work of social relief.

Vincent de Paul was born in Dax, in Gascony, in 1576, and died in Paris in 1660. As a boy he looked after the pigs on his father's small-holding, a humble beginning, which, during the earlier part of his life as a priest, he was at some pains to try to conceal.
After his ordination to the priesthood, he fell into the hands of Mohammedan pirates while on a voyage from Marseilles to Narbonne. For two years he lived as a slave, first to a fisherman, then to a physician who taught him medicine, and then to an apostate Christian priest whom he won back to the Faith and with whom he returned to France.

He became almoner to Queen Margaret of Valois; then tutor to the children of the Count Gondi-Joigny, and was soon well on the way to a life of ease and splendour—the kind of life followed by many an ambitious ecclesiastic of that period. But his conscience began to trouble him at the thought of the squalor of the peasantry compared with the grandeur in which he was living, and he ran away to devote his life to the alleviation of their misery. And this is the point where the film takes up his story.

He had a gift for organisation, and the amount of work he managed to do (opposed as he was by social and economic influences) is, even by modern standards, something quite astonishing. He formed groups of priests to look after the spiritual and temporal wants of the peasantry; he became the pioneer of social welfare work for unwanted babies. He was appointed by Louis XIII to aid the convicts condemned to the galleys. He organised the erection and staffing of hospitals for the poor. He founded a group of nuns whose work was to minister to the poor in their own homes and in the streets. These Sisters of Charity, as they were called, were the first nuns whose vocation took them out of the cloister into the lanes and byways of the cities in their service of the down and out. With their big, flappy head-dress, they are still a familiar sight in London and Paris and in other places, where there is need for charitable work to be done.

It was the life of this extraordinary little seventeenth-century French priest, with all that his example and courage and passion for social justice might mean to modern, faction-ridden France, that inspired Maurice Cloche with the resolve to make a film about Vincent de Paul. Maurice Cloche is a film personality of great distinction in France, and is known for films of unusual beauty and integrity. His documentary, Le Mont Saint-Michel, which received an award at Venice prior to the war; his Nord-Atlantique and his Feu Sacré are all in the distinguished class.

To get material for his film, Cloche consulted the archives of Vincent’s own foundation at Paris, the Lazarist Fathers. He sought the collaboration of historians and littérateurs. But the enormous historical fresco that was the result of these labours succeeded only in frightening away the prospective financial backing. And there the matter rested until the Liberation. Then it was that Maurice Cloche had the idea of trying to raise his money by means of a national subscription. He got in touch with a Catholic cultural organisation called Office Familial de Documentation Artistique, and the President, the Vicomte de la Grandière, undertook the work of

(Continued on page 38)
Monsieur Vincent goes from triumph to triumph. Maurice Cloche's marvellous film has now received the Grand Prix du Cinema Francaise, as the best film of the year, awarded by the Société D'Encouragement à L'Art et L'Industrie. In addition, the Belgian critics have voted it the best film shown in Brussels since the Festival.

Vicomte de la Grandière, the President of O.F.D.A., the organisation which sponsored the appeal for the financing of Monsieur Vincent, has now gone to the U.S.A. in order to arrange for the distribution of the film in America. It is to be hoped that exhibitors in this country do not allow America to steal the privilege of being the first to show this splendid film outside Europe.
A Screen Life of St. Vincent de Paul—(Continued from page 36)

making appeals through the parish churches of France. A
Monsieur Vincent Association was formed and sums of varying
size were collected, multiples of 1,000 francs being regarded as
profit-bearing shares.

The previous attempts to reduce the life of St. Vincent to the
proportions of a film were abandoned, and the task of producing
a scenario handed over to Jean Bernard-Luc and Jean Anouilh.
Anouilh is a well-known French dramatist, and the dialogue he
has written for Monsieur Vincent is one of extraordinary
brilliance and sensitivity. It gives Pierre Fresnay the opportunity
of bringing the character of Vincent de Paul to life. France has
many outstanding actors, but Pierre Fresnay is in a class by himself.
Every part he plays becomes, so to say, a reincarnation of the
character he is portraying. You may remember his performance in
La Grande Illusion; in Le Duel (which he also directed); or, more
recently, in Le Visiteur. But in Monsieur Vincent he surpasses
himself, and I have no hesitation in saying that it is without excep-
tion the most perfect portrayal I have ever seen in a film. From
the opening sequence, when you hear his footsteps clattering down
the cobbled streets of his parish at Châtillon, to the last scene of all,
where, as a dying man, he issues his instructions to the youngest of
his Sisters of Charity, he dominates the story, and the utter integrity
of his performance so pervades the film that one tends to overlook
the fact that it is he who is holding the whole production together.

Pierre Fresnay, writing of the part of Monsieur Vincent, has
said: 'What temerity on the part of an actor to pretend to assimilate
a character so noble, a nature so expansive and versatile as that of St. Vincent de Paul!" And he went on to say: "The difficulty in interpreting a character is, it seems to me, in inverse proportion to its complexity and depth. Where an actor feels himself to be lost and helpless is when the part entrusted to him lacks authenticity. But when his model comes to life before him, is materialised (so to say) all round him, it is only necessary for the actor to abandon himself and to allow the character to act in his place. The only qualities then demanded of him are confidence and humility." That is no doubt true, but it must not be allowed to deprive Fresnay of his own enormous share in the artistic success of Monsieur Vincent.

It is a curious fact that, as soon as you mention the Church or religion in connection with films, people are apt to find themselves divided into several antipathetic categories. There is the group represented by the well-known critic who, when reviewing The Last Chance, said: "Whenever I see a clerical collar in a film, I know that it is a bad film". That is an example of extreme prejudice, but it exists. Then there is the group represented by the devout Catholic who remonstrated with me when I gave an unenthusiastic review of The Bells of St. Mary's. "But we ought to support it," she said, "even if it is rather far-fetched; it's all about priests and
nuns, and surely that's a good thing from our point of view." A somewhat naive and uncritical approach to the subject, but again it has a number of supporters.

There is another group of people which labours under the delusion that the Vatican, backed by unlimited wealth and influence,

has large forces deployed over strategic points of the film front, controlling the cinema, strangling true art and imposing the tenets and liturgical forms of the Catholic Church on a bravely Protestant world. But far from its being a subject about which we feel very
conscious of power, we have to admit that the Catholic Church has exerted little positive influence on the production of films. The International Catholic Cinema Office has existed for twenty years. Pope Pius XI wrote his Encyclical about films in 1934, and yet the number of films one could enthuse about from a religious point of view is very small indeed. This state of things is due, in my opinion, to two factors: the disingenuous efforts of the producers to supply what they think the box-office demands; and the often uninformed enthusiasm of the general public for the maudlin and sentimental rubbish that is so often provided for them: and when films like The Sign of the Cross, or The Ten Commandments, San Francisco, The Bells of St. Mary’s, or The Keys of the Kingdom make enormous profits for their producers, you can be sure that the mixture is going to be repeated ad nauseam, and this regardless of the fact that the so-called religious atmosphere of these and similar films is often nothing but a devitalised humanitarianism, posing under the cloak of Catholicism.

The fact is that the Church is often acutely embarrassed by what are called religious films. It is not a question of lack of sympathy on the part of the producers, for even when the treatment is sympathetic, how often do we find the Catholic Faith presented as a religion emptied of all dogmatic content, a soft, unoffending creed of gentleness and respectability, religion presented behind a façade of rosaries and vague platitudes, such as we are seeing again in the revival of Gone With the Wind. The same thing is true of films about other denominations. A film which may, not unfairly, be called a Protestant counterblast to The Bells of St. Mary’s is The Bishop’s Wife, recently shown at the Royal Command Performance. Here again you have the producers making the same mistake in assuming that religion is synonymous with sentimentality, that it is adequately symbolised by a series of humanitarian gestures, such as helping blind men across streets; lame dogs over stiles; by wide-eyed choir boys in surplices, and a kind of spiritual blackmail by means of which tough, moneyed men and women are induced to recant their previous hardness of heart and to disgorge their wealth for charitable purposes. Charity is the main theme of Monsieur Vincent, but how real and dignified a virtue it becomes when treated by a director of integrity and honesty of purpose.

Don’t think that I am decrying the use of clerical collars and kind actions in entertainment films. But I do insist most strongly in warning people against too easily accepting as authentically “religious” the pleasing sight of a favourite actor framed in Gothic, or a charming actress wearing a coif. No, to warrant the label “religious”, a film must be made with the right intentions. And this is why Monsieur Vincent makes most other films about priests and nuns look like cheap novelettes. From the outset it was undertaken in a spirit of complete honesty of purpose and sympathy with the subject by men completely competent to do their job. That is why it will be judged primarily as an excellent piece of film-making
inspired by the life of a man with a dominating idea, the idea of his responsibility towards his fellow-men, the love of man for the sake of God. I do not wish it to be thought that I am, by implication, attacking the probity of the professional film technician. It is unfortunate that so often films that appeal to religious sentiment lose the effect they might otherwise have achieved because they are made by amateurs, who, however gifted they may be, lack the finesse of the professional. On the other hand, the professional is rarely free to choose the work he would prefer to do and must often find himself involved in the production of a film with which he is out of sympathy.

Monsieur Vincent makes no attempt to wheedle one’s sympathies. It speaks for itself. Its theme is summed up in the words which Vincent uses to his first assistant: “It is not enough,” he says, “to try to save their souls. We have also to feed their bodies. We have to convince them that they have souls to save.” His concern to house and feed the multitude has an echo of Christ’s own words: “I have compassion on the multitude because they have nothing to eat”.

No intrinsic element is allowed to interfere with the theme of the film. For example, the producers have carefully omitted any pre-occupation with merely religious functions: there is no detailed death-bed scene, no exhortations to the sick, no invisible choirs, nothing that might be calculated to inveigle one’s sympathies. The bare facts and situations are presented with an economy of conscious emotion that is unique in films.

In contradistinction to this, there was the over-elaborate, though liturgically accurate, administration of the Last Rites in Madonna of the Seven Moons, a scene which seemed to be played for its own sake, thus producing a sense of disproportion. Then there was the little boy in The Green Years making his first Holy Communion, and looking up to heaven with a rapt expression in a way that surely no normal boy would think of; or the heartrending destruction of the mission church for no apparent reason in The Keys of the Kingdom; or the copious tears of Mickey Rooney in Boys Town; or the astonishing intrusion of the old Irish mother in the last sequences of Going My Way. Compare these consciously sentimental tricks with the galley sequences in Monsieur Vincent, where the scene is presented with a deliberate under-emphasis of horror; or the almost curt manner in which Vincent deals with the crowds in his soup kitchen; or, again, the sense of frustration that constantly pervades the film. “I have done so little,” says Vincent at the end of his life, a statement that is not the pious untruth of a saint, but an exact description by one who was conscious that the battle he was fighting, the battle for social justice, would continue long after he was dead.

It is this uncompromising attitude to its subject that is the film’s great virtue, that causes real religious atmosphere to flow unbidden from its very essence. No other film that I know, not even The
Song of Bernadette, is its equal in straightforwardness. The makers of Bernadette, faced with an unusual story, shirked the issue and invoked a non-existent love interest to soften the rugged outlines of the truth. Monsieur Vincent makes no such mistake. It is almost too austere. It pursues its destined way, regardless of any plea for a softening of the blows it gives to complacency and self-satisfaction. It makes the utmost demands on the intelligence of its audience.

There is one terrible scene in which Vincent, now an old man, confronts his Ladies of Charity who are on the point of rebellion against the demands he makes on their sense of propriety and decency. He brings in a little abandoned baby which he has rescued from the cold. The ladies are filled with fastidious repugnance. He asks them what they are going to do about it. They reply that since such infants are the children of sin, doubtless God wishes them to die. Vincent rises up in awful anger and cries out: "When God wishes someone to die because of sin, Madame, He sends His Son to die!"

There is another moving scene at the end of the film, where Vincent, knowing that he has not long to live, sends for the youngest of the Sisters of Charity in order to instruct her in the manner of dealing with the poor. He tells her: "The jug of soup and the basket of bread will be heavy in your arms. But you will find that Charity is an even heavier load to carry, far heavier than the bread or the soup. Take care that you remain always gentle and smiling. It's not enough to give them bread and meat. The rich can do that. You are the little servant of the poor. They are your masters. Masters terribly susceptible and exacting. You will often find them ugly and dirty; they will be unjust and uncivilised. Nevertheless, you must give them your love. It is only when they know that they have your love that they will forgive you the bread which you give them." And that is the powerful and uncompromising note on which this truly religious film closes. In the best sense of that ill-used word, it is a socialist film.

I hope that what I have said will help to widen your appreciation of the problems that surround the producer who ventures to treat religion in his films. Film is the most potent instrument for the expression of moral and artistic and intellectual values which man has so far devised, and he does not yet realise the extent of the power within his hands.

The Christian religion, which, as Chesterton once remarked, has been found hard and not tried, is the most humanising as well as the most divinising influence which can be brought to bear upon mankind. In Monsieur Vincent we have a glimpse of the result when these two forces are synthesised. It will eventually be shown in this country and I am most curious to see the reactions of those critics who are usually the first to decry any film with a Catholic note in it. I wonder whether they will recognise the true from the false religious atmosphere? Furthermore, I wonder whether those
interested in the making of films will take the hint given them by Maurice Cloche and make themselves independent of the financial dictators when they find themselves with a theme worthy of sound film representation?—(By courtesy of "The Listener".)

VISUAL AIDS
By Our Educational Panel

As space is strictly rationed, this month's review will be as business-like as possible, and will consist of a number of short notices, preceded by a list of addresses and the conditions under which the films or film-strips in question can be obtained.

C.F.L.: Central Film Library, Imperial Institute, S. Kensington, S.W.7.
Films only, no charge for hire.

G.B.I.: Gaumont-British Instructional, Aintree Road, Perivale, Mddx.
Films: Sound—6/- a reel, plus 2/- an extra day.
Silent or Mute—3/6 a reel, plus 1/6 a day.
Film-strips: (Sale only) 15/-.

C.T.S.: Catholic Film Library, 40 Eccleston Square, S.W.1.
Films: Sound—6/- a reel, plus 2/- an extra day.
Silent—4/- a reel, plus 2/- a day.

B.I.F.: British Instructional Films, Mill Green Road, Mitcham. Surrey.
Films: Silent—Hiring charge A; 2/6 per reel, plus 1/- an extra day.

V.I.S.: Visual Information Service, 168a Battersea Bridge Road, S.W.11.
Film-strips for sale 2/9.

(A)

FOR SENIORS

Geography.—Men of the Alps. (Sound Film.)

This film is an attempt to survey the human geography of Switzerland. It touches on archery as a national sport, cattle-rearing and kindred occupations, the making of mechanical toys and fine instruments, the development of hydro-electric power and industry, the contribution of refugees to the life of the country and problems of trade. Throughout, there is background of typical scenery and land utilisation, brief verbal comments and Swiss
tunes. As a geographical survey there are some notable omissions: transhumance, city life, national unity despite religious and linguistic differences, the "canton" system of government and the problem of emigration. Altogether—too comprehensive for its length, too rapid in movement—it stimulates general interest but it is not a good teaching film.

[C.F.L., 1 reel, 10 minutes, for children 14-16, in Grammar or Technical School.]

History.—Changes in the Franchise since 1832. (Sound and Mute Film, and Film-strip.)

This is an interesting film, illustrating the growth of the franchise by means of maps and symbols and intriguing little figures, and it gives a very clear summary of the subject. It is intended for older children and adult audiences: but even for these it is rather too full, and it is essential that the teacher should become familiar with the film in advance, and study the teaching notes if the mute version is being used. The notes contain the useful suggestion that the film might be shown in three parts—and these correspond to the divisions of the subject commonly taken in a school certificate class.

[G.B.I. No. 683 F. and FM., 1 reel, 10 minutes, for 15+ onwards, secondary, all types and adult.]

Science.—The Life-Cycle of a Plant (Sound and Mute Film.)

The first part of the film shows the emergence of the plumule from the seed and the subsequent growth of plumule and radicle—the actual time required for such development and for later stages in growth needs stressing. A photomicrograph of the leaf showing stomates follows, this calls for explanation. The next section, showing the development of inflorescence and individual flower, insect visits and the alteration in position of the various organs of the flower, is excellent. The diagrammatic representation of fertilisation interpolated here must be explained. The last part of the film shows the development of the seeds and pod including the final explosion which expels the ripened seeds. Of special value is the vivid portrayal throughout of those plant and flower movements which are so often unnoticed.

[G.B.I. No. 644 F. and FM., 1 reel, 10 minutes, for younger seniors.]

Religion.—The Sick Call. (Silent Film.)

This is the best teaching film known to the writer, and illustrates admirably the value of the story-approach to the teaching of religion.

The supply of the Sacred Oils, the good Catholic doctor summoning the priest, the preparation of the sick-room, the priest’s
arrival and the administration of the Last Sacraments are all reverently and clearly enacted, in the setting of a good Catholic home and parish, and are happily followed by the recovery of the sick man and a joyful convalescence: and, in copies which have not been mutilated, the film ends very appropriately with the invalid’s visit of thanksgiving to the church in the quiet of the afternoon.

Let us hope that we shall some day have equally good films illustrating the Sacrament of Holy Order—and a good Catholic Marriage. [C.T.S. No. C.3, 1 reel, 10 minutes, for all ages.]

(B) FOR JUNIORS


These are truly films that teach. The pictures are very attractive in their simplicity and clearness, but there are far too few of them. Junior School Children like to follow a story step by step and they resent omissions. Nos. 447 and 448 need 18 more pictures. No. 361 should surely include a scene showing the solemn celebration of the Pasch by the Jews.

However, the most serious omission in non-Catholic films on the Bible is the lack of connection between the Old and New Testaments. As Father Van Zeller stresses so much in “From Creation to Christmas”: “Without Him (Christ) the Old Testament Books are a collection of isolated Documents; with Him they assume a unity; they have a purpose, they lead UP.” [V.I.S. Nos. 447, 448, 361. About 24 pictures each.]

English.—Find a Word, No 1. Eight Examples of How Water Moves. (Silent Film.)

The first of a series whose object is vocabulary work, this film is formed of eight shots of water in movement under various circumstances, from boiling in a pot to breaking on a pier. It is literally delightful, full of the delight felt by all in the beauty and music of moving waters. A silent film, its musical appeal is imaginative but very real; shown to a group of ten-year-old children, it provoked immediate response; they not only suggested and selected words of movement with unexpected nicety, but were ready to attempt short verses to re-create rhythms and sounds. A door was opened to literary appreciation.

It is admirably suited to classroom use; short, presenting the subjects without distraction or unnecessary prolongation, and with intervening spaces sufficient for assimilation and expectancy. But the teaching notes are pedestrian. [B.I.F. No. E.S. 40, 1 reel, 4 minutes, age 9-13.]
Dear Sir,

Since subscribing to your paper, I find that many films that I would have thoroughly enjoyed at the beginning of that period now leave me very dissatisfied, so it would appear that your efforts to help people to want better films are having their effect.

Anthony W. Somerville.

Dear Sir,

I have recently become aware of the Catholic Film News; and I am very enthusiastic about it. It is a really well written and constructively critical review and in addition presents the Catholic angle which to Catholics at least is indispensable.

Although I have been a keen student of the film art for a considerable number of years I have only struck one other review which treats the matter as seriously as Catholic Film News—that is the irregularly published Penguin Film Review.

Your magazine is doing a fine job and fulfilling a much wanted need. May your circulation increase with the years!

Peter R. C. Pozzoli.

Dear Sir,

At a recent meeting of "The Guild of the Sacred Heart", which distributes your publication, the Focus was discussed. A hope was expressed that those responsible for the magazine would produce a really first class periodical so that people would be attracted to buy; thus spreading Catholic views and influence. A member suggested that close-up photographs of film stars would make the magazine sell like "hot cakes". The psychology of this point was approved with an addition that articles, other than direct reviews, for instance on life at the studios would boost sales. The opinion of the meeting was that everything possible should be done to fight the anti-Catholic influence of the cinema, an attractive but dangerous entertainment.

M. G. P. Inkpen.

Dear Sir,

As a non-Catholic I place great faith in the Catholic Film News for guidance in films suitable for my daughter and have found it most reliable.

Arthur F. Painter.

Dear Sir,

While I congratulate you on the cover of Focus and the attempt, in these difficult days to widen the appeal of Catholic film criticism, I feel I must utter a protest that the name Catholic Film News has disappeared from your periodical. Surely the point of the change was to make people realise that you were not giving them news of Catholic films but Catholic news about films. Focus concentrates attention on the responsibility we have towards our people, but it must always remain Catholic film news.

Reader.
BOOK REVIEW

[It is proposed that this column be devoted to notices of books about the art of film. The bibliography of books of lasting value concerned with film is not very extensive, but there are some which no serious student of the cinema can afford to miss. We propose, therefore, to list from time to time, not only recent publications but also those works which may be regarded as, in their way, pertaining to the classics of the film art.]

Going to the Cinema, by Andrew Buchanan. (Phoenix House, 7s. 6d.)

This is one of a series of books intended for children. It will tell them about the Theatre, the Ballet, Radio, listening to Concerts, how to look at Pictures, and so on.

Andrew Buchanan is well known in the world of films as a writer, producer, critic, director and editor of more than usual competence. He is at present producing a film about the work of the Medical Missionaries of Mary and their work among the lepers which bids fair to mark a stepping-stone in the development of this kind of documentary.

He is devoted to the work of trying to raise the standard of film appreciation and criticism among the general public, being convinced that that is the only way in which the standard of films themselves can be successfully improved. With that aim we are in complete accord and therefore extend a hearty welcome to this book. It is simple and not too technical, and like all really good works for adolescents will appeal to the adults also.

It has chapters dealing with the history of films; how they are made; what is done by the various people concerned in the making of a film; information about non-theatrical and educational films; newsreels and documentaries. It has also a very valuable chapter on film criticism from which we quote the following: "Think for a moment of the many people visiting cinemas who don't know why they like or dislike a film... why a film is good or not so good. To know what to look for is proof that your critical powers are being used... We live in what is called the machine age, or more extravagantly, the atomic age, but whichever it is, considerably more attention is paid to material than to spiritual and aesthetic things, and a great many people declare that they have little or no time to devote to the arts—to the beautiful things in life... A person who has not developed a sense of beauty is most certainly only half alive, and similarly, a film-goer without that sense reduces his enjoyment of films by at least a half... How can we get more of the best kind of films? First of all by knowing what is the best, and then by choosing to see it whenever we get the chance".

With that we thoroughly agree for it is what we have been saying ourselves for a long time.

J. A. V. B.
"CHANCE plays an important rôle in the career of an actor," says Pierre Fresnay. It would seem that, but for a series of accidents, which, in the event we must say were fortunate, we should not have had the privilege of seeing his amazingly perfect performance in Monsieur Vincent. He tells how, at the time he was playing in London with his wife, Yvonne Printemps, in a piece called "Oh Mistress Mine", Louis Jouvet was engaged to play the part of Captain Boieldieu in La Grande Illusion. It was in 1936 and the abdication of Edward VIII caused the authorities to abandon "Oh Mistress Mine", owing to its curious likeness to the Windsor affair. At the same time Louis Jouvet found himself tied up with another successful play at the Comedie-Francaise, which made it necessary to find an alternative for his part in La Grande Illusion. This was taken over by Pierre Fresnay and became one of his outstanding successes.

In the same way, his eventual selection for the rôle of Vincent de Paul was due to a curious set of chances. Jean Anouilh, who was to write the brilliant dialogue for Monsieur Vincent, had, more than ten years ago, suggested the life of Vincent de Paul as a part for Fresnay, but nothing came of it. At the same time, Maurice Cloche, the director of Monsieur Vincent, unknown to Pierre Fresnay or Anouilh, was vainly trying to secure financial support for his film. When, at last, the financial arrangements were fixed, Léon Carré was looking for actors to play the principal parts. He came to the studios where Fresnay was actually making Le Visiteur. He was more than astonished to find that Fresnay and Anouilh had for so long a time toyed with the idea of filming Monsieur Vincent. Both actor and scenarist were, at the moment, tied up with other contracts, but in the most curious way both of them found themselves free to undertake their parts and, as Pierre Fresnay expresses it, "Monsieur Vincent, Jean Anouilh, Maurice Cloche and I were at length united. It is difficult not to believe that it was all destined so to be."

Great actors are divided into two categories: those who lose themselves in the characters they portray, and those who remain themselves no matter what part they play. Pierre Fresnay belongs to the better category. The parts he has played have nothing in common save the name of the actor. Captain Boieldieu in La Grande Illusion, the dandy in Je Suis Avec Toi, Gerard de Nerval in La Main du Diable, Detective Wens in Dernier des Six, the gangster in Fille de Diable; they are all great parts magnificently played and each one is different.

Pierre Fresnay, who is a Protestant, was at Cambridge before he went on the stage. He has never given up his passion for the stage, and like some of our English film actors, continues his connection with the theatre even while he is working at the studios. His creation of the title rôle in Monsieur Vincent earned him the Grand Prix at the Venice Film Festival and it is difficult to imagine an award more truly merited.

JOHN VINCENT.
CINE FILMS FOR HIRE
16 mm. SD. or ST.

Child of Bethlehem
Certain Nobleman
Prodigal Son
No Greater Power
Journey into Faith
Who is my Neighbour?
Man of Faith
A Woman to Remember
Blind Beggar
Wilderness, Pt. 1 and 2
Unfaithful Servant
Jairus' Daughter
We to Receive
Thy Will be Done
Go Forth
Springtime in the Holy Land
Zion's City
Passion to Ascension
Manger to Cross
Mountain Rhapsody
Vatican of Pius XII
Californian Catholic Missions
Jerusalem
Arabian Bazaar
Petra
Rome Symphony

The DAWN CATHEDRAL FILM series are the finest 16 mm. films for the Church anywhere in the world and they have a world-wide distribution amongst Catholics. No pains or prayers have been spared to secure the excellent quality of production and the wonderful sense of devotion. These films also make the ideal type of film strip with real life characters and they will bring to life the teaching of the Holy Scripture. The reason why these films are more reverend than any others is because they were made by a convinced Christian production unit.

CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY
(Affiliated to the Office Catholique Internationale du Cinema)

President:
His Eminence Cardinal Griffin, Archbishop of Westminster.

Aims and Objectives:
1. To encourage the development of Catholic criticism of films with the object of influencing, as far as possible, the type of films publicly exhibited.
2. To promote the organisation of discussion groups for the study of films.
3. To establish a library of films of Catholic interest.
4. To organise a Summer Film School.
5. To encourage the production of entertainment and documentary films calculated to demonstrate the Christian cultural heritage of Europe, in its arts, crafts, religious life, agriculture, architecture, etc.
6. To establish when and where possible, Cameo Repertory Cinemas where films of permanent interest and value may be seen.

Annual Membership: 10s., (which includes monthly copy of Focus).

Hon. Secretary:
REV. J. A. V. BURKE, Mayfield College, Tunbridge Wells.
Telephone: Mayfield 384.

Vol. I

FOCUS No. 3

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EDITORIAL

A PAPER

BY

A HEAD TEACHER

MOST Catholics, at least, have heard of The Workers' Charter; many have read it; some have studied and discussed it; those who know a good thing when they see it have proclaimed it a masterly analysis of the social problem and a constructive plan for its remedy; non-Catholics say that it is full of common sense; it has become so well known, such honest endeavours have been made to apply it to modern conditions, that the other papal papers tend to remain unread, unhonoured and unapplied. How many Catholics, for instance, know that a Pope has written a paper on films? I am sure, I am taking nobody's character away in saying that most Catholics, even Catholic students of the film, know nothing of what Pope Pius XI has said about the use and the misuse of films in his encyclical: Vigilanti Cura. A Catholic critic of some standing admitted recently that he was...“Quite unaware, my dear fellow, that His Holiness had written a paper on films.” Every week I sell a lot of Catholic papers, periodicals and Catholic Truth Society publications; the only pamphlet which refuses to sell is the one about films written by the late head teacher of the Catholic Church: Pope Pius XI.

Vigilanti Cura (dare I call it the Filmgoers’ Charter?) most certainly should be read by all who have the welfare of the Catholic Film Society at heart. The Office Catholique du Cinema, to which the Catholic Film Society in this country is affiliated, was organised by Canon Brohé with a view to studying and putting into practice the papal teaching on films.

I like to call Vigilanti Cura the Cinderella of the encyclicals. It is hidden away and sits alone and that is a pity; for if people would take the trouble to get to know it, they would find that it is full of ideas which if applied will help to elevate the cinema to conformity with the aims of Christian thought, art and culture.

Abie Levy met Rosemary Murphy in London. The consequence was that they wanted to get married. But they couldn't find a priest in London (! ! !). So as he was a Jew and she a Catholic they went through a form of marriage before a Protestant minister in England and later before a Jewish rabbi in New York. And the Catholic bishop said: "They must be out of their minds".

Recent publicity from Paramount begins with the remark: "Bing Crosby is really a nice fellow". Why does Bing Crosby Producers, Inc. have to dig out this moth-eaten play to make it into a film? Going My Way and The Bells of St. Mary's, whatever their limitations, were calculated to counteract the preconceived ideas of the ignorant that priests and nuns are monstrosities unrelated to normal life. Now we have a film about the Catholic laity, though clergy of three denominations are involved. In so far as it implies that when a Catholic and a non-Catholic are married according to civil law and going to have a baby, the Catholic authorities may convalidate the marriage, and that subsequently the families concerned and their respective clergy can meet in harmony without sacrificing principle, this is all to the good. The clergy (including the Protestant chaplain, who has apparently succeeded in keeping out of an English gaol in spite of having conducted a marriage service in a Register Office without the presence of the Registrar and without using the form prescribed by law) come out of the affair best. Except when the Orthodox rabbi suggests remarriage "according to her faith", they never speak out of character (though the Bishop's secretary seems unnecessarily flabbergasted by a case of Ne temere and Disparitas Cultus) and give the impression of being reasonable and intelligent men.

But there is much that is truly regrettable about this picture. For one thing it conveys the impression that religion is simply a matter of racial and national distinctions and traditions, about which the older generation make more fuss than they should, and that what really matters in life is singing "Too Ra Lura" to babies. I hardly think that this sentimental propaganda in favour of mixed marriages will be very welcome to the hierarchy of this country just now. Nor will the casual attitude to invalid marriage on the part of the Catholic contracting it. If it be argued that such an attitude is only too common in real life, then for the-
sake of balance let us, for a change, have a film which makes clear something else no less real. Feature films are not the place for dogmatic exposition. But again and again one does hear non-Catholics say something to this effect: "The religion of Catholics means more to them than ours does to us; there's more to it somehow." Can't we have a film calculated to interest such people, as well as pictures which cater for those to whom Catholicism is merely a more or less amiable but insignificant idiosyncrasy of the Irish? Q.


The critics, have, I feel, been unduly hard on this film. Had it been American, they would have accepted all the stock situations and characters and overworked dialogue with a shrug; because it is British, they seem to expect something better. In view of the fact that we are now, apparently, committed to box-office certainties in place of the problematical pieces which made Britain's reputation during the war and after, this is hardly fair.

Two soldiers returning to civvy-street join the Metropolitan police. They are soon embroiled in Soho's night-life racketeering. One of them falls by the way and joins the spivs; the other becomes a plainclothes man and hunts him down. Complications arise from the fact that the plainclothes man is engaged to the other's sister. She cuts the Gordian knot by marrying the boss-spiv. This releases the jealous passions of a cabaret singer who thereupon knifes the spiv. Fun is fast and furious until the cabaret singer jumps over the roof-top and unites the true lovers in an everlasting promenade; for the film ends with the trio marching happily into the audience.

**Night Beat** is one of those films about which one feels embarrassed, because, though it is full of holes, it will almost certainly catch the fancy of the impressionable public to the confusion of the critic. Direction is brisk enough but the editing is ragged. Christine Norden does everything one expects cabaret singers to do, and, as far as I am a judge, just as well. Anne Crawford as the sister, again has a part that is just not good enough for her talents. Ronald Howard shows promise of a well-directed future. Hector Ross might be a Dana Andrews, given the chance, and Maxwell Reed as the super-spiv, is another threat to the position of Stewart Granger.

I add my tribute to the performance of one whom Campbell Dixon informs us is named Mervyn Redwyn, for a perfect vignette as an old lag resenting the lack of finesse of the new recruits to the Police Force.

Through this quasi-documentary there blows something of the vigour of Byron's verses from which the title is taken:

Yet freedom, yet thy banner torn, but flying  
Streams like the thunderstorm against the wind.

Like a clean wind it thrills your mind and pushes you along on your way, full of admiration (perhaps for the first time) for those men and women who after the fall of France went underground, lived lives of utter self-abnegation, uncompromising obedience and courage, in order to ouwit the enemy and to impede the Nazi occupation.

Against the Wind, which comes from the Ealing Studio, home of many a good semi-documentary, is a dignified tribute to these patriots. The story has the flavour of authenticity, based as it is on the work of Elder Wills, British film art director who during the war became a lieutenant-colonel in charge of the camouflage department section of special services. The story—it centres around Fr. Philip, a Catholic priest (Robert Beatty) from Montreal; a young Scot (Gordon Jackson); a Belgian Belle (Simone Signoret); an adventurer with no country (Jack Warner); an escaped Jew (John Slater) and a patriot (Paul Dupuis) who goes over to the enemy for the sake of his country—is told excitingly, with Belgium and the country bordering France as the scene of action. These adventurers have their macabre jokes; but the life they are called to live is no joke . . . fear, suspense, danger, suspicion, that hunted feeling, are their constant companions; the screen reveals admirably these states of mind and with no false emphasis. You are impressed more by what is left unsaid than by what is said. I think this is particularly true in the portrayal of Fr. Philip. He is shown to be a man of courage and of fine feelings and a leader of men; but you infer that it is his priesthood which makes him what he is and sets him apart. When he refuses the suicide pill which is part of this squad's equipment, Julie (Giselle Preville) looks at the Chief and says quietly: "Fr. Philip will be brave enough without that." Catholics will be relieved to know that the priest in this picture has more than the Bing Crosby, good mixer, crooning type of priest.

There is not a dud actor in this film, not a dud sequence; but it was a mistake, I think, to introduce so much French dialogue in one particular sequence. The idea, I presume, was to give atmosphere and authenticity, which is all very well; but the mother tongue is good enough for most Britishers who have little (if any) French.

E.

It will be interesting to note the reception which the general public gives to this deliberate attempt to make them laugh. The critics have been superior, censorious andcondescending. The general public will probably be divided into two categories. Those who have read F. Anstey's humorous study of parental pomposity in the melting pot will doubtless cry out at the liberties Peter Ustinov has taken with an already sufficiently-stuffed museum piece. Those who come to the film armed with the consciousness of their ignorance will wonder what all the fuss is about.

They will need to be warned that Peter Ustinov is one of our Left Wing Bright Young Things; that he has here seized the opportunity to tilt at several of the symbols of those ideas which he regards as reactionary: pucka sahibs, the old school tie, public-school religion, the traditions of the regiment and all that, in fact, most of the things that W. S. Gilbert has already held up to our derision.

It is sadly overdone. Burlesque is tolerable for half an hour. Perhaps for an hour. But it takes a genius to keep it up for more than an hour and a half. "In keeping with the spirit of the story", we read in the Credit Notes, "exaggeration of characteristics is the keynote throughout the production". But that is just the point: the characteristics were not exaggerated in the story: they were changed.

The film had an excellent opportunity of presenting the predicament in which Paul Bultitude found himself when his insincerely expressed wish to change places with his schoolboy son was suddenly granted; but instead of being content with the psychological contretemps which this situation provides, the producer runs off after the chance to show how cleverly he can satyrise his grandfather's whiskers and Old Shako. On the whole, I think he fails.

That is not to say that I found the film without humour. I welcomed the attempt to make us laugh and, dutifully, I laughed. But not for long. The attempt was too self-conscious.

Anthony Newley as the boy and Roger Livesey as the man both work hard; Anthony with conspicuous success. Other players deserve mention too. James Robertson Justice for a towering performance as Dr. Grimstone and David Hutcheson as Paradine, the reprobate uncle who causes all the trouble. I would also like to pay tribute to a sincere performance by Petula Clark, the second she has recently given us. She is worth watching.

I think that most family parties would enjoy a visit to Vice Versa, but, as I say, it will be instructive to notice the overall reaction of the G. P.

Frank Bundy has been responsible for a large number of documentaries in his time and this film is cast in an unusual semi-documentary mould. (For those interested in the wheels within wheels I might add that it is a Sydney Box Production for Gainsborough, presented by J. Arthur Rank.) The subject is football pools, illustrated by four fictional episodes about different types of winners.

The first is a suburban family man (Jack Warner). The usual alignment of social distinctions is changed by the fact that his wife is played by Marjorie Fielding, who nevertheless remains her inconsequential stage self. As usual in British films this kind of family life is effectively portrayed.

The next episode might be described as a revue sketch with a macabre ending. The winner in this case is a henpecked clerk, whose wife is excellently played by Joan Young.

No. 3 seems intended for the edification of cynical persons who might suppose that the pools are run simply for profit. It is designed to illustrate the high degree of integrity, public spirit, care and perspicacity of those who promote them and the Awful Fate of those who attempt to cheat. A night-club singer is involved, which provides an opportunity for costume and behaviour which cannot be commended.

The fourth winner is a double bass player (Edward Rigby at his best, delightfully disillusioned and recalcitrant).

It has been suggested in the press that one joke in this picture is the coarsest ever to have passed the censor. But those unfamiliar with coarseness will miss the allusion.


This film is irritatingly boring at the start by reason of its conventional Hollywood movieness, but later compels sympathetic interest by certain touches of humanity. The story is of a Boston judge who gives his tiresome wife the slip, goes to California and more or less falls in love with a girl much younger than himself. Everyone in the film seems to take it for granted that the only natural course in the circumstances is that he and his wife should be divorced, regardless of her reluctance and dignified grief. (His absence had had a maturing and improving effect upon her.) And some of the audience made it clear that they considered the wife's distress to
be stupid, irrelevant obstructionism. But the eventual solution is on the lines of *Brief Encounter*.

This can well be described as the right solution for the wrong reasons, since there is no thought of marriage as essentially permanent or as involving any obligations which may not rightly be set aside in favour of an emotional counter-attraction. Yet the moral is not wholly wrong because, although no one reveals awareness of God’s commandments or Christian marriage, the deciding factor is an appreciation of the value of stability in life. And, after all, the Christian doctrine of marriage is not imposed by God arbitrarily; its purpose is to ensure family stability and security, especially for the ageing wife. To expect an adequate, sacramental conception of marriage in films would be to exhibit an optimism rarely justified. But *Indian Summer* comes down on the right side when it gently implies that those who, when not so young, feel disposed to throw over the traces, will find their true contentment rather in lying on the bed which they have made for themselves.


The Venice Film Festival last summer awarded the Grand Prix for film direction to H. G. Clouzot for his work in this film. It was awarded because of his power and originality as a director rather than because of the subject matter of the film. Clouzot has a flair for the gutter and the slum which he manifests with all the cynicism of a misanthrope, but his films have the merit of leaving us revolted at the life he shows us and unlikely to want to imitate or justify it.

*Quai Des Orfèvres* is a cheap and tawdry French version of our Scotland Yard. On Christmas Eve, Inspector Antoine (Louis Jouvet) finds himself called upon to solve the mystery surrounding the death of a rich and well-known voluptruous. Maurice and Jenny Martineau, music-hall artists are the suspects. They are eventually exonerated. In the process much sordid detail is unveiled. The methods of the French police leave us with little enthusiasm for the custodians of justice in the land of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

Jouvet is by turns phlegmatic, sarcastic and cruel as the Inspector, and builds up a convincing portrait of a tired and disillusioned policeman. Blier is the real hero of the film. His work as Martineau has an extraordinary sensitiveness. It is a film worth seeing but is suitable only for those of formed and balanced mind.

Distance does not always lend enchantment (in this case it does). What we like today we often loathe tomorrow, (not with regard to this film). Time has stripped the charm from many a face and many a film (not from the face of Mrs. Miniver). When, during the war, I saw Mrs. Miniver I thought it a charming, sincere piece of work: when the other day I saw it at The Empire, I found it as fresh and as charming as ever . . . in fact, more so. This film, made during the war, when everyone was feeling sorry for mother England, when even America was convinced that England had had it, could have been a very self-pitying, weepy-woey tale or a boastful bitter bluffing bit of propaganda; all praise to the producer and director it is nothing of the kind; it is strong, balanced, there is a certain nobility about it, I was not surprised to read that Mrs. Miniver did much to make Uncle Sam realise that the old British Bulldog was still alive and biting; but badly needed the help of all who cherish freedom.

Yes, there is much to admire in this film: its humanity, its nice blending of humour and pathos, its unaffected understatement, its correct sense of atmosphere, its splendid acting. I would not wish to rob charming Greer Garson (Mrs. Miniver) and handsome Walter Pidgeon (Clem Miniver) of any of their glory richly deserved; but I would like to call for three cheers for Dame May Whitty's portrayal of Lady Beldon, the bluff rugged old dame who behind a rough façade concealed a heart which was big, warm, loyal and most British.

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**READERSCOPE**

**CINEMA CLUBS**

Sir,

Mgr. Adamson's letter is gratifying and we are glad to know that our film reviews are of use to the Liverpool Youth Committee, but I should be happier if I knew more exactly why my recent article on this subject was considered unsatisfactory. It would also be helpful to know the reasons for Mary Field's failure to convince the committee.

I think two factors have constantly to be borne in mind when this subject is under discussion: (a) Cinema Clubs are an alternative to unsatisfactory home or locality conditions and are not so necessary where out-of-doors recreations are adequate; (b) the films provided at the Cinema Clubs are tending to provide the need for psychologically suitable films for children. The fact that, in the past, unsuitable films have been shown, does not militate against the excellent work which Miss Mary Field's organisation is doing to remedy this state of things.

The weak spot in the argument for Cinema Clubs, is, in my opinion, the difficulties inherent in controlling the enormous numbers of children who frequent the Saturday morning cinema.—V.
THE MEDICAL MISSIONARIES OF MARY

PEOPLE sometimes ask questions about Catholic Film Action. They do not realise that an important part of Catholic Film Action is to provide material with which the public is able to learn to form its own critical standards about the films it sees. Such people are more impressed by film-making than by talking about films. For the sake of these as well as for other, more thoughtful persons, we are glad to be able to tell you of a film that is, in every sense of the word, a piece of Catholic Action. This notwithstanding the fact that the maker of the film is a Quaker.

The Medical Missionaries of Mary are a Congregation of women founded in 1936 in response to the appeal of Pope Pius XI for new Institutes of Sisters for medical work in the missionary countries. They are ready to go to any mission and to take up any branch of medical work. Their special work hitherto has been among the leper colonies in Nigeria. They have followed the further appeal of Pope Pius XI that the power of the film should be used in order to teach and to spread the knowledge of the love of God by having a film made which deals with every aspect of their medical and missionary labours. This has been made as much with the intention of fostering vocations for this truly heroic work as for the more mundane but necessary purpose of collecting funds to ensure that their work may continue.

The Sisters have shown themselves in complete accord with the mind of the Church by having their film made by competent professional technicians. So often this kind of film is spoiled because it is the work of amateurs, who, however devout, lack the equipment and experience of the professional. In Andrew Buchanan, the Sisters have found a man who is not only expert in this field of documentary film-making, but also endowed with deep religious convictions which have enabled him to enter with the greatest possible sympathy into the altruistic spirit of those whose work for humanity his film portrays. No pains have been spared to make it fully authentic and in the sense of Grierson's famous definition, "the creative interpretation of actuality," it is a true documentary.

A more detailed review of the film will be given in next month's issue, together with the arrangements which the Catholic Film Society are making to exhibit this film. In the meantime you may tell your friends that here is a film with which the Catholic Film Society is proud to be connected, one which shows religious women following in a humble way Mary, who went forth on a gracious act of womanly charity to bring help to her aged cousin in her trial at maternity, not alone but carrying Christ with her. The Medical Missionary follows Mary's example in bringing medical aid to the sick and suffering and by alleviating their bodily misery, helping to prepare the way for the coming of Christ through the ministry of His priests. Here is the authentic story which Black Narcissus failed to tell.
FAN MAIL

By Michael James

CINEMA HAS CREATED A PUBLIC

FACTS and figures make dull reading and it is not the purpose of this article to attempt a detailed survey of the number of letters written in a week or a month or a year to any one particular star. However, the fact remains that the Cinema has created a public which is devoted to a remarkable degree to the object of its worship; in this instance, a film star. And it is worth considering very briefly the mind of this public and to attempt if possible to suggest some sort of answer to the problem.

The "fan" public is made up of children and young men and women, largely uncritical in their taste, and likely to be influenced by the sensational rather than the entirely truthful. Of any social entity it is possibly the most easily exploited.

In an age when moral and social values count for little, and a truly religious mind appears to be outmoded, it is not difficult to see how the purely superficial attractions of the Cinema, and it would be a commonplace to enumerate them, can cast an emotional spell that for millions is an answer to their dreams. Every man has his hero but the heroes of the Cinema are not of flesh and blood. The Screen at its worst is an elaborately conceived fantasy, carefully calculated to appease the sentiments of the million patrons for whom there is no standard but the standard of escape—escape from self and escape from life.

SACCHARINE AND SILVER LININGS

In a recent article David Lean put the matter in a nutshell: "The great mass of film audiences are adult, mentally or physically, and they are not very interested in adult problems. The greater proportion of filmgoers are under twenty-one, mentally and physically; they go to the movies as an escape from reality. The big movie executives know this, and have provided a liberal diet of Saccharine and Silver Linings, which has rewarded them with enormous profits. This great audience also likes to associate itself with the characters on the Screen; so the makers have provided characters which will satisfy this desire."

Lean goes on to analyse the reactions of an average couple when the big picture comes on the Screen. After the introduction of the female star "Mary makes a comment on her general appearance and her clothes in particular. What she is thinking, however, is whether this celluloid character is a worthy character for her to transfer herself to for the evening". And the same goes for B. N. too. Transfer herself: transfer himself. That is the point. Personal identification with another being whose virtues
we admire is known to all of us in one shape or another. But when the virtues are of celluloid it is a dangerous affair. Build a heaven for a penny, and a nightmare of consequences follow after.

INSPIRATION OF A FAN-LETTER

This transfer of self is the inspiration of a fan-letter. The majority of them are harmless enough in themselves. Requests for signed photographs, letters of admiration for this or that performance, letters of regret or disappointment for their hero’s latest rôle. Others are often pathetic. A last grasping for support in a world spinning away into space without apparent rhyme or reason. No one to love or sympathise, no one to learn from, obey. Except the shadow on the Screen. He or she will understand, will help. In such fond expectation the letters are written.

Most film companies have organised fan mail departments whose task it is to sort the thousands of letters received weekly from the fans. From here requests for photographs are answered and the photographs dispatched. Other letters are categorised and sent off to the stars themselves. There is reason to believe that a number of these letters are answered, and possibly sympathetically. But the fact remains that a shadow-relationship of this sort can never be fulfilled in any real and lasting sense. There must always be a certain pretence and the responsibility that the star has to bear cannot be discharged lightly.

ONLY ONE ADEQUATE ANSWER

It is a fantastic situation, for which there is only one adequate answer. Hundreds of thousands of letters are being written, and for no other reason than love of the drug itself. Until we can get our values straight, come to a true and balanced understanding of the meaning of life—the very danger of the drug will never become apparent. Until this happens there will always be, to quote David Lean again “Betty Grable, Tyrone Power, four bands and Technicolor” round the corner—and four bands and Technicolor mean four thousand letters to lend a bit of colour and excitement, a bit of a zip to the dull, drab world. Photographs of Grable, photographs of Power and a hundred heart-breaks, no doubt, to be confided in the shadow on the Screen. There is only one answer. And that not just round the corner, but here in the still centre of things. Only the hero is not simply a shadow, but very definitely of flesh and blood.

The celebrated novel of Cardinal Wiseman, Fabiola, is once again to be made into a film. The leading part is to be played by Michele Morgan and the first scenes are already being shot in Rome. Michele Morgan is the centre of a group of Italian and French actors among whom are Henri Vidal and Massimo Girotti.
I. ANNA KARENINA


In any art it is ideas which matter most; for what is art but a medium whereby artists share their ideas with the world? Tolstoy one of the world’s great literary artists, expresses many of his social and ethical ideas in his famous novel: Anna Karenina; it seems to me, therefore, that the first duty of a reviewer is to say whether he thinks that this film has captured the mind of Tolstoy’s novel. I hold that it has, and, with remarkable fidelity, too. Any Tom, Dick or Harry is able to make a film-story of a classic; only an artist can reproduce it. Sir Alexander Korda, a distinguished film-artist himself and the producer of this film, wisely gave the direction
to Julien Duvivier who is renowned for his artistic integrity, for his originality, for his sensitiveness of film-approach. Julien Duvivier plays no tricks with Tolstoy's work, he keeps to his job: he directs, he interprets, he makes this Russian literary masterpiece become a motion picture of fine poetic quality. I admire Duvivier's direction of this film very much indeed: it has the "feel" of truth; the director does not butt in, he does not force you to take sides, either with the beautiful, gay, charming Anna (Vivien Leigh) who lets her heart rule her head, or with Count Karenin, her husband (Ralph Richardson) a prig and a bit of a humbug, yet a man of certain fixed moral principles, to whom she is unfaithful, or with Vronsky (Kieron Moore) the dashing young guards officer who gives up his career for the price of her love and whose mistress she becomes.

The story is told with a firm measured pace; a pedestrian plot is raised to the pedestal of drama; and when at the end you hear the screech of the crashing train, when you see the beautiful Anna in her black dress lying dead across the snow clad railway lines, you are left to make your own reflections. The moral is clear; but it is not rammed down your throat; the true artist does not preach, he teaches; he does not force your will, he speaks to your heart, he opens your mind. Tolstoy taught that if the laws of God revealed by Christ are broken, terrible results follow. The normal, healthy, intelligent person who sees this film will be led to realise that adultery, contrary to the natural law and the positive law, inevitably destroys individual peace and happiness and disintegrates society.

This film has something to say and says it beautifully, and that (surely) is good art . . . the lovely flowing costumes designed by Cecil Beaton, the sets designed by Andre Andrejew, Henri Alekan's distinguished photography, all help to create atmosphere and to make places and players come alive. Vivien Leigh, with her grace, her charm, her beauty, her lovely diction, does reproduce Anna; Ralph Richardson gets right into the skin of the dry-as-dust, pedantic, ego-bound Karenin to whom Anna is unfaithful; Levine doesn't get much of a show, but he is authentic; Sally Howes makes a splendid Kitty; the different people in the restaurants, on the race course, in the military council chambers, in the salons and the theatres are real people and Tolstoy's people are most certainly real; he reminds me of Dickens.

Kieron Moore looks the part of Vronsky; he has a noble bearing; anyone can see that he has the physical and spiritual qualities of a great actor; but (in my opinion) he was miscast; and that is saying nothing against Kieron Moore.

This film is in harmony with Christian morality and it accords with the best standards of art.

E.
II. LEO TOLSTOY

SUPERFICiALLY there is a resemblance in the spiritual evolution of three apostles of non-violence—Gandhi, Tolstoy and Saint Francis of Assisi. All three when young achieved worldly popularity, all three renounced the material standards of the world, all three expressed their new-found ideals through poverty and asceticism. All three entered, at last, the Valley of the Shadow, the material for a magnificent series of three films is here. Each of the three lived a life of colour. The mise-en-scène of all three men was full of heraldic colour and glitter; the hills and medieval Umbrian villages, the gorgeous barbaric splendour of Russian nobles and the vast grey of Russian peasantry, the jungle-like beauty of India, the teeming millions in their bazaars and by their sacred rivers—what scenes for the film technique! The story of each man is full of dramatic contrast, of lyric intensities, of enormous inward struggle. Nothing is missed from the drama of the figures—the spoiled darling of Italian society becoming a bare-footed friar, carrying a song of joy to the common people (and to birds and beasts!); the brilliant young Russian noble becoming transformed into a brave soldier, a literary lion, and shaggy Russian peasant; the brilliant young Indian lawyer transformed into an Indian saint, worshipped by millions, and all three preached a gospel of non-violence. This unifying theme forms the basis of the plea for a series of three superb films.

But the resemblance between the three great men was in fact superficial. There is unity in the phrases used, but “non-violence” meant something radically different to each man. The nature of their “conversion” differed, and the quality and object of their faith differed enormously also. Saint Francis of Assisi stands vividly apart from Tolstoy and Gandhi by reason of his lyric joy, his unquestioning religious faith, his obedience to his Church, and his utter freedom from both the morbidities of the literary artist, and the devious and darkened ways of the political reformer. Tolstoy and Gandhi stand nearer to each other; both preached “non-violence” as a remedy for social ills, but with Tolstoy the motive of personal salvation was the main element, while with Gandhi the attainment of a political ideal loomed large.

THE BETTER WAY AND THE ONLY WAY

Yet undoubtedly the world has been deeply moved by the grandeur of Gandhi’s manner of life and the tragic martyrdom of his death. I have a feeling that Gandhi’s glory will throw a light back upon Tolstoy and the Russian, already the subject of a revived interest, may achieve greater significance as an apostle of non-violence. Indeed that is why I am anxious for Saint Francis of Assisi to form one of the trio, believing, as I do, that his was the

(Continued on page 64)
In the film, "Anna Karenina", makes a splendid Kitty. The lovely dresses for this film were designed by Cecil Beaton.
better way and the only way. Men will always read the story of Tolstoy and Gandhi with some awakening of the spirit, even with a vague misgiving, but the story of Saint Francis will always stir the heart as a song and a poem and a spring morning vibrant with the song of birds.

Leaving Saint Francis and Gandhi, let us look more closely at Tolstoy so that we may clearly see the divergencies between him and the other two.

Leo Tolstoy was born in 1828 of Count Nicholas Tolstoy and a lady who had been Princess Volkousky and who helped her husband by her wealth to rebuild the family fortunes. The boy Leo (youngest but one of four children) lost his mother when he was but three years of age, and his father died six years later. In the absence of parental love his natural sensitiveness was deepened and there was a taint of morbidity from the first. He came under the influence of Madame Jushkov, an aunt, whose moral standards were lax and typical of her class; as a student of a rich man's university he threw the reins on the neck of a libidinous desire and revelled in the pleasures offered by a decadent aristocracy. There was some idealisation of his licentiousness and license. He thought at times that he was pursuing (as he wrote) 'Her — the well-beloved'. But his soul was too finely wrought to be satisfied with this and a mood of ennui, satiation and self-disgust overcame him. He revolted against what passed for learning in his circle and was ever tentatively exploring new tracts of reading and thought. His imagination painted himself as a leader amongst men. In the mood he broke away and went to the wars. An easy victory by the Russian army was celebrated by gorgeous revelry and in disgust he asked to be transferred to Sebastopol where the Russian army was making heroic resistance. There a trait in his character emerged; he mingled with the common soldiers, served them devotedly and fought heroically. It was then that he discovered the power of his pen. His description of the scenes of the Sebastopol struggle created a furore in court and literary circles. The Tsar recalled him; the literary leaders lionised him.

**ST. FRANCIS AND TOLSTOY**

You see how his story and the story of Saint Francis began to diverge. Francis lived a gay life but there is no evidence that he lived a licentious one. True he too went to the wars in a mood of chivalry. It was as a soldier that he received the illumination which beat him to his knees. There was nothing morbid about his acceptance of the other claims of Christ—and he never wavered in his obedience to the Church. He wedded his Lady Poverty with a song and tramped barefooted through Umbria with a song. But this is anticipating Tolstoy's story.

Tolstoy began to disappoint the literary circle. He revealed
disconcerting unorthodoxy. He showed all embarrassing concern for the poor and the oppressed. Turgeniev raised the misgivings of the literary set: "I regret I cannot draw nearer to Tolstoy". The accession of Alexander II in 1855 had let loose winged ideologies. Everybody said (in effect) "We are all progressive now". The ominous word "Progress" became a catchword. "The People" was a phrase to be heard, though not yet feared and Tolstoy fell a prey to this recurrent illusion that the Golden Age can be ushered in by a ukase. The phrase "The People" had for him almost the content of a religious idea. He actually visited Italy and France to study educational systems. In this Mahatma Gandhi was like him. To both education and self-government (though this latter meant something different to Gandhi) were forces which moved open the portals to a new era. He anticipated the Emancipation Act by freeing the serfs on his estate and started a village school on ideal lines, he himself teaching drawing, singing and (significantly) Old Testament history. Government inspectors were impressed. The experiment was a failure. The school was closed and Tolstoy, sick in mind, went off for a "koumiss" cure. He returned to his estate, a craving to found a family seized him. He married (in 1862) Sophia, the second daughter of his friend Dr. Behrs. In all they had thirteen children, so that Tolstoy had ample material for educational experiment. Actually he tried few new ideas, except that he eliminated "punishment" and like Gandhi, taught the nobility of manual labour, he himself wielding the hammer and the sickle.

ANNA KARENINA UNMASKED THE POISON

But what most vividly differentiated Tolstoy was that he had the creative instinct of an artist. He could write great literature. His masterpiece "War and Peace" (1869) was a vast panoramic painting of human society as he saw it—the glittering and decadent nobility strutting against a background of the dumb millions of the People. Not with the cold dialectic of Karl Marx but with the glowing imagination of an artist he preached the Class War. "The People" he had affirmed, "are stronger, more independent, more just, more human and above all, more necessary than the upper class"—and did but echo Rousseau's "C'est de peuple qui compose le genre humain". If Karl Marx had possessed imagination and artistry and grace of mind (which he did not) he could have written "War and Peace".

Tolstoy's "Anna Karenina" (1873) has been popularised. Inevitably so, since it is a story of sex passion. But it unmasked the poison which was corrupting society. The tragedy of Anna and her lover Vronsky is stressed too much in the public mind. Of equal importance is the portrait of the happy married life of Kitty and Levine. We miss the point if we miss this and also Levine's final resolution to "live for himself and God". Afterwards, in the "Kreutzer Sonata", Tolstoy preached a spiritualised
type of marriage. This was after he had begotten thirteen children. Yet since works of art outlive reforming ideologies, history may yet regard Tolstoy’s books as his chief claim to the veneration of mankind.

**TOLSTOY’S MISTAKES**

But the greatest divergence from Saint Francis and in a lesser degree, from Gandhi, is the formulation of his religious belief; like many Russian reformers he identified a corrupt Church with the Church Christ died to found. To use an old idiom, he emptied out the baby with the bath water. With a naïveté astonishing in a man of his intellect (but remember he confessed he had always hated history) he rejected all the traditions and evolutionary life of “the Holy Catholic Church” with its sacraments and dogmas, and sought Jesus in the New Testament. But like so many humanitarians, what he did not like in that book he rejected as impure accretions. These accretions included the Incarnation, the Redemption on the Cross, the Resurrection and indeed I imagine all of the Apostle’s Creed. Like all naïve humanitarians he harped on the Sermon on the Mount to the exclusion of all else. Typically he abhorred the doctrine of Original Sin, after having so brilliantly described it in his novels. And all this was slowly worked out as a philosophic treatise. He was never driven to bitter tears like Peter, never stricken to his knees like Paul, never cried out for mercy on any cross like the crucified thief. He never passed through the typical Christian conversion like St. Francis of Assisi. He passionately worshipped no crucified Lord and never cried “God be merciful to me a sinner”. He died at last with no stigmata on hands and feet; his shaggy hair and crude garments were those of an old Russian peasant and not the holy habiliments of a Saint Francis. Nor indeed were they the loin cloth of Mahatma Gandhi who passed through a more definite spiritual experience even if it were watered down by eclecticism. But Tolstoy truly shared with Gandhi and Saint Francis a profound love of the common people and was loved by them. The other two became poor indeed. Tolstoy played at poverty, making over his estate to his wife and going on living as before—an austere life it is true. Yet since he loved much, much will be forgiven him. Gandhi died by the hand of forces he had stirred; Tolstoy may be contemplating the fruition of his theories in the Gestapo state of the Soviet Union. Non-violence in both cases bore fruit in horrible bloodshed.

But time may show that the doctrine of non-violence purified by the Christian spirit, has a significance for this distracted western world. These three men were apostles of a truth, and God makes use of great sincere men to His Glory. Tolstoy has deepened our view of the tormented human heart. For that let him be honoured. But he has made no difference to the inescapable fact that we still desperately need the sacrifice of Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of God, to whom be praise. 

SIDNEY F. WICKS.
A monthly series of film shows is being arranged to take place on Sundays at St. Peter's Hall, Cathedral Precincts, Westminster, S.W.1.

The first film to be shown will be Anthony Asquith's Uncensored, a story about the liberation movement in Belgium during the first world war, when the heroic efforts of the Jesuits were successful in printing La Libre Belgique against all the odds of the German occupation.

Sunday, March 14th, is the first date. For times and prices see the Catholic Press.

Other films to be shown will include the outstanding documentary film made by Andrew Buchanan for the Medical Missionaries of Mary, and a revival of The Song of Bernadette.

It is hoped to be able to organise a Summer School of Film to take place during the late summer. Particulars will be published as soon as they are available.

Lectures on the Responsibility of Catholics Towards the Cinema have been given by the Honorary Secretary of the Catholic Film Society to the Catholic Discussion Group at Tunbridge Wells and to the Union of Catholic Mothers at West Norwood.

Father Declan Flynn, O.F.M., has addressed the C.E.P.A. at Leigh-on-Sea on the subject of Catholic Film Action.

Father J. A. V. Burke talked to an audience composed of the Catholic Nurses Guild and the Upper Forms of the Convent of the Sacred Heart at Tunbridge Wells on the subject of Film Appreciation.

The Newman Circle at Oxford are to have a lecture on the work of the Catholic International Cinema Office. The speaker will be the Rev. J. A. V. Burke.

We are so much in need of laughter these days that news of film comedies in production is doubly welcome. Two Cities Films are making Woman Hater, a story about a European-born Hollywood star who, being cynical about men, accepts the hospitality of an English peer to write a book about her views. He is also a woman-hater. The end of the story will be obvious, but one can imagine considerable fun before the end comes! Edwige Feuilliere and Stewart Granger are the stars.
WE have had a number of enquiries about film-strips, and so have decided to devote our space in the present issue of Focus to this.

For those who have not seen one, it should be explained that a film-strip is a series of still pictures printed on a length of film and thrown on the screen by means of a specially designed projector. There are a great many makes of machine on the market, and particulars of several are given below.

The pictures can be made from photographs, prints, original drawings or diagrams, and lettering can be added. They are made up in three sizes, single frame (or ciné), double frame (or leica), and sometimes in square frames. These are passed through the projector by turning a knob or pressing a lever, and can be moved backwards and forwards at will. As many as 80 frames can be made up on a single strip, though the more usual number is 25—40; and only a few may be needed for one lesson. They can also be made up into separate slides.

Film-strips can be obtained from libraries, and they are more usually bought than hired; they can also be made up to order from one’s own pictures and material. Sources and information regarding this are also given below.

Film-strip projection is admirably suited to classroom use as it is handy, inexpensive and very simple to work, and can be carried out with little or no darkening of the room.

**FILM-STRIP PROJECTORS**


- Lamp Wattage: 250.
- Frame Size: Single, Double and Slides.
- Weight: 12—13 lbs.
- Price: £36 5s.
- Delivery: Immediate.

A.M.P. (Service Model).—Messrs. Advanced Mechanical Productions, Ltd., Chaucer Works, Beehive Lane, Ilford, Essex.

- Lamp Wattage: 250.
- Frame Size: Single, Double and Slides.
- Weight: 9 lbs. (excluding case).
- Price: £25.
- Delivery: Immediate.
Lamp Wattage: 100.
Frame Size: Single, Double and Slides.
Weight: 30 lbs., with case.
Price: £33.
Delivery: Immediate.

Lamp Wattage: 100.
Frame Size: Single, Double and Slides.
Weight: 16 lbs., plus case 10 lbs.
Price: £33.
Delivery: One month.

M.P.P. (Model 3).—Messrs. Micro Precision Products, Ltd., 145 London Road, Kingston-on-Thames, Surrey.
Lamp Wattage: 100.
Frame Size: Single, Double and Slides.
Weight: 11 lbs., (including case).
Price: £23 14s. 3d. (including screen).
Delivery: Four weeks.

Lamp Wattage: 250.
Frame Size: Single, Double and Slides.
Weight: 16 lbs. (including case).
Price: £29 2s. 6d.
Delivery: Immediate.

VIS.—Messrs. V.I.S. Projectors, 168a Battersea Bridge Road, London, S.W.11.
Lamp Wattage: 12 volt, 2 amp.
Frame Size: Single only.
Weight: 7 lbs.
Price: £12 12s.
Delivery: Three months.

DUFAY-CHROMEX. — Messrs. Dufay-Chromex, Ltd., 14 Cockspur Street, S.W.1.
Lamp Wattage: 250 or 100.
Frame Size: Single, Double Square and Slides.
Weight: 20½ lbs. (including case).
Price: £45 14s.
Delivery: Immediate.

Lamp Wattage: 250 or 200.
Frame Size: Single, Double and Slides.
Weight: 18 lbs. plus case 8 lbs.
Price: £37 2s. 6d.
Delivery: Immediate.

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SOME FILMS REVIEWED

NOTE: Category A indicates adults only; B, adults and adolescents; C, family audiences; D, particularly for children.
The figures refer to the pages on which the review appeared in the "Catholic Film News".

Bachelor Knight (C) (239) Man About the House (A) (235)
Bataille du Rail (A) (235) Monsieur Verdoux (A) (238)
Big Heart, The (C) (235) Mrs. Fritsherbert (B) (238)
Captain Boycott (C) (229) October Man, The (B) (229)
Deception (B) (235) Pursued (A) (239)
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BOOK REVIEWS

Films Since 1939. Dilys Powell. (British Council; 2s.)

Chestnuts In Her Lap. C. A. Lejeune. (Phoenix House, Ltd.; 10s. 6d.)

The more veteran readers of Catholic Film News will recall the pungent reviews that used to appear over the initial "Z" which served as a nom de film for Father Leo McGovern of the London Oratory. His untimely death deprived us of a valuable pen. He had a high standard of literary criticism, and, as a film reviewer, was an admirer of the ladies who write for The Observer and The Sunday Times. On one occasion he referred to himself as "burning my joss-sticks before the gynaecrats of the Sunday Press" and it is certain that he would have rejoiced to pay his tribute to the wit and wisdom and sound critical sense which distinguish these two books.

Though both are remarkable for a background of learning that is often lacking among reviewers of films, Miss Dilys Powell has, of the two, the greater claim to scholarship, as her works on archaeology bear witness. In the present volume, one of a series on The Arts in Britain, she gives us a survey of films in Britain during those years which have now come to be recognised as those which saw the establishment of the British film industry on a footing of international importance. She gives a brief account of virtually all the important films made during the war and immediately after. "Parallel with what is, I believe, a permanent orientation towards internationalism, there is a desire for solidity and truth, even in the sphere of entertainment". In view of the recent trend towards mere Box-Office servitude which is now discernible in British films, Miss Powell's final remark is something of a warning. "The serious British film has thus found an audience as well as a subject. If it preserves its newly-found standards of conception and technique, it will find not merely a national, but an international audience."

C. A. Lejeune would probably disown the label of learning, but her gift for the telling phrase and the grace of humour allied to a wide and deep reading and an abiding interest in the important things of life, give even her lightest reviews an atmosphere of permanence and value. For that reason, her collection of film reviews, gathered over the past ten years, is something more than a sentimental posy made for the sake of her admirers; it is a set of model essays in the art of film criticism. Her imitators have been numerous but none has ever quite captured that elusive quality which makes it a joy and a boon to read her remarks on the film of the week. Someone has said that "dullness is six out of the seven deadly sins of criticism; the seventh is insincerity". If this is true, then Miss Lejeune is well on the way to canonisation.

J. A. V. B.
Kieron Moore, who astonished the London theatre-goers with his performance in Sean O’Casey’s *Red Roses For Me*, was originally intended for a medical career, but the lure of the stage was too strong for him and he abandoned his books for the sake of the footlights. After a few small parts at the Gate Theatre, Dublin, he came to London, where his acting in the Casey play attracted the notice of the film studios. Edward Black cast him for the rôle of Salvatore in the British Lion film: *A Man About The House*. The critics, almost unanimously, acclaimed him and, indeed, it is hard to imagine a more difficult film début for a young Irish actor than that of the Neapolitan major-domo of Brett Young’s novel, in which he has to speak with an Italian accent throughout the film with sundry excursions into Italian itself, a feat which he carried out with distinction.

His next film was *Mine Own Executioner* in which, again, he won the applause of the critics for his intense and very moving study of an R.A.F. pilot who is suffering from a war-time neurosis. He managed to suggest, almost uncannily, the pent-up suffering and horror of the man who knows that he is not always accountable for his actions, a performance which a man of greater age and experience might well have envied.

His youth, however, was against him in the important production which was his next film venture. *Anna Karenina* is a Russian story which demands of the actors who portray its characters, a deep professional asceticism which only experience and long discipline can achieve. Ralph Richardson has it, so has Laurence Olivier, so has Frederic March, who played the part of Vronsky in the Garbo version of this film. It is no fault of Kieron Moore’s that he was badly cast in *Anna Karenina*, and he will give us many a portrait in coming years which will show that the critics were not wrong in hailing his performance in his earlier films. He will learn, I hope, that his Irish accent, delightful and valuable as it is to an actor, needs to be disciplined and controlled in order not to restrict the range of performances of which he is capable.

Kieron Moore married Christine Norden, another young player with great talent. It is gratifying to readers of this review that he chose to be married at the Church of the Assumption in Warwick Street, London, because it was there that he first came to offer his worship of God when he first arrived in London. May God bless his work.

*John Vincent.*
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EDITORIAL

BEES IN MY BONNET

IT is not possible (yet awhile) to answer all letters which come into our borrowed office (are you aware that "The Catholic Film Society" in this country has nowhere to lay its head?); there are two letters, however, which suggest editorial comments.

"READER" (see "Readerscope", February issue of Focus, page 47), says: "Focus concentrates attention on the responsibility we have towards our people, but it must always remain Catholic Film News."

Focus does not concentrate on the moral responsibilities of the Cinema; it will always provide Catholic Film News; but it is within its scope to focus attention, from time to time, on the power and responsibility of this modern pedlar of ideas. Those of us who are privileged to work for The Catholic Film Society are convinced that the Society will make big and important strides when every Catholic in the country realises the responsibility and possibilities of this great modern power. I believe that the long line of psychoanalytical films which pour from the studios is a proof that the Film World is searching for something. We have that something.

THE second letter which deserves an answer comes from Frank Kirby. (Please read his letter in this issue, page 80 before you read my answer.)

My dear Sir—That bee buzzing in your bonnet is as sweet music to my ears. The same sort of bee has been buzzing in my bonnet. I agree with all you say. We all do talk too much and maybe write too much. Believe me, The Catholic Film Society means to get going, we have been inhibited through lack of funds. Your idea is good and possible, and optimism rules the world. Anyway, it is better to have tried and failed, than never to have tried at all. To ask every Catholic interested in films to contribute one pound seems a bit steep, until of course, you remember you are merely asking for a penny a day for 240 days. Put that way, it sounds cheap and easy and possible.

But who is going to do the begging? In this issue am I expected to focus our readers' attention on One Penny a day for 240 days Fund?

Well, here goes! I declare the Fund open. When you have your pound, please send it to our Hon. Secretary.
FILM REVIEWS


This is "Q" speaking to you from the trade show of The Three Weird Sisters. It's a nice morning with a nip in the air, and as I stand in the vestibule I can see Mary Clare in a fur coat. Yes, and Edward Rigby is just coming down the stairs from the gallery. And there's the assistant director of music at British National Studios—someone has just gone up to him and said "Are you Bernard?" Everybody is saying "Awfully good" and they gave a round of applause at the end of the film.

What do I think about it? Not much, I am afraid. If you have outgrown novel-ettes, I shouldn't advise you to see it. There are moments of originality and humour, and, of course, a potboiling competence, but conventional shallowness of thought, and fumbling in the characterisation. Mary Clare is wasted in the crude part she has been given and Edward Rigby is dragged in unnecessarily and incongruously.

The scene is in Wales and there are enough Welsh names in the cast and the credits to ensure that this adaptation of the novel by Charlotte Armstrong is not completely phoney. But one comes away with the impression that the Welsh are nasty, Baptists are nasty, elderly women are nasty (and liable to be homicidal), mine owners are nasty, blind, deaf, crippled and fat people are nasty, half-wits are nasty—in fact practically everybody except nice young ladies from London, like Nova Pilbeam and, of course, the nice people who go to see the films the nice people at Elstree make.

Q.


The cinema trade papers pour out a daily, weekly and monthly cascade of cynically apt comments on the commercial value of films. Not for them the niceties of critical appreciation. You and I, dear reader, are dismissed as inconsequential nonentities. The one criterion of a "good" film is that it has "box-office appeal". Nevertheless, one can frequently detect beneath the cast-iron materialism of the showman, the critical contempt of one who has to sit through the screening of one elaborate fake after another. So the formula with which one trade paper lists the latest of Cecil B. DeMille's super-colossal screen-shakers: "Expertly confected hokum assured of gratifying grosses at British box-offices". Nothing I could think up about Unconquered could put it better than that.

DeMille cocks a snook at the critics by handing out with the credit notes at the Press Show three typescript sheets of "historically accurate questions and answers suggested by Cecil B. DeMille as a result of the research on his latest Technicolor motion picture Unconquered". Do you know which troops occupying Fort Pitt in 1763 wore green coats with red facings, or which troops wore red coats with blue facings? Did you know that George Washington's teacher was an indentured convict? No, neither did I. Do you care now that you know? No, neither do I. For all these interesting details would have some significance only if the characters we see on the screen had some claim to reality. Since they are all figments of the film-maker's imagination it would not matter to me if they wore busbies with Eton suits.
Why do the super-colossal-moguls make such a fuss about their frantic search for authenticity when it is clear that they do not care a fig for anything but sensationalism?

Nothing you have ever seen on the screen is missing from Unconquered. You can safely take your impressionable nephews and dithering aunts with the certainty that they will have their fill of romance and excitement. Indians in full war paint, fights to the death with fire-tipped arrows, torture scenes in which nobody gets hurt, miraculous escapes from certain death, Scots Wha Hae and bagpipes too, and, naturally, because this is a Cecil B. DeMille Picture, a girl having a bath, but all done in the most decorous manner.

The actors seem to enjoy themselves, even Gary Cooper, who is getting a little old for this kind of thing. Howard da Silva is a villain of the deepest dye; Boris Karloff beautifully painted as a Red Indian Chief; Cecil Kellaway fatuous as the comic relief, Paulette Goddard is rapidly reaching the top of my list as film's phoniest actress, but she looks lovely in foaming white lace petticoats, tied to the stake.

You will get your money's worth all right. I wish I could say that you won't.

V.


This series of film-magazine two reelers, in the manner of the March of Time series, is always interesting. No. 16 is, perhaps because of its title, treated in something less than the serious documentary manner we are accustomed to. It is so easy to be facetious about art by contrasting the sham and the real, the philistine and the cultured, the popular and the profound. When it comes to films, Robert Donat speaks on behalf of all well-wishers of the British cinema when he suggests that we may be in some danger of getting smug about British films and that we cannot afford to be.


Because a film is about morbid people, you cannot condemn it (if you wish to be fair) as a morbid film. If you are one of those people who want a laugh all the time, for the lord's sake keep away from Le Corbeau, for you will get no laughs (well, hardly any); but if you believe that Film is an art, if you accept the principle that it is part of the artist's job to reveal the whole of life; its sorrows as well as its joys; its darkness as well as its light; its sins as well as its virtues; its smiles as well as its tears, you will credit this film as having a certain brilliance.

The people you meet in this psychodetective-thriller are not nice people; they are frustrated or have a grudge against life, are soured or disappointed or sadistic, one of them destroys the peace of their small town by writing anonymous, threatening blackmailing letters signed: Le Corbeau (The Crow).

Who is writing these letters? You'd be surprised! I hope I shall give you no clue. As a detective story with a psychological twist it is cleverly contrived. The acting is brilliant, You will like Nicolas Hayers' photography and the sets by Andrejew. But you may wonder what it's all about. I imagine that the point of this film is to show us why apparently normal people behave abnormally, why people are cruel to others.

Most forms of cruelty, like many forms of illness are the attempts of those inwardly unhappy to compensate themselves, to establish themselves in the eyes of others. I have heard people affirm that French films fall down because they state a problem without giving a solution. This may or may not be true. I don't think it is. But I am supposed to be writing a review, not working up a debate. You want to know whether this is a film worth seeing; if so, why so; if not, why not. I do not recommend this film to the young or immature or to those who have no sympathy with fallen human nature or to those who are occupied with the workings of the subconscious mind and are themselves morbid or to those who make psychology a substitute for religion; but, it is my opinion that a robust Catholic will see written across the darkness of this film, the generous standing-invitation of the Divine Healer. . . . Come to Me, all ye that labour and are heavily burdened and I will refresh you.
The cause of morbid psychological ills is sin, original and actual; and the only adequate solution of psychological problems is the Grace of God through Jesus Christ, Our Lord, as St. Paul pointed out long ago.

E.


We are obviously intended to get excited about Michael Denison, an agreeable newcomer. But he seemed to me only a more sensitive version of Stewart Granger or David Farrar. More memorable are the performances of Mary Clare as a silly woman who greets the 1914 war with the remark "If only they had listened to my husband"—a corset salesman—"this wouldn't have happened", and Finlay Currie (he was the convict in Great Expectations) as an elderly doctor.

The story, based on the novel by Francis Brett Young, is really the life story of a doctor as told to his son. But the son is not really his son, but his brother's son by his own first wife. If you follow me. There are slight echoes of The Citadel in the film, the devoted-to-the-people doctor and the make-money doctor and so on. I am not quite clear whether the nasty doctor came to an untimely end or was saved by the skill of the nice doctor, but when the nice doctor married the wrong girl, she died quite soon and then he married the right one and lived happily ever after.

Q.


Why Dons and Deans and Archbishops and the Respectable Man in the street delight to read thrillers and murder stories; why children love ghost stories and nervous maidens indulge in eerie, creepy novels is a problem for the psychologist. My point is that this brand of fiction, gives entertainment to many innocent people and must be judged as such. Cry Wolf is meant to be an eerie film; but the way some critics have slashed it, you would suppose that it was meant to be a documentary. For what it is meant to be, for what it is meant to do, it is not at all bad; throughout the story the element of suspense is sustained and there is a surprise denouement. With better casting (it seems to me) there would have been a better sense of illusion. This is not Errol Flynn's type of film. Barbara Stanwyck, I could not help feeling, was giving a bold face to a part with which she had little sympathy. But it was a joy to watch the performance of that rising young star; Geraldine Brooks, who will climb the heights.

E.


The best thing about this beastly film is the Technicolor in which it is photographed. Some lovely scenes of Stafford under snow, rolling downland and beautiful horseflesh help to redeem it; but it is not a film that can be recommended. Not so much because of its subject matter which is murder and adultery; but because it does not seem to occur to the producers that such subjects, in order to be safely used as matter for a film must be shown to be anti-social and, to use an out of date word, sinful. The Commandments are not a list of arbitrarily imposed taboos; they are an outline of the rules necessary to be observed, if mankind is to survive. Blanche Fury is a woman, who, taken in by rich relations, marries one for convenience, has a love affair with another who fancies he is the rightful owner of the property, and connives at his crime of murder, denounces him to the police and dies in giving birth to his child.

The film wheedles our sympathy for this unprepossessing pair in the most blatant manner. Stewart Granger's fans will be annoyed to know that he dies on

This re-issue has historic value as a patriotic American musical of the war years, with the Goldwyn Girls mobilised. It does not ask to be taken seriously and occasionally pulls its own leg.

Those who have seen Danny Kaye at the Palladium recently applaud his capacity for holding the audience for a long time. In this film he does not get a real chance to do that. But within its rather rigid and slightly monotonous limitations (contrast the range of a comedian like Sid Field) the humour of this wholesome young man is effective, with its tongue twisting, jaw dislocation and general impression of muscular convulsion. He plays the part of a hypochondriac called up.

If you are easily pleased you should see this picture, but not if you are easily bored.

This has nothing to do with politics but is another essay on the lines of My Friend Flicka, with the ranch, the boy, the colt, the dog, etc. The boy is no heathen; he says his prayers with fervour, though his petitions end, somewhat unexpectedly, with "for Grandma's sake". All the same, there seems to have been some effort throughout to curb sentimentality.

There is a fight between a horse and a bear which presumably passes the censor because bears are not nice animals (in this film anyway) and the bear gets beaten. (It it faked, of course. Indeed the scenes involving animals were photographed under the supervision and with the approval of the American Humane Association. What society, if any, approved of the human beings involved is not stated.) This scene will distress the non-bloodthirsty section of the youngsters, but there is hardly any love interest to bore them, though an improbably glamorous lady trainer is occasionally courted by her masculine counterpart.

My most satisfactory memory of this rather commonplace picture is something not really belonging to cinema, because it would have been equally effective in a still—the perfect composition of a shot of dog, horse and mountain background.

Q.

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**SOME FILMS REVIEWED**

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READERSCOPE

To the Editor, Focus:
Dear Sir,

I am a Catholic, a traveller, and I read Focus. As a rule I do not read "Editorials", an omission shared in common with many who are neither Catholics, travellers, nor readers of your Review. But "A Paper by a Head Teacher" got me, so a bouquet for your caption. The thirty lines of Editorial under that heading in the March issue make it clear that (1) the Review, if it has—I think, with advantage—changed its name, is still "Catholic" as well as "Film"; (2) Pope Pius XI has written an Encyclical, "Vigilanti Cura", on the films; (3) all of us should try to secure the text and make a study of it. Underlying your excellent suggestion would seem to be two implicit assumptions. Firstly, and this concerns Catholic readers, it is envisaged that the C.T.S. arrangements in all their Churches are well and usefully organised. Visitors to one of the churches I know best would conclude any time during the past ten years that the C.T.S. wrote only on Anglican Orders, the Reformation, and Reunion. And our parish is miles away from any Catholic book-shop. It is definitely not easy for us in these circumstances to secure "Vigilanti Cura". Secondly, and here I have in mind non-Catholics. At least four such readers of Focus are known to me. They have not, to my knowledge, ever crossed the threshold of a Catholic church and they are not particularly keen on literature in the disguise of religious tracts. On behalf of Catholics like myself, far removed from an efficient C.T.S. centre, and the non-Catholics who read Focus but do not read religious pamphlets and publications, may I make two requests: (1) do not keep on referring to the Encyclical on the films without telling us something about it. There is a danger that we Catholics use these papal documents as a kind of anchor in argument, but what they anchor us to is only too often obscure. For instance: at a large public gathering a non-Catholic school-teacher asked me what was the Papal attitude to co-education. Seeing a priest acquaintance in the gathering we manoeuvred across the hall and popped the query to him: "Oh you must read 'Divini illius Magistri', the Encyclical of Pius XI on Education" was the answer we got. What the teacher in question wanted was a simple statement that co-education was censured by Pius XI because (a) of the false idea that man is meant for a purely natural life and is not affected by original sin; and (b) of a deplorable confusion of ideas which instead of seeing two sexes as complementary partners, sees them in all things equal and identical. The difference should be maintained during the years of formation. Something like that would have helped. Instead, in the middle of a crowded hall, we were told: read "Divini illius Magistri". Let us not be anchored to a catch phrase: "read 'Vigilanti Cura'".

(2) Is it possible for us who read Focus, whether Catholic or non-Catholic, C.T.S. patrons or not, to have the whole Encyclical "Vigilanti Cura" reprinted in sections, covering several issues, and when necessary with whatever explanations a non-Catholic reader particularly might need.

Then when we refer in conversation or argument to "Vigilanti Cura", we who have the Catholic film movement at heart will know to what we are anchored.

Focus would do us a great service.

With every good wish
Yours sincerely,
T. J. PURCELL.

Dear Rev. Father,

Congratulations on a fine first issue. Focus is at last putting Catholic views and news of films in an attractive and presentable manner comparable with other film periodicals. Focus can equal and even surpass these film periodicals in future years only if Catholics give Focus the very necessary backing and interest that it deserves.

Every Catholic household that visits the cinema should consider it a duty to invest in the monthly issue of Focus and keep it carefully for future reference when studying the local cinema programme of coming features.

Yours sincerely,

STAN. A. DENNIS.

Dear Sir,

An excellent form of Catholic Action is to leave pamphlets, and other Catholic literature, in trains, buses, and other
public places, in the hope that some storm-tossed soul outside the Church may gain benefit thereby.

An attractive cover is essential. So thank you, Sir, for adding Focus to my list of "Booklets-to-leave-in-the-train-when-I-have-read-them."

Thanks also to Carol Marsh for being such a charming Cover Personality. She'll help a lot.

And may I commend this practice to you, readers?

Yours faithfully in Christ,
R. H. EASTWEL.

Dear Sir,
I have pleasure in enclosing P.O. for six shillings, which I enclose unconditionally as an annual subscription to Focus.

May I take this opportunity of wishing Focus the success it deserves. I have just received the first copy, which I thought was very good indeed. From a printing angle also it is a very well turned out magazine. The only criticism I have to make is that some of the articles are a little "over the heads" of ordinary people, and also, although I realise you are dealing with a serious matter, I would implore you not to lose your sense of humour. Would it not be possible to include an article concerning the lighter side of the film industry?

With my best wishes to those responsible for Focus, I am,
MARIAN PERROTT.

Dear Sir,
Congratulations on Focus. The girls in the T.C.G. Section here just lap it up and it has now been introduced onto the paper stall at church. It's a big step up from the old C.F.N. but I think it will attract much more attention in its new form.

MARGARET MCLEAN.

Dear Editor,
We all talk too much. I am very interested in the work of the Catholic Film Society. The literary side is vitally important, I know, but I am impatient to see the technical side developed. Why not take immediate steps to set up a studio and make films. Lack of money, I suppose, is the snag. Why not open a fund as did the Catholics in France. There are about four million Catholics in England and Scotland. That would mean roughly a million adults. Half a million would be uninterested or apathetic but half would be keen. If every Catholic gave one pound, you would be well away. Then decide on a story that has strength and beauty: (Hugh Benson's novels or Canon Sheehan's any good?) then call a meeting of all Catholics: literary blokes and technicians, and then get going, properly.

Do you consider this suggestion practical or have I got a lot of bees buzzing in my bonnet?

FRANK KIRBY.

Dear Rev. Father,
I am not renewing my subscription, not because I do not fully appreciate the great and indeed most necessary work you are doing, but because my daughter Mary, who is a boarder at St. Anne's School, Southampton, is equally keen, and is obtaining and sending Focus to me each month from there. With seven children, I can't afford double subs., as I am sure you will appreciate!

The new format of Focus seems to me excellent. No doubt you will see that Film Reviews is always a prominent feature. To a Father it is particularly important to have your sound criticisms. I am especially glad that you take a broad view of your responsibilities. Frankly, I have heard too many of the Reverend clergy issue sweeping pulpit condemnations of films in general, when it is obvious that they never set foot inside a cinema. In a particularly bad case (not in Bournemouth) I approached the Rev. Father concerned and asked him how many films he had seen during the past year. He replied "One"—and hastened to add, somewhat lamely I thought, that he had been told this and that and therefore thought it well to "speak out".

I am a member of the C.S.G.'s National Executive and the local Chairman for Bournemouth. If I can be of any special assistance in consequence I will be glad to be so. Let me know, please, if you think I can.

More power to you—
Sincerely yours,
T. M. J. WARD.

Dear Sir,
May I suggest that a great improvement in your excellent little magazine would be to list the films reviewed in the "Contents" at the beginning.
So many people must take the magazine primarily for film reviews, which would be so much handier if such film reviews were indexed. It is wearisome to search through back numbers for a particular review.

H. Walter.

Dear Sir,

I am gathering a concensus of opinion from those people who have promised to take Focus regularly and although all feel that it supplies a great want, many think that it is a little too academic and not sufficiently illustrated.

With best wishes for its success,

Sincerely,

Jos. T. Campbell.

The Editor of Focus,

Dear Sir,

Thank you very much for a copy of your paper which was sent to me. I was very much interested to see it: and I do congratulate you on the absence of what one can only call parochialism, too often evident in Catholic undertakings of this kind. I do a certain amount of film work, and if I can ever be of service to the paper in any small way, I shall be grateful for the opportunity.

It was a little tactless to send me the February copy with a good old slating of Mark of Cain, of which I wrote the first script!! However, it was the first script: and quite unrecognisable in its final form, with the Victorianism to which your critic objected, overlaid, and only one proud line remaining of what I had written—and I agreed with all he, and a great many other critics had said; so my feelings remain unruffled. But in this connection, though I am glad enough not to have my name attached to that epic—don’t you think the poor script-writer might come in for a "credit" in your reviews? You give us the producer, the director and the players: but the writer is the man you are after—it is the content of the film which you mainly criticise, or which you are out to improve; and none of those people could open their mouths unless the writer gave them words to say. Producers and directors may muck the things about but they are, with a few honourable exceptions, incapable of changing Yes, to Oh yes, without the author by to "write in a line". The play’s the thing, as far as your publica-

CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY NEWS

The Catholic Institute of Film Education in Holland has produced, with characteristic Dutch enterprise, a series of pamphlets consisting of a Prospectus and Nine Lessons. The object is to provide a correspondence course in cinema criticism and technique for clergy, teachers, parents and all who have control of youth.

It is suggested that a similar course might be produced for this country. That is one of the results which may come out of the Summer School which we are about to organise.

A discussion on the subject of Religion and Film was held at the British Film Institute recently under the chairmanship of the Secretary, Mr. R. W. Dickinson, M.A. Andrew Buchanan, the Rev. Brian Hession, M.A. and Father J. A. V. Burke took part. A report of this will appear in the summer number of Sight and Sound, the B.F.I. quarterly.

Exasperating difficulties seem to dog our efforts to organise our film shows. Just when we thought that everything was lined up for a series of exhibitions starting with Uncensored, we discovered that the need of darkness had been overlooked by the person who agreed to rent us the hall! The main problem is to secure a hall that is centrally placed in London. We have every hope of solving this by next month.

They Came to Nigeria is the name of the film made by Andrew Buchanan for the Medical Missionaries of Mary. We shall review it next month. It is a first class piece of work with an excellent commentary spoken by Robert Speaight and music contributed by Westminster Cathedral Choir. We recommend it highly to parishes who are looking for a film for a special occasion. It couples first-class film work with a very moving account of what one religious order is doing for the relief of suffering and misery.
CHURCH OF ENGLAND FILMS COMMISSION

THE COMING OF THE LIGHT AND YOUR INHERITANCE

The Archbishop of Canterbury recently attended a private showing of two films, the first fruits of the efforts of the Church of England Films Commission to provide instructional films on topics of liturgical and historical interest to adult members of the Church of England.

A large gathering of clergy and laity interested in the possibilities of film in the teaching of religion gave the films a warm welcome. They were introduced by Canon G. D. Barker, Chairman of the Production Committee of the C. of E. Films Commission; Miss Mary Field, Gaumont-British Instructional Ltd., and the Rev. F. N. Davey, Editorial Secretary of S.P.C.K.

Canon Barker said that the purpose of films made for the Commission was to confirm the faith and strengthen the devotion of the Church of England. It would be easy to be critical if the films were compared with the average entertainment film, but these films were to be regarded as tools in the hands of the teacher, and were not intended to supersede the teacher.

Miss Mary Field said that in the early days of films, those that were too dull to be entertaining were called educational films. In a similar way, films that showed cathedrals and ruins were apt to be dubbed religious films. In both departments, it was now the case that one could be more explicit, since films were definitely limited in function and aimed at a precise and particular audience. Such films, religious and educational, were now to be judged on their own ground according to the purpose for which they were made. By this criterion, these two films were an important step in the history of the use of films by the Church.

The Rev. F. N. Davey pointed out that for the Eucharistic scenes in Your Inheritance two versions of the film had been made, since the diversity of practice tolerated in the Church of England made it likely that the "developed" ceremonial shown in the present version would not be acceptable to everybody.

The Coming of the Light, produced by the Rev. G. L. Wheeler, was directed by Mr. Andrew Buchanan. By means of topographical and diagrammatical sequences it illustrates the history of Christianity in this country from the earliest times down to the sixth century. It is planned as the first in a series of historical instructional films.

It is technically well done though one felt that some of the diagrammatical sections were unduly prolonged. A Catholic could find little to object to on the historical ground apart from the assumption that it told the story of the Church of England without any suggestion that there may have been a change of identity and belief since the Faith first came to this land. The terms, Canterbury Mission, Continental Mission and Celtic Church, are, from our point of view, somewhat question begging.

Nevertheless, this film could be used without qualms by Catholic classes since its very simplicity robs it of any tendentious tone.

Your Inheritance, produced under the supervision of the C. of E. Films Commission and directed by Mr. Christopher Radley, of Selwyn Films, is a slightly dramatised attempt to bring before the minds of adult churchgoers that what goes on inside the church cannot be separated from life outside and has some effect on the community and nation. We see a baptism, a confirmation class, a wedding, funeral, a celebration of the Eucharist. It is all carried out with the greatest reverence and dignity and is, technically, a beautiful film. It is marred, I think, by a too rapid ending where the tempo seems to have been spoilt in the cutting room.

A Catholic may, perhaps, be allowed, while offering sincere congratulations on these excellent films and returning thanks for the hospitality which enabled us to see them, a sense of sadness and compassion with the makers of these films, that they were unable to conceal within their body, differences which make any question of united effort on our part, so very unlikely on any but the most technical grounds.

We may also be allowed to point out that the statement made by Canon Barker, that these were the first religious teaching films made in this country is not quite accurate. The Catholic Film Society produced, before the war, films on the Sacraments and on Prayer, which are still doing service in our schools and convents.

F. B.
THE APOSTOLATE OF THE FILM

By Fr. V. A. Burke

HIS EMINENCE AND FILM ACTION

THE CARDINAL gave the word to go.

A telegram said "Shall be delighted if you can attend meeting Paris Monday". That was very interesting. But today was Thursday and my passport had expired a fortnight previously and the Home Office were being rather difficult about persons who had urgent reasons to go to the Continent.

This was in April last year. Two months earlier, we of the Catholic Film Society had been summoned to Archbishop's House. The wording of the invitation gave us no clue as to what we might expect to hear. What, in fact, happened, was that we were told that His Eminence wished for Action. He had heard about the re-organisation of the Catholic Film Society after its war-time suspension; he had given his approval to our work; he now wanted to know what we were doing.

It was not difficult to outline the main objectives of Catholic Film Action in this country; information of the public with regard to the films shown at the commercial cinemas; constructive film criticism; the organisation of persons in the industry who are Catholic and feel a sense of responsibility for the use of the powerful machine of which they are the attendants; study groups for the purpose of film appreciation; encouraging the use of films in education; encouraging the production of worth-while films, etc., etc. It was not difficult because it was all laid down in the forgotten mandate; Pope Pius XI's Encyclical on the Use of Films.

His Eminence bade us go forth in his name and with his authority to do what was necessary to bring Catholic influence to bear as efficiently as possible upon the powerful film machine.1

1 The Catholic Film Society was founded in 1934 by Father Ferdinand Valentine, O.P., for the purpose of making religious films. Catholic Film News began to appear in 1938. The war killed both enterprises, but the Film News, in a truncated form, resumed its existence in 1940. Since its resurrection last year, the Catholic Film Society has abandoned, for the time at least, the making of films as being secondary to the more important work of instruction of the public about the films that are shown in the commercial cinemas.

THE WHEELS START TURNING

Then the wheels started turning. First of all, the Catholic International Cinema Office (O.C.I.C. to you) renewed their urgent request that Catholic film interests in Britain should be fully and authoritatively represented on their councils. Two of our priest reviewers had been present in Rome in October 1946 at the first General Council meeting of the Catholic Cinema Office since the war. But since the Catholic Film Society was not officially authorised by the Hierarchy as yet, they were accorded the extraordinary status of corresponding members. It was made clear that the Catholic Cinema Office regarded it as imperative that Britain should be part of the O.C.I.C.

They were busy dealing with the preliminary work for the Catholic Film Congress to be held in Brussels in June 1947. When they heard of Cardinal Griffin's demarche, they sent a demand that a representative of the Catholic Film Society be present at their Council Meeting in Paris.

Dutifully I sent the documentation concerning the Cinema Office and the forthcoming Congress to His Eminence, not thinking for a moment that I should hear anything more until very much later. But The Cardinal believes in Catholic Action. And the imperative word is ACTION.

I BORROW THE FARE

Catholic organisations and their officials never have any money. That was the case with us. I borrowed the fare to Paris, after a prayer to the Patron Saint of Film technicians. I spent a lunatic 36 hours pursuing Passport Officials and persuading them of the necessity of my journey. I got The Cardinal's blessing. I sent a telegram to Paris begging someone to find a hole for me to sleep in. I missed the connection for Victoria and squandered my basic petrol for a month in a mad rush across country to Folkestone, only to find that the state of the harbour at Calais and the vagaries of the tide would delay the boat for three hours.

(Continued on page 86)
Top Left—After a private showing of "Monsieur Vincent", Sir Clarence Sadd, J.P., D.C.L., entertained the guests to lunch. Here you see Fr. Burke, Secretary of the Catholic Film Society, explaining the work of the O.C.I.C. to John Davis of the Rank Organisation and to M. Heret of the French Delegation.

Top Right—Here you see Sir Clarence Sadd (fourth from left) listening to His Eminence, Cardinal Griffin discussing with Mr. Rank the possibility of a film on The Passion.

Bottom — The Catholic International Film Congress held at Brussels last June was opened by Mgr. Cento, Papal Nuncio.
(Continued from page 83)

My first trip to the Continent since the war was made in the company of a large crowd of very vocal Frenchmen returning from the defeat of their XV at Twickenham. They sounded more like conquerors coming back with the spoils of battle, for they were liberally supplied with French wine and saucisson, whereas I had to wait four hours for a plate of railway soup.

At the Gare du Nord, when we arrived at 2 a.m., there was Monsieur Ruszkowski with a large placard to enable me to identify myself: a touching service of amity and welcome which, at that hour of the morning, I particularly appreciated.

At Paris a warm welcome was extended to the representative of the Catholic Film Society, Canon Brohee, President of the International Catholic Cinema Office was particularly gratified at the expedition manifested by His Eminence in acceding to the request for a British member at their deliberations.

INTERNATIONAL ENTHUSIASM

The days of conference passed in a haze of international enthusiasm. It was remarkable to note the apostolic fervour which animated each of the delegates present. One began to see the work of Film Action in its context of Catholic concern with the affairs of man.

It was during that week that I first became acquainted with Monsieur Vincent. I heard much talk about a film being made under the auspices of the Catholic International Cinema Office, and I feared the worst. But when I went to the studios at Buttes Chaumont and saw Pierre Fresnay, the very image of St. Vincent de Paul, in the act of bringing the Saint to life; when I saw the rushes of the as yet, unedited film; when I felt the enthusiasm of the players and the technicians and saw the care with which everything had been foreseen, I was reassured.
THE FUGITIVE


This is a difficult review for me to write for I have, apparently, to eat my own words. I went to see it with a strong anti-prejudice. I have seen it three times. I still consider that the reasons for my prejudice are valid but I also consider that its message is of such importance that the film should be seen by all, not once only, but several times; seen and pondered.

The reasons for my prejudice are two. First, it is impossible (I think) to translate the essence of Graham Greene's sensitive, nervous, psychological prose into the film medium; second, religious themes in films need to be treated with the utmost integrity if they are to avoid the pitfalls of sentimentality and extravagance. With regard to the first, the script-writer has wisely ignored the deeper implications of Graham Greene's novel and uses

The hunted priest comes to say Mass in a sick woman's house
A mother brings her baby to be baptised

The priest is led out to be shot
only the outline, a priest in a totalitarian country being hunted by the police, trying to escape but being brought back again by the need which the people have for his ministrations. With regard to the second, the film comes dangerously near the edge.

Forget that the film has anything to do with the novel, The Power and The Glory and you will be entertained, edified, elevated in mind and sent home with a sense of exaltation that the power of the priesthood is still God’s instrument for bringing grace and mercy to the souls of men; that no toil or torture, not even death or dishonour will prevent men offering themselves as victims that the glory of God may be manifested.

John Ford, with some of the screen’s masterpieces to his credit, has here achieved something that is less than his best but still very high in the order of poetic creation. He is more successful with his settings than with his players. His use of the Mexican scene, the wide, rugged, panorama, the desecrated church, the bright, hard, military barrack-square, the cloister-like arched side-walk of the market place, the joyous clamour of the Mexican Indians in festive mood, their dark forboding when the police take hostages, all these John Ford uses to build up a picture of great sensitivity and beauty. His use of light and shade, deliberately exaggerated, heighten the effects of drama and nervous tension.

The players are less satisfactory. Henry Fonda (not a Mexican type, but the Box-Office, apparently demanded a “name” to sell the film) is wooden and shallow where the character calls for the deep, nervously controlled pliability of the man who is afraid but is drawn by something greater than fear to risk his life and freedom. Dolores del Rio is beautiful, statuesque, animated, but always unreal. The Lieutenant of Police, played by Pedro Armendariz, is noisy and amateur. The Mexican players make beautiful frescoes in veiled, madonna-like processions, in grave, mourner-like groups at a death-bed, in shrieking hordes of licentious soldiery sacking the marketplace, but they never lose their automatic air of puppetry; one can almost see the strings dangling from the director’s fingers.

J. Carrol Naish alone brings his character to life; a loathsome picture of a Mexican police spy, cringing and hypocritical, dirty and dangerous.

It is a pity that an obviously new pocket stole and an almost new black suit should spoil the illusion of a man who has been on the run for five years.

R.K.O. Radio Pictures are to be congratulated for offering us this sincere portrayal of the difficulties under which the Church exists in some places today. Coming after Crossfire, another picture with a message to the Christian conscience, it is evidence that they are aware of their responsibility towards the cinema-going public.

V.
THE WORK OF MARY FIELD

By HUGH McKAY, O.F.M.

There are some 350 million Catholics in the world and some 300 million people in the world go to the Cinema each week. These astronomical figures may be of slight interest to the average man, but there are other statistics which should rivet the attention of every parent, teacher, social worker and priest. The Saturday Cinema Clubs in this country have a membership of over 400,000 children. Only a lunatic can fail to be interested in the psychological, social, cultural, and religious influences which the films inevitably have upon the impressionable minds of youngsters whose ages range from 7 to 14 years. It is not without significance that for some years past, Russia has had a steady output of children's films. The Chinese Government too have recently decided on an ambitious production programme which will consist mainly of educational films and on which it is prepared to spend about 50 million pounds.

It is a healthy sign that most of the people who are interested in the film industry of Britain, are increasingly aware of the social responsibility inseparable from the modern cinema. They realise that far too much money is spent on glossy trash of one kind or another. At the same time they feel that the half-informed negative criticism of the individual moraliser and reformer is no answer to the problem. It must be tackled with imagination and in a big way. Hence it is in this special work of catering for children's needs that the British film public should be most grateful to Miss Mary Field. She spoke on this subject at a Catholic Film week-end held at St. Antony's Hall, Forest Gate, E.7. This brief notice may serve to bring some of her main points to a wider audience and also introduce the special Christmas programme of children's films under review.

In 1944 Mr. J. Arthur Rank formed a special department of G.B. Instructional Ltd., for the sole purpose of producing films for children's entertainment. This new venture was placed under the direction of Miss Mary Field and an Advisory Council on Children's Entertainment was set up under the chairmanship of Lady Allen of Hurtwood in September 1944. This Advisory Council is made up of members who belong either to Governmental or other national bodies interested in how children spend their free time. It meets once a month to discuss ideas and scripts of suitable children's films. It is on a non-profit basis, but samples of this C.E.F. work are already showing in Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and have been included in experimental programmes in Norway, Czechoslovakia, France, Austria, Germany and Hong Kong. Experiments show that children prefer ordinary-looking boys and girls of their own age as actors rather than platinum blondes. Fun and slapstick comedy make a greater appeal than any amount of sentimentality. At the same time the C.E.F. does not make the mistake of giving the children only what they want. Indeed the whole purpose of education is surely to train us to want the right things spontaneously. The C.E.F. tries to give them the best they can accept and imperceptibly raise their taste and standards of comparison, so that in the long run they will be able to sort out the gold from the trash of the cinema productions. It is the positive approach of not less films, but more good films all round.

The specially selected film programme for the Christmas season at the Tatler Theatre is an illustration of the work of Mary Field and the C.E.F.

SQUIRREL WAR. This is a Technicolor cartoon in three instalments. It tells of the adventures of Rollo, the Red Squirrel and his friend Corky the toymaker against the machinations of Gringo the selfish Squirrel and his
accomplice, Brown Rat. It is meant for children only, but I am afraid I was laughing out loud and this rather amused the hard-boiled critics all round me!

THE BOY WHO STOPPED NIAGARA. Certificate: U. Running time: 33 minutes. Director: Leslie McFarlane. Produced by Canadian National Film Board for C.E.F. During a school-outing Tommy Twitchett has a dream in which he switches off Niagara Falls. There is a nation-wide search for the culprit and the excitement comes to an end only when Tommy wakes up again. This should appeal to the ten years old and onwards. There is plenty of obvious and slapstick humour which makes a child say: "Do it again, Daddy. Do it again!" Adults find it tiresome, but the children love it.

CIRCUS BOY. Certificate: U. Running time: 50 minutes. Producer: F. A. Hoare. Director: Cecil Musk. This has all those ingredients which will make a film a success with youngsters of all ages. It combines the two great themes of school-sports and circus. Michael the school champion diver and swimmer lets the side down at inter-school sports through a sudden attack of nervousness. During the holidays he spends his time with some circus friends of his mother's, learning to walk the tight-rope and take the part of a circus clown. All this time he is acquiring a new self-confidence which enables him to save the tight-rope act in a moment of crisis in front of the whole school. After that there is no doubt that Michael is going to win the swimming cup for the old school. The acting by the schoolboys, particularly that of James Kenny as Michael is very good.

MAGIC GLOBE. Certificate: U. Running time: 9 minutes. Producer and Director: Herbert Marshall. This is a Children's Travel Film. A little boy and girl from England are taken by Cinemagic to Czechoslovakia. There they see toy-makers, medieval castles, cities, schools, and folk festivals in the Tatra Mountains until the magic brings them home again. This is a first-class film. The photography is excellent and interest is kept up all the time. Audiences of any age will enjoy it.

TOPICAL PARS

Monsieur Vincent, the film about the life of St. Vincent de Paul, is breaking records in France. At the Trianon in Toulouse it has run for a month and been seen by 71,000 people. Previous record had been 12,000 people. This for a smallish provincial town is extraordinary. It is still drawing large crowds in Paris.

Two amusing reactions after seeing Monsieur Vincent. At the private showing in London attended by His Eminence Cardinal Griffin, a technician present who was by way of being a Communist intellectual, said: "It is the first really Communist film I have seen!" A French girl at a convent at which the C.F.S. Secretary gave a talk about films said, apropos Monsieur Vincent which she had seen in Paris during the Christmas holidays, "Yes, I liked it, but (with a deprecating little shrug) it is against the aristocrats!" Shades of the tumbrils!

Readers who live in or near to London will have an opportunity of seeing an exhibition of British film art now being held at the Victoria and Albert Museum. The exhibition continues until May 6th.

The eagerly awaited production of Hamlet will be shown in London in May. Their Majesties the King and Queen are to attend the Premiere, the first time they will have attended a Premiere that was not a Command Performance.

Sir Laurence Olivier has produced a version of the play which he claims is entirely cinematic. Unfettered by the demands of the stage he has made the film in the way he believes Shakespeare might have done had he been a modern screen-play writer instead of a Tudor playwright. It is certain that Sir Laurence will give us a beautiful and intelligent piece of work, no matter what the philistines may have to say about it.

COVER PERSONALITY—ERRATA

The name of Christine Norden was inadvertently given last month as the wife of Kieron Moore. His wife, of course, Barbara White. Thinking of one thing and writing another! Sorry!

J. V.
PARADOXES OF THE FRENCH CINEMA

(From our Special Correspondent in Paris)

By ANDRE RUSZKOWSKI

EVEN in the realm of the Cinema France provides some astonishing contrasts. Such an article as this is too short to analyse the reasons in detail but it will not be without interest to indicate certain points which give French films their characteristic originality, their rare qualities, even though, at the same time they are often dangerous in content.

A PROSPEROUS INDUSTRY IN RUINS

At first glance the foreign visitor will be struck by the artistic and technical richness of the films that are showing in Paris at present: Le Silence est d'Or, which gained for its producer the First Prize at the recent Brussels Festival, and for Maurice Chevalier, in a rôle that is new to him, the award at Locarno for the best male performance; Le Diable au Corps, the performance of whose principal actor, Gerard Philippe, was judged by the Brussels jury as the best, and into which C. Autant-Lara has poured all the resources of a fine and subtle art, placing them at the service of a subject that is morally unacceptable: Quai des Orfeuves, another example of the technical virtuosity of a director, Henri Georges Clouzot, who deserves a more interesting subject, but which suffices to enable him to place the film among the exceptionally good, aided in this by the inimitable Jouvet; (the Grand Prix carried away by this team at Venice was amply deserved). Monsieur Vincent, which was decorated even more indisputably at the same Festival for the unforgettable creation of Pierre Fresnay as St. Vincent de Paul, revealed unsuspected talents on the part of its director, Maurice Cloche, even though he had the benefit of so magnificent a subject. The detached simplicity with which Jacques Becker recounted the story of two Parisian artisans rendered Antoine et Antoinette uncontestably the best film shown at the Cannes Festival, a triumph again for the director of the film Le Maudits, the second great film coming from the maker of La Bataille du Rail was declared the best film of adventure at Cannes. It is more, it is a deeply felt human document, dealing as it does with one of the most painful of human problems and possessing considerable propaganda value; Les Jeux Sont Faits, even though its impossible subject deprived it of any Festival award (that is the fault of its author, Jean-Paul Sartre) nevertheless is proof of the outstanding technical ability of Jean Delanoy and witness to a courage that is not so common among film producers.

To these eight important films one may add some average films such as Les Freres Bouquinquint by Louis Daquin; Paris 1900, that curious cavalcade of the end of an epoch, skilfully directed by Nicole Vedres and crowned by the French critics with the Louis Deluc Prize; Café du Cadran, its close rival for festival honours and others.

The French cinema-going public have voted definitely in favour of their national productions. Except for a few rare examples in the case of American, British and Italian films, foreign productions do not attract a tithe of the interest shown in the films of France.

And here is the paradox. At the very moment when the films being shown in Paris are carrying away the majority of the awards of the International Film Festivals, their quality challenging all comers, the public according its favours, the producers are practically obliged to stop work altogether.

An industry cannot be expected to pay out in production costs sums which exceed the total takings at the box-office. Yet, during the past year, this has been the state of things and the situation is deteriorating and the producers are at the end of their tether.

What is the cause? Partly the general economic situation, partly the difficulties of export, but mainly a badly administered financial system and a lack of efficiency in the control of distribution. However, the industry itself in co-operation with the studio technicians is already
working out a scheme to save the situation. The Government, too, has appointed a Commission composed of members of the various Ministries, charged with the task of suggesting measures which will remedy the present absurd state of things.

A DESTROYER WHO CONSTRUCTS

From the point of view of morals and ideology, the French cinema industry probably allows more liberty to its artists, especially the director, than does any other national industry.

As a result, each one of them gives free rein to his personal opinions, expressing by means of his work, a more or less marked ideology, a conception of life that may be termed Parnassian. Each one is aware of the variety of opinions, philosophical, political, social and cultural which are current in a country that is ever in the vanguard of ideas, ever looking forward to the revolution that is to come.

Naturally, such artistic creators have the tendency to go contrary to the established order, to help to bring it down. Sometimes, having given up hope of finding in this world either love or justice, they demolish the established order without putting anything back in its place, ignorant of the fact that there is something better.

Of such kind are the dark, despairing, pessimistic films like Les Portes de la Nuit, with its gallery of abject characters where there is found nothing to recompense the wretched condition of humanity.

It is, however, remarkable that, even in this negative, empty condition of things, a French director will often give proof of the greatest refinement, where one finds a reflection of that Christian civilisation of which it is the product. Le Diable au Corps gives us a characteristic example. Think of the result if this unpleasant subject, already sufficiently objectionable in the book by Radiguet, had been handled by some vulgar-minded Squeers! Actually, Claude Autant-Lara and his scriptwriters, Pierre Bost and Jean Aurenche, have taken the greatest pains to translate with discretion and poetic insight, to "dematerialise" as far as possible, this sad story of the evolution of two adolescents.

Here again you have a typical French paradox: a sensual infatuation expressed in the most transcendental terms. One feels oneself, as it were, ill at ease when faced with such an anomaly. Is not such a film likely to be even more a source of embarrassment to the consciences of the ill-informed? Personally, I think it is, and that is why I am on the side of those who list this film as unsuitable for the general public.

It is odd, when one comes to consider the numerous communist influences within the milieu of the French film industry, that there is almost a total absence of films presenting the ideal order to which the Communist Party is, presumably, tending. One finds no positively communist propaganda. In contradiction to the Soviet cinema which glorifies the established order and wills that everyone should know about it, the French communist cineastes (whose number seems, elsewhere, to be diminishing every day) content themselves with giving an exaggerated caricature of the bourgeois social order, as if they wished first of all to destroy within the heart of Western man all sense of confidence; to disarm him morally.

There are other producers, like Sartre, who appear to use the cinema in order to propagate some pseudo-system of philosophy of their own. In the case of Rene Clair, one detects, under the smiling and soft exterior, an attitude of extreme bitterness towards life in general.

Another disturbing feature is the excessive importance attached by some producers to the question of technique. For a Clouzot, a Becker and others, it does not seem to matter what subject they make use of, what the moral or human values of such a subject may be so long as it can be made to serve as a pretext for displaying the brilliance of their technique. Is there not a danger that the cinema, by abandoning the value of content for the advantage of form in this way may risk wearying its audience and exhausting its sensibilities?

A final contrast: in the midst of this desultory situation there arises the phenomenon of Monsieur Vincent, about which foreign critics are already saying that it is, from the point of view of personal psychology, the first authentically religious film. In its bungling but none the less sincere fashion, the problem of the Christian conscience is also posed by the frankly "populist" film Les Freres Bouquiquant. Yes, there is no question; France is still able to make the world take notice.
AIDS TO SCIENCE TEACHING
By Our Educational Panel

AGENCIES:
G.B.I. Film Library, Aintree Road, Perivale, Middlesex.
Films—hire: 6/- a reel, 2/- extra day.
Film-strips—sale: 7/3 each.
(V.I.S. Information Service, 163a Battersea Bridge Road, S.W.11.
Film-strips—sale: 3/6.
Unicorn Head, 177 The Vale, Acton, W.3.
Film-strips—sale: 10/-.
Central Film Library, Imperial Institute, Kensington, S.W.7.
Film loaned free.

FILM-STRIPS
FRUITS AND FLOWERS OF THE HEDGEROW

Series 1.—Out of 37 frames, the first 9 are devoted to an elucidation of floral structure and the structure of fruits and seeds by means of clear diagrams. These introductory frames are useful for revision but are rather dull for the uninitiated. Then follow some very good photographs of hedgerow plants. The flowers are shown first, then the fruits. They give a good idea of the appearance of the plant in its natural habitat but the backgrounds are sometimes confusing and it is difficult to distinguish the plant in question.

Series 2.—A number of trees and shrubs with their flowers and fruits are shown, as well as herbaceous plants of the hedgerow. The photography is excellent, especially of the Cuckoo Pint to which 3 frames are devoted. Since Bryophytes are included, some idea of their size, relative to the Angiosperms, should be given.
(Daily Mail. Photographs and script by R. F. Cosser, F.Z.S. Secondary Grammar School, all ages.)

"SEE HOW THEY CLIMB"

This strip should prove excellent for revision work in a School Certificate Class.
A great variety of climbing plants is shown and in most cases, the morphology of the climbing organ is made clear by a close-up photograph against a plain background.
(Daily Mail. Secondary Grammar School, 12 years onwards.)

THE DANDELION

This is a particularly useful film-strip as showing the complete life-history of a common plant.
The photography is very good and shows clearly the appearance of the plant at all stages of development. Close-ups of the inflorescence open and closed are given and the composite nature of the so-called "flower" is made clear by a section of the capitulum and an enlarged photograph of one floret. The frames of fruit formation and dispersal are really beautiful.
(Daily Mail. Senior Schools and Secondary Grammar Schools, all ages up to 15.)

BRITISH SPIDERS
Spiders and their webs have an interest for every child.
This film-strip will do much to stimulate intelligent observation of these little creatures.
The photography is excellent.

TREES—in 3 series
These 3 film-strips form an excellent teaching series and will be of great assistance both for Nature Study and more systematic work in Biology.
The series are well arranged, not more than 5 trees being dealt with in any one strip and these are viewed from every aspect. The winter and summer appearance of the whole tree are shown, then leaf form, flower and fruit are illustrated by close-ups.
Series 1.—Is the most useful of the three because it treats of the four commonest and best known of British trees—Oak, Ash, Beech and Horse Chestnut.
Some Oaks of historic interest are shown.
Series 2.—Has special interest for London children as showing the familiar Plane. Hornbeam, Sycamore, Maple and Sweet Chestnut are also dealt with.
Series 3.—Has some very attractive photographs of Silver Birch and Scot's
Pine. Two Poplar species and the Yew are also included. (Daily Mail. Photography by Eric Hosking, F.R.P.S. Suitable for all ages.)

**PAPER MAKING—2 strips**
This is of general interest, giving some idea of the science on which paper making depends. The first strip shows the machinery used in the different processes through which the raw materials must pass and the second strip brings out well the part played by the individual craftsman in the making of high grade paper. (Daily Mail. Secondary School, all ages.)

**THE ZOO**
This depicts a visit to the Zoo giving photographs of all its varied inhabitants and so will be a favourite with children of all ages. (V.I.S. No. 123.)

**EXPANSION**
This strip is disappointing. The diagrams are less clear than those a teacher could readily prepare on the blackboard, and the usual text book photographs showing thermostats, would serve as well as the frames showing these in the strip. (Unicorn Head.)

**FILMS**

**ASTACUS**—(Sound film)
Teachers of H.S.C. Biology will find this a most useful film. The main theme is the structure of the appendages. The homology of these is well emphasised while their diverse modifications are clearly illustrated and related to function. Incidentally, a good deal is learnt of the general structure of the Crayfish and the working of the gastric mill is excellently shown.
(G.B.I. No. 798F. 2 reels. For Grammar School post-matriculation.)

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RABBIT**—(Sound film)
This is an outstandingly good film with splendid photography. In a series of dissections one sees the development of the foetus in situ and the way in which it is protected and nourished. The growth of the foetal membranes and the functions of the placenta and umbilical cord are particularly well shown. A useful introductory part, tracing development in lower animals such as Sea Urchin, Trout, Frog and Chick, places the Mammal in its true perspective and emphasises the advantages of internal development.
(Central Film Library. U.K. 183. 4 reels. Grammar School 15+.)

**WATER CYCLE**—(Sound film)
This film needs adequate teaching preparation. Beautiful shots of cloud effects and natural expanses of water accompany clear explanations of evaporation and condensation. It seems a pity that the freezing of a pond is introduced; this detracts from the development of the main theme and is not fully explained. (Central Film Library. U.K. 745. 1 reel. Of limited use for scholars of secondary school age.)

**SIMPLE MAGNETISM AND ELECTRICITY**—(Sound film)
This is an excellent instructional film. Simple experiments with magnets are shown and described with great clearness and the earth’s magnetic field and lines of force are well illustrated. The connection between magnetism and electricity is well brought out. All this is then used to explain the principles which underlie the working of the telephone. The energy transformations from sound waves to electric impulses, from electricity to magnetism and back to sound are explained and the relevant parts of the telephone clearly displayed while this is done.
(Central Film Library. U.K. 651. 2 reels. Suitable for children of Secondary school age and of general interest to telephone users.)

**THE STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN**—(Sound film)
The fascination which the night sky holds for all, is exploited to the full in this film.
Interest is aroused by the vivid story of the discovery, an accidental one, of the result of combining lenses to form a simple telescope. The marvels of the modern instrument are then displayed and it is used to unfold the wonders of the heavens, hidden from the patient watchers of the past. The film ends by showing nebulae beyond the Milky Way, thus emphasising the immensity of distance and the long history of God’s universe. It should inspire all with fresh reverence for Him Whom “the heavens proclaim with ceaseless devotion”.
(Dawn Trust. No. LS.20. 2 reels. For Secondary schools, clubs and interested adults.)
BOOK REVIEWS

Michael Balcon's 25 Years in Films. (World Film Publications, Ltd., London, 1947, 12/6.)

Invitation To The Film. Liam O'Laoghair. (The Kerryman, Ltd., Tralee, 1946, 7/6.)


In Timon of Athens, Shakespeare tells how flattering friends do fawn when fortune smiles. In the film world in which, human nature being what it is, jealousies and selfishness play a large part, it is a great tribute to the qualities of a man when friends turn up from all quarters to do him honour. Sir Michael Balcon well deserves the Knighthood with which His Majesty the King has marked his quarter century of service to the Seventh Art in Britain. More pleasing still is to note the spontaneous expressions of joy which come to Sir Michael from every side of a large industry. This book is a tribute paid by actors, directors and critics to one who has done more than any other one man to put British films in the front row of artistic achievement. Campbell Dixon, Michael Redgrave, Francoise Rosay and Cavalcanti contribute their share to the paean of praise. J. Arthur Rank writes a Foreword and Michael Balcon himself has something to say about the many stars who have passed through his hands.

It is like a history of the film itself merely to mention the names of his films: The Lodger, Easy Virtue, Journey's End, Sunshine Susie, The Good Companions, Man of Aran, Rhodes of Africa, 39 Steps. These are some of the 300 films which mark his passage through the years. The Captive Heart, San Demetrio, The Overlanders, Frieda and It Always Rains on Sunday are titles which show that his touch has not faltered.

The names of his stars, from Ivor Novello and Madeleine Carroll to Googie Withers and Tom Walls are testimony that cinema net is very wide.

We Catholics can be grateful to Sir Michael for the trouble he has taken in Frieda and Against The Wind to see that our idea of priests has not been travestied.

Ireland is a country with a wealth of natural background for films, a bottomless bag of talent for players and a special line in writers. It is sad to relate that, in spite of this embarras de richesse, the country has not yet produced any first-class films. Liam O'Laoghair, in this very informal and friendly book, tells us some of the reasons. Though it was published two years ago, I mention it here because it makes an ideal introduction to the art and craft of film. It has a special appeal for Irishmen but it also has something of value for other Catholics who are beginning to realise the importance of the cinema, about which Pope Pius XI said: "There does not exist today a means of influencing the masses more potent. . . ."

Frank Launder contributes a Foreword and there are chapters dealing with craftsmanship, documentary, educational, amateur and the historical aspects of the subject.

Penguin Film Reviews have reached a very high standard of critical excellence. The latest number is no exception. There is a particularly interesting article by Jan Read about the technique of Hollywood box-office tactics. Fritz Lang deals with the problems of the endings of films: Happy or Otherwise? There are other articles on Music and Film Libraries. An excellent collection of stills completes an unusually satisfying number.

J. A. V. B.
COVER PERSONALITY

KATHLEEN RYAN

The best film players come from the stage, and Ireland has given her share of first-rate actors. Barry Fitzgerald, Arthur Field, Una O'Connor, Maire O'Neill and Sara Allgood, to mention only the most obvious ones. Now we have Kathleen Ryan, chosen from the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, to play the part of the girl in Carol Reed's outstanding poem of the screen, Odd Man Out. The success she made of that part earned her another role as an Irish girl in Captain Boycott. Now she is breaking new ground in the name-part of George Moore's novel Esther Waters which is being filmed at Pinewood with Cyril Cusack, another Abbey player, in the cast.

Kathleen Ryan is one of the intelligent people in films. She has definite ideas about the relative merits of screen and stage and can hold her own in any discussion on the vexed question of film art. She had early ambitions on the stage but her parents insisted on academic distinctions first. So after her schooling at the Sacred Heart Convent at Mount Anvill, Dublin, she travelled on the Continent, learned languages and, having studied economics at Dublin University, won a degree in commerce before going on the stage.

At the University she met her husband, Dr. Derry Devane. She is a devoted wife and mother and one of the headaches which she continually provides for the studio staff is her habit of running off to Ireland to be with her family as often and as long as possible. She refuses to live in London and as she is not allowed, under contract, to fly, the studio staff finds itself having to pin her down to films for as long as they can while they have her with them? She is quite uncompromising as a Catholic. Her present film requires the make-up routine to start very early in the morning. On January 6th, she had been in the make-up room for an hour from 6 in the morning when she suddenly decided she must be out to Mass. The studio was horrified. It would hold up production! It could not be done! "Very well," says Kathleen. "No Mass; no film." The easiest thing to do was to let her go to Mass!

Kathleen Ryan has not, so far, had much opportunity to show what she can really do on the films. Her part in Odd Man Out was really the result of sensitive directing, an appealing, fragile loyalty which is made hard as steel through the strength of the love she has for the hunted man. But I for one felt that Carol Reed did not mould her sufficiently to his design, and, Kathleen, I should not be surprised to learn, felt the same about him. In Captain Boycott she had little or no acting to do but did it very well. In Esther Waters she has a difficult part but is supported by a strong cast including Mary Clare, Ivor Barnard, Cyril Cusack and Fay Compton. Her leading man is a new-comer called Dirk Bogard and she is directed by Ian Dalrymple, who made Woman In The Hall.

Kathleen Ryan usually appears unsmiling and sad in her two previous pictures. In real life she has one of the gayest of smiling Irish faces and is full of a Puckish wit and humour. She takes her work on the set very seriously but as soon as the take is over she is joking with whoever is nearest.

She is conscious of the claims which the films make on an intelligent player and she is concerned lest she forget the lessons learned on the stage. She would be wise not to let herself be typed too often. That is the way to an early death for a film star. I think that she has enough strength of character to resist the blandishments of the man with the contract book if she thinks that the part offered her is only a glamour part. More strength to her elbow.

J. A. V. B.
This, the only international film review, is devoted to the Cinema’s artistic development. Impartial and authoritative, it is read in fifty countries. There are many illustrations, and recent contributors have included S. M. Eisenstein, John A. V. Burke, Andrew Buchanan, Brian Hession and Cavalcanti.

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PENNY A DAY FOR 240 DAYS' FUND
IF one fourth of the Catholic population in England and Scotland contributed a penny a day for 240 days The Catholic Film Society in England would be able to set up a production unit.

It was the pennies of the Catholic population in France that made the making of the film Monsieur Vincent possible.

Kindly send a donation to:
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EDITORIAL

WAKE UP AND DREAM!

In the pangs of discussion, ideas are clarified and daring deeds are sometimes born. For this reason, I hope that readers of Focus will make full use of Readerscope. Much talk may produce a talkie comparable with Monsieur Vincent, made by the Catholic Film Society in France, from the pennies of the Catholic man in the street.

There is a growing desire among Catholics all over the world to use the Cinema for the honour and glory of God. Moreover, the times in which we live demand that we do not sit around and fiddle while the Christian Heritage and Christian Culture burn. For a long time the enemies of Christianity have been using films to infiltrate their creed into the modern mind. If you want to change the thought of the world, said Lenin, you must do it through the theatre and cinema.

There is still a disinclination in some Catholic circles to use films as a medium of imparting Christian thought and philosophy. We should remember that the Catholic Church was using the moving pictures of her liturgy, in order to impart ideas and ideals, long before the coming of the movies and the talkies. Are we afraid to step in where angels have not feared to tread?

At the moment, at Studio One, in the heart of London, Les jeux sont fait (The die is cast) is having a good showing. In this film, as one of our reviewers points out, Jean Paul Sartre works off his phoney philosophy. Stripped of its technical terms and with the lid off, Existentialism (I mean, of course, Sartre's particular brand) is just plain atheism which rejects the idea of God and denies that there is an absolute moral law.

It is silly to keep on saying: But that sort of thing cannot happen in England. Today, battles are won by Infiltration. It would be more sensible to wake up and dream of the latest of the arts dedicated to the glory of God; and then do something to make that dream come true.
FILM REVIEWS

By Our Panel of Priests

THE WOMAN ON THE BEACH.
Starring: Joan Bennett, with Robert Ryan, Charles Bickford.

Corps or bathing belle? Neither, but Joan Bennett mooning moody around a wreck. Enter Nice Man. Nice men are apt to fall for the Joan Bennett type. Unfortunately she has a husband in this picture. And he is blind. There seems some doubt about this, which is only dispelled by letting him walk over the cliff edge. Which seems rather drastic. But he takes it in his stride in more senses than one.

And what is more, the Nice Man also had a Nice Girl, who goes to a Nice Dance in a Nice Frock, all tulle and flounces (a masculine description, which would probably provoke the smiles of my charming colleagues of the Catholic Herald and the Universe). After the two men have pushed one another out of a small boat in a storm, and the blind man, who is an artist and a bit temperamental, has set fire to his house and all his pictures, he and his wife settle down quite comfortably together and the other man realises that Nice Men should stick to tulle and flounces and leave Joan Bennett alone.

As the film ends so unimpeachably I may be taken to task for not recommending it. But I felt that if nobody committed murder or adultery that was quite a fluke.

Miss Bennett, of course, has too much character to be completely dull. But Nan Leslie, as the other girl, might earn a high award for standardised femininity. And one would expect something better from a director of Jean Renoir’s standing.

The publicity catchphrase associated with this film is “Go ahead and say it . . . I’m no good.” O.K. then. I’ll say it.

Q.


The Italian dramatist, Luigi Pirandello, is one of those writers who, like Shaw and Priestley, use the novel and the stage in order to preach their own peculiar philosophies. His main theme is a species of Berkleyian idealism, the power of illusion. Man constructs an identity for himself, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously. Nevertheless, he is, in reality, alone in the universe, for, apart from his own individuality, there is no reality. Indeed, even this may be questioned since he appears differently to everyone else and no one man’s impression of him is more real than another’s. Hence it is problematical whether he has real identity at all.

Upon this philosophical lunacy most of Pirandello’s works are based. As You Desire Me; Six Characters In Search of An Author and The Mock Emperor are the best known in this country. Enrico IV is characteristic of its author. It tells of a man who, living for twenty years under the delusion that he is the Emperor Henry IV, regains his reason only to find that all that would make life worth living for him is beyond his reach. Having killed his enemy he takes refuge in his former state of masquerade, this time deliberately relegating himself to the ranks of the insane but leaving his acquaintances under the impression that his malady is real.

The film is an outstanding piece of work both as regards production and acting. The sets are magnificent and the playing of Osvaldo Valenti as the madman is of the highest order of tragic acting. There are a number of excellent characterisations; among the best being that of Lauro Gazzali as Enrico’s servant, Giovanni.

The whole piece provides an interesting comparison with the recent Italian films
FOCUS

which have won such high praise in this country. Though it is of a totally different order to Open City and To Live In Peace, it compels admiration as a further example of the manifold fecundity of the Italian school of film. Enrico IV is worth taking some trouble to see, but I do not recommend it for unsophisticated audiences.

V.

THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI.
Starring: Orson Welles, Everett Sloane and Rita Hayworth.

Select carefully all the recognised Hollywood situations: as, the other man’s wife, double-crossing (it’s quadruple here), the confiding hero, the entirely non-moral lovely. And all the best shots: the luxury yacht, with high diving (how do the ladies come out of this bone-dry, with every particle of face powder in situ?), Chinatown theatre, the sub-tropical picnic, scenes in court, Crazy House as a substitute for slapstick, marine aquarium as back-cloth to a love scene, and, of course, a motor crash. And then write your story to drag them all in, if only by the hind leg. This is The Lady from Shanghai, and very good it is on its own lines. Moreover there are some creditable attempts at psychological shooting to relieve the mere photographic unrolling of a yarn. The photography itself is unequal, but excellent at its best. Mr. Welles’ huskiness does not always carry so far as the Circle: and in a plot like this the listeners need all the help they can get. The top light of the film for us was the acting of Mr. Everett Sloane, highly studied and very consistent. Miss Hayworth, impeccably beautiful, is perhaps hampered in her performance by the possession of a guilty secret of which she is unburdened only in the last ten seconds of the 86 minutes. (We missed all the clues, but you may be sharper.)

This film is entertainment pure and simple, and does not aim, we imagine, at being anything else. A great deal of ingenuity, and some originality, has gone into the making of it.

H.


This film opens with Robert Newton (he is playing the part of Derek Engels, a film director) looking like a cross between a schoolmaster and a plumber and wagging his walking stick at his cast as he tells them that in this particular sequence they must be tough and that when he says tough he means tough. I got the impression that "the powers that be" were so concerned to make this film tough and snowbound that they forgot it is the story which really matters. It would be untrue to say that you cannot see the story for the snow; but the story does get lost and becomes wet, limp and fuddled and the dialogue is most moist. A pity, for this could have been a very good film indeed! With so many stars one had a right to expect a better show, which only goes to prove that it is not wise to hitch one's celluloid wagon to too many stars. The individual acting of the stars in this spy-thriller is splendid: the trouble is, (I think), that they do not lose their individualities and act as a team. There is one sequence, however, which makes this film memorable and gives it distinction. A search party is ordered out to find Dennis Price. This skiing party, carrying hurricane lamps which glow blood-red as they glide, with the grace of ballet dancers, across the crisp white snow in the black hours of the night, is a moving picture of rare beauty.

E.


The screen play by Rudolph Cartier and Edana Romney does not claim to be more than "inspired by" the novel by Chris Massie. The film is the first British production made in a French studio and both English and French
FOCUS

Behind Madame playing suppose. It means. much forget, cannot scheming No, impending the the Van executed. Running the splendid nightmares young the the rains spots party hanged work was his mental furniture, work was his mental father

ANTOINETTE. played by Norma Shearer (where is she now?), is girlish and gay at the beginning, tearful, sophisticated, fin-de-siècle and cynical in the middle, and haggard and despairing at the end; but the handsome hero in the person of Count Axel De Fersen turns up. No, he doesn’t rescue her. They embrace each other with many tears and for an unconscionable long time. She goes off with a radiant serenity, peace, etc., on her face, wearing a thing like a dust-cap in which she is executed. John Barrymore, as the old King Louis XV, appears too seldom. His acting is confident and he towers above the rest of the cast, not excluding Morley. The rest of the characters are pedestrian: Tyrone Power as Count Axel De Fersen, Joseph Schildkraut as the bold bad villain in the person of the Duc D’Orleans, Gladys George as Madame Du Barry are all very stereotyped.

The picture was made ten years ago, of course, and allowance has to be made, I suppose. But there was so much opportunity in this theme: the intrigues of the Court, the sufferings of the people, the true motives of Marie Antoinette, the sinister atmosphere of impending catastrophe, all give the ingredients of a powerful story. But what have we in the film? The skinny story of the gay young wife married to the dumb husband with a handsome hero and a scheming villain in the background. Plenty of succulent kisses, plenty of tears and much talk of having and not having children, a confinement scene thrown in. child actors with strong American accents (why is it so difficult to get used to?). All these are no substitutes for the terrifying and tragic story of the fall of the French monarchy.


An over-eager choir of monks, somewhere in the background and slightly off the note, have already begun the Requiem when the old king Louis XV is not yet dead. Indeed they have already reached the Dies Irae. Meantime, the heir, Louis XVI, done to perfection by Robert Morley, instead of being at his grandfather’s bedside, is telling his wife. Marie Antoinette, that they can have children after all.

One of the ladies-in-waiting to the queen, in splendid eighteenth century costume, cries out, “Keep your hands off me you filthy swine!” when some nobleman, whose name I forget, only wants to look at the diamond necklace which started all the trouble. But he handles her roughly and gets the necklace and says “Now you get out!” and they all go away and the plot thickens.

These incongruities in the production (and they occur throughout the picture) are, to put it very kindly, a pity. They blot out many of the good things in the picture. Robert Morley’s playing of Louis XVI is serious and artistic; a little over-acted at the beginning—“A bit too dumb”, said a young and fresh critic who was with me—but he soon gets the feel of the part and sustains his perfect portrayal throughout. Marie Antoinette, played by Norma Shearer, is girlish and gay at the beginning, tearful, sophisticated, fin-de-siècle and cynical in the middle, and haggard and despairing at the end; but the handsome hero in the person of Count Axel De Fersen turns up. No, he doesn’t rescue her. They embrace each other with many tears and for an unconscionable long time. She goes off with a radiant serenity, peace, etc., on her face, wearing a thing like a dust-cap in which she is executed. John Barrymore, as the old King Louis XV, appears too seldom. His acting is confident and he towers above the rest of the cast, not excluding Morley. The rest of the characters are pedestrian: Tyrone Power as Count Axel De Fersen, Joseph Schildkraut as the bold bad villain in the person of the Duc D’Orleans, Gladys George as Madame Du Barry are all very stereotyped.

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technicians were employed. I cannot say, however, that it combines the best characteristics of the work of both countries. Yet, while it does not really “come off”, it has definitely raised my hopes that future Cartier-Romney productions may be more satisfying.

Paul Mangin (Eric Portman), whose admirers would say that he lived mentally in the Renaissance period and his critics that he had a Borgia complex, was best known to posterity by his waxwork in the Chamber of Horrors. (Amusing script and good small part playing in the Madame Tussaud’s sequences.) Actually the wrong woman was murdered and the wrong person hanged for it. Behind the mirrors in the corridor Paul has a lot of dummies in period costume. Curious bloke. A bright young thing called Mefanwy (that’s Welsh, like Gwladys) gets mixed up in all this and in a Venetian Carnival party thrown by Paul, who is clearly a man of means. (Dresses, gondolas, furniture, fireworks, etc., all nice to look at.) But after Paul has been condemned to death by her father (Bruce Belfrage) she snaps out of all that sort of thing, marries an outdoor type and, after a spot of nightmares and anonymous letters, makes good as the mother of three nice children in a village where it rains like anything.

Q.
FOCUS

The spectacle, as you might expect, is magnificent, gorgeous. The costumes, done by Adrian, are beautiful, and as far as I know, historically correct. There are shots where, I suppose, there must be at least two hundred people in period dress on the screen. But the pageantry overbalances the plot and I found myself yawning. The only thing to do was to light my pipe and keep watching for some outstanding photography. But it never came.

S.

DRUMS ALONG THE MOHAWK.

This film made me long for the wide open spaces, not those on the screen, but those beyond the doors of the cinema. I hope that I am not being too hard on this technicolored tremendous trifle, but (quite honestly) it switched my mind into low gear and I found it long and tedious and heavy going.

E.


This is a film of sustained interest and exciting incident. The opening sequences, are novel and the outdoor scenes of San Francisco and the surrounding country are beautifully photographed. The minor parts are remarkably well played and Houseley Stevenson's vignetted of the old discredited facial surgeon is worthy of high praise. Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall are their own inimitable selves, and Agnes Moorehead does well in a part that could have been easily overplayed.

Any implication of suggestiveness has been eliminated and we see the friendship of Irene and Parry blossoming into love, only in the final fade out.

R.


This cinecoloured film version of Zane Grey's novel Twin Sombreros will delight all those children who have been loyally cheering their cowboy heroes during the past half century. Aesthetes, cynics, and those whom the trade press contemptuously refers to as 'montage boys' had better stay away from this film; it is not their kind.

Brazos Kane (Randolph Scott) lays aside his guns forever after he has nearly killed his best friend. As this happens in the very first sequence, and a few sequences later on he is taken out to be hanged for the shooting of another man by a sheriff whom we all know instinctively to be a bad lot, two things emerge as certainties: Brazos will not hang (it is too early in the film) and he will certainly use his guns again; how, otherwise, is he to give the villains the pay-off?

Randolph Scott has a comfortable, horsy look about him that is most endearing. The ladies in the film wear the cutest head-gear. There is lashings of riding, fighting and shooting. I do not think that there is anything that modern children, vaccinated with Dick Barton, will find unpalatable.

V.


In its own line, I would say that this thriller is the best of the year. The plot is original (Ray Milland, the man wanted by the police, is assigned to hunt himself). The story is crisp, credible and nicely shaped. The director, John Farrow, deserves a medal. The acting is polished and rivets attention, and though there are many stars performing
they are not allowed to outshine one another. Milland gives a fine performance of a hunted man. Charles Laughton, the villain of the piece, looks the part and plays the part with sinister realism. And Maureen O'Sullivan with her freshness, Rita Johnson with her charm and cleverness, Elsa Lanchester with her humour, prevent the drama from being emotionally top heavy.

E.


I am not in a position to abstain from going to the pictures in Lent, but if I were, this is just the sort of light fare I should choose to break my fast in Easter week. And it really was a pleasure to escape from the rain of an English spring by turning into a cinema not so very far from Park Lane and seeing this film. There is nothing original or striking about the theme—another Lord Richard in the pantry—but it is handled with freshness, vitality and intelligence. The film has a certain “body”, content, or what you will, so often lacking in similar trifles. It caters with some skill both for the low-brow and the slightly higher, with a little special provision for the cinema-minded.

Time has dealt so kindly with Anna Neagle that it is hard to realise that it was fifteen years ago that I first saw her on the screen (in The Little Damosel). Michael Wilding plays a conventional part with more than conventional ability. The versatile Tom Walls appears with a slightly new accent and an almost new face. Peter Graves contributes an overdrawn but amusing caricature of a film star. And there are a number of finished performances for the small parts.

I warmly commend and strongly recommend Spring in Park Lane as light entertainment.

Q.

SOME FILMS REVIEWED

NOTE: Category A, indicates adults only; B, adults and adolescents; C, family audiences; D, particularly for children.

Reviewed in “Focus” (Vol. I, Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4)

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A STUDY IN CONTRASTS

(At the moment two French films are running in the West End of London. The one is the answer to the other. Fabberique, a film of singular beauty and wisdom, is the answer to the dark philosophy which informs Jean Paul Sartre's film: Les Jeux sont faits.)


Already Jean Paul Sartre has used the medium of the play and the novel to expound his own particular brand of Existentialism; now he is using the medium of the Cinema. Les Jeux sont fait (The die is cast) is one of Sartre's propaganda stories in which his puppet characters tell the meaning of existence according to the mind of Jean Paul Sartre. Roughly this is the story... Eve Charlier (Micheline Presle) and Pierre (Marcel Pagliero) die at the same time. In the spirit world (which is more of a whirl than a world) they fall in love. Ah!... if only they had met before, they tell one another...; to cut a silly story short, they are allowed to go back to Mother Earth; if for twenty-four hours they prove their love and trust for one another they will live on in happiness; if not, they must return to the dead; and what a boring state of existence the dead endure ("O death where is thy sting"—all over the place, I should say, for those who believe the Sartre doctrine). The lovers fail. Pierre lets his Communist comrades come between himself and his lady and Eve allows her affection for her sister to come between herself and her man. To use the language of Sartre, they do not choose themselves; they do not become authentic individuals; they allow themselves to be merged in the mass mind. They go back to that unblest state where a hunchback dressed in velvet and lace, with a quick eye for the ladies, acts as a sort of spiritual guest-master and where a dessicated spinster dressed in black, who fondles a cat and wears specs controls the gates of life and death.

All very silly; but life according to Sartre is very silly.

It is not possible to understand this film without some knowledge of Sartre's beliefs. He preaches that life is meaningless, gratuitous and absurd, without any objective values. His Existentialism is an attempt to give a philosophy of life to those who believe that "God is dead" (as Nietzsche who died mad, put it). For the atheist there are two lines of approach, says Sartre:

1. He can refuse to regard the meaningless void around him (contrive a sort of psychological black-out!) refuse to choose himself; reduce his individuality and inner freedom to the minimum; and sink himself in the herd, become a totalitarian, a moral mental slave, or:—

2. Face the meaningless of life, its absurdity, etc.; refuse to be absorbed in the unthinking mass who take refuge in religion by believing in a God who does not exist; choose himself with his own will and assert his own individuality and inner freedom and become an authentic man. It is to the second class that Sartre addresses himself.

The technical merits of this film are many. It is splendidly directed, splendidly acted but... well, the ideas which inform it are weak and absurd and atheistic. Sartre contradicts himself. One moment he is preaching that life has no meaning, that it is without inherent value, and the next moment he himself is formulating objective values for the godless man who is convinced of his own uniqueness, individuality and liberty. To endeavour to give a meaning to life for people who believe that life has no meaning doesn't make sense to me. To revolt against the totalitarianites who would crush individuality and enslave men's minds is right and proper, but there is no sense in revolting against God who alone can make us free. A New Look might help Existentialism a la Sartre to realise that life is wonderful and that existence means that man is free to choose to be what he was meant to be; son and heir of the kingdom of heaven.

Fabberique or "The Four Seasons" is the complete philosophical answer to Les Jeux sont fait. It is, in my opinion, (I hope I am not calling coals of fire upon my semi-bald pate) the perfect religious film. But I am using the word religion in its correct sense which is: A disposition of the will, based on the perception of truth and knowledge, whereby man recognises his dependence upon God as his creator and last end, and endeavours to order his life in harmony with this fact. Let me, at once, sweep away your fears ... this is not a churchy film: you will not see roman collars roaming all over the place: or little boys with upturned faces singing psalms and canticles: or paternal padres patting children on the head; but you will see a family which possesses that wisdom which is more precious than gold.

A colleague told me that Fabberique is the most satisfying film he has ever seen; the critics on the B.B.C. heard who sit every Sunday morning at 12-15 have sung its praises; the crowd (vox populi est vox Dei?) throng to the Curzon, (a peg of stone from Studio One, where Les Jeux sont fait is showing), to behold its beauty and balance: the manager of the Curzon told me that the film is going great guns. Yet — and this is a big point — not a single star or starlet figures in this film; there is no glamour; no heroes; no tickling of the emotions, no slick moral celluloid salesmanship; no paint or powder or passion or sex-appeal; all the what-the-people-want ingredients are missing. Wherein lies its appeal?

"Dunno why ... but this film got me!", I heard someone saying as I walked down Curzon St. into Park Lane. I think I know why. But let me first present a close-up of the story. The entire film is enacted by real characters who live in the Rouergue district which forms part of the department in the centre of France where the law of primogeniture is effective. The story is a very simple one, in point of fact, it is not a story; for there is no plot. I can best explain it by saying that it is a film-poem which with the aid of scientific photography draws a sensitive parallel between the rhythm of the four seasons of the year and the rhythm of the life of a people who live and work and die on the farm. Pictorially (and what superb photography!) you first see Autumn, the death of the year, with its golden glory. There is a serenity, a quietude, a maturity about this season, just as there is serenity and nobility about the death of the father of the family who has lived according to a divine plan, who has worked himself out in hard work and receives the last Sacraments before he is united to his Creator in the summer of Eternity.

Follows Winter. It is hard going on the farm during this season: patience and courage are needed, yet is has its own particular beauty and there is joy in expectancy, for the farmer and his family know that wonderful things are happening within the soil, just as wonderful things are happening in mother's womb where a child is developing.

Comes the delight of Spring. There is a nip in the air, birds begin to sing; the beautiful buds burst from the dark earth and the world is transfigured with bloom and beauty; the bushes and the trees begin to put on a new look and everything in the garden is lovely. And everyone is laughing and mother is all smiles for the winter of her pain has passed and her joy which is her child no one can take from her.

As the film moves on, quietly, beautifully; as you behold the miracle of Summer, you get what my friend called, a feeling of deep satisfaction; you see that in all things there is: "A divinity that shapes our ends"; you see meaning, purpose, design, harmony . . . ("Poems are made by fools like me, but only God can make a tree"); and everything else which grows and blows and sings and lives and dies). This family has its ups and downs, its joys and sorrows; but fundamentally it is united and works as a team; one ploughs the fields, one bakes the bread, one sows the seeds, mother darns the socks and prepares the meals, at harvest-time even the children do their bit for they have a Christian philosophy of life; for them religion is not something tacked on, it is part of their pattern of life. For them, it is just as necessary to pray as it is to dig and water the land; they go to

(Continued on page 115)
In spite of difficulties in securing accommodation for resident students, we are continuing with our plans to arrange a Summer School of Film. It will probably take place in London towards the end of August or the beginning of September.

Several readers have asked for information about the Papal Encyclical on Films. It is published by the Catholic Truth Society which has the exclusive rights in this country of publishing all such Papal documents.

We hope soon to have office accommodation in the Catholic Truth Society premises in Eccleston Square, S.W.1. Until that time we must ask the indulgence of those who find it difficult to contact us. For the time being it is easier for us if you direct enquiries concerning Focus: A Film Review, to The Manager, The Blue Cottage, 69 Summer Place Mews, S.W.7. Appointments with the Hon. Secretary, Catholic Film Society, can more easily be made by post to Mayfield College, Tunbridge Wells.

N.B.—Please make all cheques and Postal Orders payable to The Catholic Film Society.

The Fund which the Editor declared open in the last issue of Focus, has, at the moment of going to press, reached the sum of £5! That is a long way off the total required if anything serious is to be done, but it is a beginning and we are most grateful to these enthusiasts who have set the wheels turning (or should we say: the bees buzzing!).

Christopher Radley, Director of Selwyn Films Ltd., is a member of the Catholic Film Society. He recently had a showing of some of his documentary films at the Crown Theatre, Wardour Street. Particularly successful is one made for the British Council, entitled Pure Water. It shows the astonishing amount of organising and administrative work that is necessary in order that you and I may drink a cup of clean water! Another of Christopher Radley’s films was made for the S.P.C.K. and is called Your Inheritance (reviewed in our last issue).


The first post-war German film to reach this country is a terribly bitter, cynical, pessimistic offering. It is well that it has been made by the Germans themselves for it is an indictment of present-day crypto-Nazism that would have been regarded as vindictive and exaggerated had it come from America or Britain. It is symptomatic of much in the German character that baffles the well-intentioned Englishman. Set against the ghastly bomb-racked shell of Berlin amid the appalling housing conditions, with children scrabbling for food in the rubble, one senses not so much the atmosphere of a people sorrowing for the wrongs of the past, as a resentment that things are as they are, unrelated to any awareness that a chain of causes links them with the jack-booted days of Hitler, Funk and Himmler.

After the surrender in 1945, Susanna Walner returns from a concentration camp to find her flat being used by Dr. Hans Mertens. He has given up his practice as a surgeon out of a sense of revolt against humanity. He is hunting his former Captain, Bruckner, who was responsible for many deaths in Poland and elsewhere. Bruckner is now comfortably ensconced in one of the few houses that have windows, running a factory and generally looking after himself. Mertens makes several attempts to kill Bruckner until he is convinced by Susanna that he has not the right to judge; that the law must be left to look after the murderers still in their midst. A final sequence shows Bruckner in prison wildly protesting his innocence against a background of phantoms of those he has caused to be liquidated.

This is an adult film and one intended to rouse discussion, as it certainly will. It is not an entertainment film, though there are one or two moments in it that are memorable for acting, especially one scene where a clairvoyant tells an old father that his son is coming back and sends the old man away contented, murmuring as he pockets the old man’s
money, "it is so easy to bring people a little happiness!" It inevitably forces comparison with the Italian films, *Open City* and *To Live In Peace*. They deal with life under similar conditions, but even in the terrible conditions of Rome under the Germans as depicted in *Open City*, one could detect a note of exaltation and defiance that is totally absent in the German film. They are miserable and see no way out of their misery save by an endurance that will bring them the pity of the audience. Almost too much use is made of the gaunt ruins of Berlin. It is as if the city itself were a character, pleading and threatening, wailing and cursing. This is wrong. The producers, I imagine, had not the intention of compelling foreign sympathy; they were concerned to teach a lesson nearer at home. Hence the impact of the various scenes in the ruined city would have a different significance to the citizens; the thought of the secret murderers in their midst would arouse a different anger.

Nevertheless we must judge the film as it appears to us and it remains true to say that every drop of pathos and self-pity is drawn out of the situations presented on the screen. The pace is painfully slow, the montage is deliberately harrowing, the lighting is used to distort rather than to enlighten, the acting is heavy with tragedy, the film ends with an implied accusation against that half of humanity which does nothing to prevent war destroying the other half.

The acting is well up to the standard of pre-war German films. Hildegarde Knef has already been snapped up by Hollywood after her part as Susanna. Ernst Fischer will probably follow the steps of the late Conrad Veidt.

A film to be seen and studied. V.

John Galsworthy, a great artist whose medium was the written word, who belonged to the privileged classes but whose constant theme was pity for the under dog, provided in his play, Escape, an almost perfect frame for film adaptation. Man-hunt is a formula which can hardly fail on the screen. When it is presented as brilliantly as it is in the present case, it is bound to elicit a warm response from both critics and cinemagoers.

The story concerns a man whose sense of chivalry induces him to interfere with a police-officer who is arresting a girl on a charge of loitering. In the resultant brawl the police-officer falls and is killed. The man is tried and sentenced to three years' hard labour on a charge of manslaughter. He refuses to regard the sentence as just and determines to escape, against the advice of the old lags. He eventually gives himself up rather than allow a parson to succumb to the temptation to conceal him by means of a lie.

The script-writer has, legitimately I think, placed the story in the present day and added one or two modern details to make this transference circumstantial. He has also added a love interest which, because it is reasonably restrained, adds to rather than detracts from an exceptionally successful stage adaptation.

Rex Harrison, as the escaped convict, (Continued on page 110)
The Parson (Norman Wooland) attempts to par
pursuers (William Hartnell—George Woodbridge)
(Continued from page 107)

adds to the succession of accomplished performances which he has given to the screen, a strong and consistent picture of a man labouring under a sense of injustice. William Hartnell, that always dependable actor, gives an excellent study as a detective whose sense of duty does not extinguish his human qualities; a performance that is among the best things in an outstanding film. Peggy Cummins is physically too youthful to be convincing as the hard-boiled woman who helps the convict to escape, but her acting makes up for what she lacks in experience. Her sojourn in America seems to have provided her with an accent that it is difficult to localise.

Among a galaxy of first-class supporting players that includes Marjorie Rhodes, Cyril Cusack, Frank Pettingell and Jill Esmond, a special word must be said in welcome to Norman Wooland for a beautiful little vignette as the parson in whose church the convict seeks sanctuary and who is rescued from the dilemma of having either to lie or to betray the hunted man by the fact that the latter’s sense of what is right and decent is stronger than his desire to escape. Norman Wooland was picked for this part after his success as Horatio in Hamlet. He has a splendid physique and is, in addition, a fine actor. We look for some interesting work from him.

Galsworthy’s religion was a sentimental mixture of pukka-sahibism and inherited decency. We Catholics may smile tolerantly at such a boneless creed, but we should recognise that it is the residue of a faith that the country as a whole once possessed. It is a foundation on which much might be built if we could but convince our fellow countrymen that our behaviour is balanced by our belief. Such a film gives much to think about and is one of those from which you get more in proportion as you give more.

V.

TOPICAL PARS

The screen rights of Cockpit, the brilliant play by Bridget Boland, have been bought by Sydney Box, for production by Gainsborough Pictures. Miss Boland, an Old Girl of the Sacred Heart Convent, Roehampton, is the daughter of J. P. Boland, until recently Secretary of the Catholic Truth Society. She served in the A.T.S. during the war and did much literary and dramatic work. At the end of hostilities she went to Germany where she wrote Cockpit, which deals with the problems of displaced persons. It will be interesting to see what Sydney Box makes of this play. He is a very intelligent producer and it is a very intelligent play. It was said that Catholic reaction to the appreciative reviews in the Catholic Press saved this play during its recent season in London. It was in danger of being taken off through lack of support until the Catholic audiences turned the scale. This may be because the problems posed in the play are more easily understood by Catholics, with their international background and sympathy. We look forward with interest to this film.

Another welcome piece of news is the success which is attending the production of the Huggett family film at Islington. Jack Warner and Kathleen Harrison won such praise for their performances in Holiday Camp that it was decided to make a series of films dealing with the family which they portrayed in that film. We badly need some light relief of the kind that these two seasoned players can give. This country has much to offer in the way of material for family film stories. We have had so much of the American families, the Hardies and others, that it will be pleasant to see some of our own.

Jane Hylton, Petula Clark and Jimmy Hanley, together with Susan Shaw are supporting Jack Warner and Kathleen Harrison in Wedding Bells, the first of the Huggett series.

THE POPE AND THE PICTURES

We can never sufficiently praise those who have dedicated themselves to the noble cause of raising the standard of the motion picture to meet the needs of the Christian conscience. For this purpose, they must make full use of the technical ability of experts and not permit the waste of effort and of money by the employment of amateurs.—Pope Pius XI.
CATHOLIC FILM-SCHOOLS IN BELGIUM

By JOZ. VAN LIEMPT

During the German Occupation, the activity of the Belgian Film Study centre stopped. During this slack period, Fr. William Van den Nieuwenhuysen organised a private study circle of friends in Antwerp. Cardinal Van Roey gave him the task of carrying on, as far as was possible, the Apostolate of the Film in Flemish districts, and directed him to prepare for action when the country would be liberated. The Reverend Father, however, was killed by a flying bomb in Antwerp.

He bequeathed to us, as the conclusion of his work, the following principle:

"The solution of the problem of the cinema resides in the creation of a real Christian cultural approach to films."

Although this was not a new idea, he made it a dynamic idea by founding a "School of Films", whose object was to enlighten people as to the nature of a good film, and to educate them to enlighten others. It also provided an excellent medium for those who wished to devote themselves more exclusively to the Apostolate of the Film.

Such a School may be, founded wherever there is a practical interest in the work of the Cinema. During the Occupation the most important were founded at Antwerp and Ghent. They are still the most important, and their practical programme is as follows:

In winter a course of 10 to 15 lectures is promoted on subjects such as: the fundamental ideas of "Vigilanti Curia"; the Essence of the Film; Language and Expression in the Film; the History of the Cinema; The Cinema and Catholic Opinion; Cinema and Conscience; Film Production; Film Technique; Camera Work, and so on; the Commercial side of the Cinema; Films and the Public; Youth and the Cinema; the Family and Films; Film selection.

There is nothing stiff or formal about these courses. They are often accompanied by the actual showing of films or stills, and are always followed by discussions. The lecturer, therefore, must be well up in his subject and often two lecturers will argue on specialised points in a film with a view to encouraging and directing controversy in the audience. Gradually groups of people really interested in the possibilities of the Cinema will form clubs and committees. These committees manage the sections of the Catholic League of the Film, which is itself organised by the Belgian Centre.

Other subjects, if necessary, are added to the course of lectures. It is no exaggeration to say that in Belgium, Catholic "Schools of Film" have won over a large section of the public to good cinema. The Catholic Cultural Review of the Cinema is an off-shoot of the activities of the Antwerp School of Films. Fr. Van den Nieuwenhuysen's publication "Filmstudien", appears only in Dutch; but we hope to have soon a French edition of it.

At the instigation of the late Canon Brohec, President of the O.C.I.C., who took much interest in our Film Schools, a similar programme for a much wider public was undertaken last winter in Brussels. The ten weekly lectures dealt with various subjects. But though they did reach a wider public, there was not the same amount of personal contact and discussion as in the more compact "Film Schools" we have described for Antwerp and Ghent.

In larger towns such as Brussels and Liege there is plenty of scope for "Film Lectures" and for one or more "Film Schools".

Finally, the ideas of Fr. Van den Nieuwenhuysen have been adopted by the State-schools in their film education programme, and as a start five lessons a year may be given in the classes of Poetry and Rhetoric.

* Summary of Paper read at the Fourth Catholic International Film Congress held in Brussels last June.
Sir,

The International Catholic Cinema Office hails the advent of the Review Focus with great pleasure.

Already, by means of Catholic Film News, our British friends have conveyed to us sound judgments on the films shown in their country. We know that their criticisms are now regarded as authoritative, even in non-Catholic circles.

It is, nevertheless, clear that the general evolution of the Cinema, as well as the development of the Catholic Film Society under the energetic guidance of its indefatigable Hon. Secretary and Treasurer, the Rev. John A. V. Burke, fully justifies the new form taken by this publication.

The IVth International Catholic Cinema Congress, held at Brussels on June 16th-22nd, 1947, produced striking confirmation of the progress made in our national movements with regard to the elaboration of a Christian cinema doctrine.

As His Eminence Cardinal van Roey, Primate of Belgium, made so clear in his closing speech at this Congress, Catholics have no intention of confining the application of this doctrine to themselves. On the contrary, faithful in this to the directives already laid down in "Vigilanti Curia", His Holiness Pope Pius XI's memorable encyclical dealing with the cinema, they wish to place the fruit of their researches at the disposal of all, and to collaborate loyally and openly with all men of goodwill who are interested in the moral, social and cultural aspects of the cinema.

Focus will thus be able to serve as a common link between those English Catholics who are specialists in the cinema world and the main body of that world, to which they sincerely desire to be of use.

It is, moreover, essential that an ever deeper understanding both of the cultural problems of the cinema and of its importance in the intellectual life of the contemporary world, should be widespread in Catholic circles.

Here again, Focus in its new form will be able to give more efficacious service in thus completing on the national scale, in Britain, the effort pursued on a world scale by the International Catholic Cinema Office, which will shortly bring out the first issue of the quarterly "International Cinema Review".

Pursuing the same ideal, but at different levels, our two publications will be able to be of mutual assistance, thereby ensuring an even greater efficacy to the action of each.

May I be allowed to end these words of welcome by wishing the promoters of Focus the success their initiative deserves. I should also like to convey, through their intermediary, the friendly greetings of the International Catholic Cinema Office to the whole British Cinema industry, to whom we are indebted for a recent series of first-class productions of high moral inspiration.

Let us all unite in our efforts to give the cinema its legitimate place amongst the modern Arts, in order that, above all, it may contribute towards that re-Christianisation without which our civilisation is in danger of irremediable destruction.

Abbe Jean Bernard,
President of the International Catholic Cinema Office.

Sir,

Though Mr. Kirby's letter is much to the point he weakens it by an oversimplification of the obstacles to be faced. The making of films able to bear comparison with the best commercial products (and that is the only standard good enough for Catholics) demands not only money. It requires in addition, capable technicians, competent writers, producers, directors. It is probable that there are many Catholics already qualified in these various departments who would be willing to devote their time and talents to the production of Catholic films. There is a further obstacle. Supposing one has the films, how do we secure adequate exhibition? The commercial cinemas are unlikely to accept films that have, as they would say, a limited appeal, by which they mean that Catholic cinema-goers are not sufficiently numerous. The alternative is the parish hall, but how many parishes have halls suitably equipped even for standard (non-threatrical) film exhibi-
tion? Belgium and France have a number of Family Halls under the direction of the Church authorities. Could such a system work in this country?

Having solved all these difficulties, what of stories suitable for filming? Here we are on fruitful soil, waiting to be cultivated. There is no lack of subjects whether fictional or factual which could make excellent Catholic films. Thomas More, Edmund Campion, Dominic Barberi, Bishop Ullathorne, Cardinal Newman, Francis Thompson, are characters that spring at once to mind as the central figures of fascinating film biographies. The Jesuit martyrs of Canada, the missionary reduction of Paraguay, the discovery of Cathay, the coming of the Franciscans and Dominicans to England: these are pregnant subjects for film treatment. In the field of documentaries, what about the building of the cathedrals and monasteries, the work of the Religious Congregations for the poor, in medicine, for education?

There is no end to the possibilities. Such subjects could even interest the commercial cinemas if properly produced. But, under present Trade Union conditions, what of the cost? The Fund which the Editor declared open last month has, so far, brought in £6! Where do we go from here? The minimum cost of a short documentary under Trade Union conditions is in the region of £3,000. Still too much talk? It is just as well that some of us have done some talking. It clears the air and the mind of many facile delusions.

There is one way to produce religious films (not to be confused with films about religion) so that the outlay concerned is reduced to the minimum of cost alone. This is for those who wish to be independent of the commercial racket. The trade thinks the scheme an unworkable lunatic dream. But it might come true! It is for a group of religious people, fully competent technically and artistically, dedicated to the Apostolate of the Film as other religious groups are dedicated to the Medical, the Educational, the Agricultural Apostolate. The professional film maker might answer that this is to take the bread out of his mouth. Not necessarily. There is room for both departments, especially as the religious department is not likely to be accepted by the commercial department. What about it? Some more talking seems indicated.

Yours faithfully,

J. A. V. Burke,
Hon. Sec., Catholic Film Society.

Dear Sir,

Thank God for the buzzing bees. Their music is certainly sweet. The sooner we start making films the better. Must we let the money-bug frighten us? Must we wait until a fund is started and expanded? Surely there are at least some initial activities associated with film making which can be commenced and even completed without money, or whilst steps are being taken to obtain money!

I write as one less wise, of course, but I am going to write anyway. It seems to me that money is not necessary to select a story, even though it may be required eventually to obtain the use of the story. Seeing that several people with technical knowledge and ability have spontaneously offered their co-operation it seems to me that the preparation of a script could be undertaken without money. With a script ready it need not cost money to discuss or even to prepare further plans.

I am not trying to prove that films can be produced without money. I am not quite so less wise. Money is needed and must be obtained. But why wait until it is obtained before starting? Why not start now doing what can be done without money? The fact that good work has been done and is being done successfully will add strength to an appeal for funds to carry it on and complete it successfully.

When something, even something, can be done now, why not do it now? When a start can be made now, why not make it now? Could you gather the willing co-operators together? That would be something. It would be a start and it needn’t cost you anything. If you have to send letters I will pay for the stamps.

With every good wish.

J.

Sir,

It is perhaps just as well that the matter of Cinema Clubs has come up for discussion, though my original letter containing an allusion to the subject was intended merely as a private letter offering good wishes to you on your
excellent work being done through the medium of the *Catholic Film News*.

Your recent article on Children’s Films was, to my mind, unsatisfactory, only in so far as it did not distinguish between the effort to produce better Children’s Films and Cinema Clubs. This was also a weakness of Miss Mary Field’s talk in Liverpool. Everyone will agree in applauding the very laudable effort to produce suitable films for children, but this effort need not be confined to Saturday morning, nor does it require the setting up of Cinema Clubs as such. The two things are quite distinct. In any case Miss Field admitted that the percentage of the more suitable Children’s Films was, as yet, quite small and that the Saturday morning shows still largely consisted of the less suitable type. Moreover, the purpose of Saturday morning Cinema Clubs is much wider than the showing of better children’s films—so wide, indeed, that whereas in the past one has liked to think of the home and the church as the centre of the child’s life, it would appear that these are now largely to be replaced by the cinema. A gentleman of my acquaintance who visited a Cinema Club said it was a near approach to the Nazi type of religion; and there is the story of the child member of a Cinema Club who when it was dying, was anxious to see the Manager of the Cinema.

The education and upbringing of children is a delicate and highly responsible task and those who would attempt it should be fitted by vocation and training to do so. Whilst I am prepared to believe that the promoters of Cinema Clubs are well intentioned in their efforts, I am of opinion that they are somewhat misguided.

Yours, etc.,

T. ADAMSON.

Sir,

In view of the striking success achieved on the Continent by the film *Monsieur Vincent* which, as you know, was produced by means of public subscription, might it not be possible, given a suitable script, for a similar film to be undertaken in this country? If I might make a suggestion, it would be that you should offer a prize for a film-script on a definitely religious theme and that the best scripts submitted should then be considered with a view to production.

The work of amateur units, no matter how well-intentioned, cannot result in films of the standard of the French film to which I have referred, but it is equally obvious that no commercial company in this country will undertake a religious film of any size or merit unless it is guaranteed from loss, and the success of *Monsieur Vincent* shows what can be achieved through the subscriptions and donations of an interested laity.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

M. LEYLAND,  
Organising Secretary,  
Catholic Truth Society.

Sir,

I am easily bored. I might go so far as to say that I am always bored. When other people are amused I am merely less bored. I have the emotional capacity of a codfish. It is, therefore, noteworthy that when, for the second time, I saw Danny Kaye in *Up in Arms* ... I smiled. More, I laughed outright at some of Kaye’s antics. Perhaps “Q” is a little—er—snobbish?

I was bored by the overdressed charmers known as the Goldwyn Girls. In explanation of “over-dressed”, may I express the opinion that when the object of the game is to suggest complete nakedness, a fig leaf is as good as a fur coat. That’s the trouble with these panders, they’re so illogical. Or is it merely cowardice in the face of convention?

Yours,

RONALD BROWN RIGG.

Dear Sir,

Referring to Mr. Kirby’s letter and your editorial comment in the April issue of *Focus*, I feel that some of the points he advocates regarding definite action have been stated in my letter published in the *Catholic Herald* on March 25th last, and as a result of his letter the million penny fund for production has been inaugurated by yourself.

I feel, however, that the raising of adequate funds in this way will be a long and tedious job unless a really big publicity campaign is launched. Before the latter can be inaugurated successfully, a small group of Catholic business and professional men and women must come forward prepared to back the Catholic Film Society in its publicity campaign and to finance, say, two social documentaries to be made for public exhibition.
The production of such short films while the publicity campaign is being set on foot is essential, since it would show that the Catholic body in this country means business, and that the pennies as collected would be put to an immediate use.

Moreover, if the pennies, half-crowns, or pounds, are to be successfully collected on a mass scale, it is surely reasonable to ask that those who have funds to invest, or credit available, should set an example by coming forward in an ample way.

After all such backers can, in association with the Catholic Film Society, form themselves into a Company in order to supervise expenditure and to ensure that a reasonable return on their investment will eventuate. Those who have the means will not be "giving in charity" but rather will be "getting in early" on what will be eventually a profitable venture. For once a flow of short and feature films of quality is set going, films blazing with the beauty and drama of our Christian heritage, the demand of English-speaking Catholics throughout the world, and indeed of other audiences, will surely not only astonish supporters but repay any help given now a hundred fold.

So let us cast our bread upon the waters realising, however, that this "charity" is a better bet than any "pool"!

In my view, certain definite steps should be taken now, as follows:

(1) The calling of a meeting of all who would guarantee to give substantial financial support for the formation of a private film production company.

(2) The formation of an Executive committee, including the existing committee of the Catholic Film Society, who would appoint three sub-committees:

(a) A finance committee whose first duty would be the collection of the aforesaid advances, the preparations for forming a private producing company, and the securing of further finance.

(b) A production committee to consider what short and long films should be made as a beginning, and to supervise production.

(c) A publicity committee whose function would be to appoint a publicity manager and to supervise the publicity campaign.

It is essential that each sub-committee should consist exclusively of persons having professional experience of the subjects for which they will be responsible, otherwise the amateurishness so often associated with well-meaning idealists will stultify all possibility of efficient production.

Nothing but bold tactics will ensure the aim in view. Let Catholics remember that in other less favoured countries the opportunity of supporting the making of such films would not be given them.

Yours faithfully,

C. A. RADLEY,
Managing Director,
Selwyn Films.

FABBERIQUE—Continued from page 104

Mass on Sundays to refresh their souls; then adjourn to the pub where they drink the wine of the country and sing and dance and refresh their bodies. All very simple you may say. But simplicity, when it is the right stuff, is a tonic. I think this film makes its appeal precisely because it is informed with that simplicity which fills a man with wonder, when he beholds the miracle of life.

"The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God" sings the psalmist. Sartre says there is no God. In one of his plays: The Flies, Orestes defies the gods in the name of his new-found freedom. He cries: "From now on I'll take no one's orders, neither man's nor God's." Enough said! Les jeux sont fait preaches the gospel of darkness, of anarchy and of selfishness.

Fabberique sings the song of the wonder of life.

Les jeux sont fait lays down the law that life is absurd and is without purpose.

Fabberique reveals both the pains of life and the poetry of life and the mystery of its sublime purpose.

Nothing happens by chance.

I like to think that it is no mere chance that close to a cinema which is showing an atheistic film, there is a cinema which is showing a film which is its answer.

E.
SCIENCE AND RELIGION

AN INTERESTING NON-CATHOLIC VENTURE

A
organisation known as the Committee of Fact and Faith Films of which the chairman is Lt.-Gen. Sir William Dobbie, is arranging to show two 16 mm. films in colour to schools and factories in this country, free of charge. The pictures, made by the Moody Bible Institute of Science, Los Angeles, are called God of the Atom and God of Creation and run for about forty minutes each. They are described as "sermons from science" and in their popular presentation of scientific discoveries are quite first rate. Considered as cinema they are good too, and free from any of the amateurishness which can be the bane of "religious" films. The sound track I heard was not all it might have been, but that may have been due to usage. The Americanism of the commentary may not please British audiences, but an English voice would have been even more unpleasing to Americans. The choice of music, if not exactly inspired, might have been far worse.

The films are calculated to give a shock to any who imagine that science has disproved traditional Christianity, or rendered it superfluous. For a real scientist, who obviously "knows his stuff", occasionally reads passages from the bible in his laboratory and argues (as does the Catholic apologist) from the existence and nature of the world to its Creator. Nor does he leave it at that, but proceeds to the corollary of the folly of man if he ignores God. It was a really interesting experience to see a film which begins and continues for some time in regular documentary style and then (in marked contrast to the typical documentary) points a theological moral. And this is done very effectively, with obvious sincerity and humility, and without either unctuousness or revivalistic emotionalism or hysteria. As Gen. Dobbie's name might indicate, these films have a nonconformist backing and originate from the corresponding elements in America. But in spite of inevitable differences in phraseology and emphasis, I cannot recall anything to which a Catholic censor could object. (I had to leave after the first, i.e. the stellar part of the second film.) Extremes proverbially meet, and a Catholic may sometimes find himself more at home in the atmosphere of evangelicalism than in that of moderate or modernistic Anglican churchmanship.

God of the Atom gives some account, in the best tradition of popular science, of the nature and use of atomic energy. It is not too technical, nor more obscure than necessary, and never dull. Its thesis is that only a return to God can save man from inflicting incalculable harm upon the human race by abusing his discoveries.

God of Creation is less topical and more perennial. It uses telescope and microscope to illustrate first the magnitude of creation and then the intimacy of divine providence as shown in the minute detail of organic life.

The use of the Protestant version of the Bible and the unawareness of the Church as custodian and interpreter of Scripture make these films hardly suitable for Catholic schools. But Catholics would have cause for the greatest satisfaction if they could produce something equivalent to this truly praiseworthy achievement of our separated brethren.

Q.

Penny a Day Fund

ARE
YOU
CONTRIBUTING?

See Page 2 of cover
VISUAL AIDS

LIBRARIES:
Dawn Trust Film Library, Aylesbury, Bucks.
Gateway Film Productions, 84 Powys Lane, Palmers Green, N.13.
V.I.S. (Visual Information Service), 168a Battersea Bridge Road, S.W.11.
G.B.I. (Gaumont-British Instructional) Films, Ltd., Aintree Road, Perivale, Middx.
B.I.F. (British Instructional Films), Mill Green Road, Mitcham, Surrey.

RELIGIOUS FILMS
PRODIGAL SON. Dawn Trust. DCF3, 2 reels, 22 mins. Age 11 onwards. Hire: Silent 12/-, Sound 20/-.
"NO GREATER POWER" (Zaccheus) DCF4, ditto.
"WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?" DCF6, 3 reels, 30 mins. Hire: Silent 17/-, Sound 25/-.

Three of the beautiful "Cathedral Films" available from the Dawn Trust Library which demonstrate the value of the film in translating the Gospel Story into the picture language which appeals so strongly to the child and the immature adult of today.

The subjects are handled with the reverence they merit. No pains nor expense has been spared to give faithful pictures of the Holy Land—the Judean desert, the Lakeside, and the hamlets of Galilee—nor of the dwellings of the people and their clothes and customs. The same is true of the characterisation. And we are not disappointed of glimpses of the Master, in which He is depicted with strength and dignity, as well as tenderness.

The one objection to these films in Catholic eyes is the addition of a good deal of imaginative detail in the form of biographical incidents for which there is no evidence in the Gospels and which are sometimes trivial, not to say confusing. This applies to both the Good Samaritan and Zaccheus and lessens their teaching value, however much it may suit the parish hall, for, as every teacher knows, children will be unable to distinguish fact from fiction, and are sure to remember the wrong thing. In both the films in question these apocryphal details occur in the first reel, which could be omitted: but this would make the hiring charges seem rather heavy. Otherwise both films are excellent, and the Prodigal Son is also very good.

There are 16 other films in the series, all available in both sound and silent versions. These reviews were made from the silent films. In each case it is important to see the film through before using it. There are also film-strips to correspond, which will be reviewed in a later issue of Focus.

HISTORY FILMS

Shows travel by coach: 18th century roads, turnpike and tollgate, and the inevitable highwayman. Gives glimpses of the countryside, both enclosed and unenclosed, of Georgian houses, and a market town. Also homelife of the leisureed classes, their costume, pottery, pictures, furniture and books. Also the changes in farming and industry, the new implements and machinery and some of their effects.

The film is interesting and informative and would be valuable for teaching. But it raises a number of questions—what about town life? the have-nots? the underworld? Hogarth's London? the London of the Coffee Houses and Gordon Riots? the social services? Education?—in other words, the film should either have been longer, or shorter—i.e., taking one aspect only, or many more. Let us hope that we may one day have further reels of, say, Georgian London; and the Other Side of the Medal.

The production is very pleasant, the photography is good, and the colour delightful, especially the warm mellow colouring of the Georgian houses, of which there are delightful shots showing valuable architectural details. The film contains a number of stills which are rather irritating—the market town, the water mill, the agricultural machinery—the picture reproductions are poor and would be better omitted, or shown in
their setting, as might the pottery: though this is much better reproduced than the pictures.


Simple outline of evolution of Gothic Arch from Round to Perpendicular, showing principles of construction without confusing detail or unnecessary terminology. The functional superiority of the pointed arch is explained by means of diagrams, and illustrated by examples of vaulting, lancet windows, Early English doorways, leading on to the Decorated and Perpendicular styles. Examples are also given of the 19th century Gothic revival.

It might have been thought that the subject would make a better film-strip than film: but, contrary to expectation, it makes a very good film for the purposes of revision, for which it is designed. The movement conveys the sense of development; the diagrams are clear and the examples well chosen; the omissions are judicious though a few more examples of the decorated period might have been given. There are no place names, which is really better for children, though tantalising for grown-ups!

**FILM-STRIPS FOR GEOGRAPHY**

Geography teachers have for many years used Visual Aids in the form of pictures, diagrams, maps, slides and films. To these may now be added the film-strip, which has many advantages. It is small and therefore more easily carried about and stored than a set of slides or pictures. The film-strip projector is more easily worked than the Episcoppe and can be used in an undarkened room. As the strip is a collection of "still" pictures each one may be left on the screen for a varying length of time according to the amount of description necessary. In this way the film-strip is better than films.

**V.I.S. as a Source of Supply for Film-Strips for Geography.**

The above firm have a very good supply of geographical film-strips. The following are a selection.


This includes a good, clear map showing the physical divisions of the country. The strip gives a survey of the whole of North Germany and emphasises the varying scenery of the low sandy coast and the Great Northern Plain. There are pictures to illustrate farming occupations, water transport and industry. There are many illustrations of the towns from the great North Sea and Baltic ports to the industrial cities of the Ruhr.


This deals with South Germany and again there are good maps. There are good pictures of the Rhine basin including the Rift valley, and the gorge scenery is illustrated in pictures of the Vosges, the Black Forest and the Bavarian Alps. There are also good pictures of the medieval cities of South Germany.

Together, these two strips would provide material for a series of lessons on Germany. Also some of the pictures in the second, e.g., the Rhine gorge, would be useful for physical geography.

**THE LAKE DISTRICT.** No. 198. Price 3/-. Age 13-16.

This illustrates mountain scenery and shows some of the most beautiful peaks of the Lake District. It includes a number of pictures of lake scenery. It might be used for one lesson on the Lake District, but also provides pictures suitable for physical geography or geology for illustrating the effects of glaciation.

**THE NORFOLK BROADS.** No. 227. Price 3/-. Age 13-16.

This is a contrast to the previous film-strip and might be used with it for comparing the different types of scenery in England.

It gives pictures of the East Anglian rivers, the Yare and the Waveney, and also scenes on the Broads and in the Fenlands. There are also some pictures of bird life.


This shows the physical features of North Island with good views of the hot spring district of Rotorua. There are
good pictures of the Maoris and their way of life. This film-strip would provide good material for revision for a class which has listened to the B.B.C. Travel Talks this year.

This shows the fine mountain scenery of South Island with pictures of snow covered mountains and glaciers. It provides interesting material for the study of physical geography, and some of the scenery illustrated could be compared with that shown in the film-strip of the English Lake District.

FILM-STRIPS FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

English has less to gain than most subjects from Visual Aids. Yet a judicious showing of pictures to illustrate the books read in class can stimulate the imagination and quicken the memory of many children in the lower and middle ranges of school age. The following are a few specimen film-strips chosen at random to test the general validity of this theory.

ALICE IN WONDERLAND. Illustrated by Tenniel. V.I.S. No. 182. Price 4/-.
There is no need to comment on Tenniel’s pictures, so often unhappily displaced in children’s books by those of lesser artists. This strip is excellent and could be on view, picture by picture, while the class of eights and nines is reading from an unillustrated edition of “Alice”: better to have the best or nothing.

A very happy choice of animal pictures and incidents from a Nursery classic. The pictures would help the children beginning to read stories on their own as well as forming subjects for oral composition and written sentences.

The pictures here might make good revision of the story and the children could compare them with those formed in their minds while reading the book. The figures are biblical in character and the frames vary between engraved and photographic types which tends to destroy the connection between them. Christian’s age ranges from that of a youth to that of an old man inconsistently, and some of the scenes are unattractive. Part II might be used as material for original composition as it is less often read in school.

This book should be read more in schools than it is. But the strip is not very attractive. Some of the pictures are not clear and others are over crowded. The night scenes are interesting, but the figures might put the children off wanting to read about their adventures. Perhaps Don Quixote characters are best left to the imagination.

The incidents here illustrated are well chosen. The people are in character, in some cases fearsome but not grotesque, in others pleasant to look at. There are some very good backgrounds such as Peggotty’s house and the seashore. The life and dress of the period are well illustrated.

SIR WALTER SCOTT. V.I.S. No. 240. Price 7/-.
This series of frames shows scenes from Scott’s life and from the novels. There are some lovely pictures of Scotch country, ruins and buildings. But it is confusing on the whole, with odd pictures from different novels difficult to identify when the stories are not well known, as is likely to be the case with school children. It is too slight to stimulate interest leading to further reading.

A good series: pleasing pictures which show real, not fanciful background to Shakespeare’s life. The strip would illustrate very well, though perhaps sketchily, an account of the theatre in Shakespeare’s time, showing as it does Bankside with the Globe and Swan theatres, and a few contemporary actors, though had these been in costume they would have been still more useful.
MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.
V.I.S. No. 183. Price 2/-. This, on the other hand, is not so effective. The figures will not please children reading and acting the play: they make the fairies earthly and do not enhance the incidents of the play that they are chosen to illustrate. The pictures alternate with a few lines of explanation and verse.

A very good use to which the English teacher could put the film-strip would be as material for reviews for V and VI pupils, limiting comment and criticism to a few lines of apt and well-chosen words as a preparation for studying the reviews of films, plays and books in the press.

FILMS FOR JUNIORS


KING PENGUINS, G.B.I., FM793, 2 reels, 18 mins. All ages. Hire: 3/6 mute version of a sound film.

These films were found useful in developing the interests aroused in a class of eight and nine year olds by a study of Scott's Last Expedition. The first two mentioned aim at isolating and concentrating on the essential physical features of their subjects; they are so short that each can be shown several times in the same lesson, so allowing for increasing accuracy of observation; but the individual shots are not always long enough and more "close-ups" are required. Films had been selected as the most natural manner of showing living creatures, but it is likely that a film-strip would have been a more successful aid. (A film-strip entitled Penguins is available: B.I.F. 133, 10/-.) These two films belong to a series of 20 zoo films for primary schools, for which a complete set of teaching notes is available for 2/- to enable teachers to plan ahead, and several of the titles have parallel film-strips which can be bought, but not hired.

King Penguins is longer and was more satisfactory, giving close and clear views of structural details: beak, tail, legs, feet, feathers, etc., and swimming in slow motion. It opens by showing the birds in their native Antarctic (more of this is desirable but perhaps not easy to obtain), continues with studies of them in the Edinburgh Zoo and devotes the second reel to the rearing of the chick. As this is an all-age film, the mute version (having neither voice nor captions but accompanied by detailed notes on the successive subjects involved) was chosen for younger children and easily adapted to them; one obscure point, however, arose: a wooden crate super-imposed on a sea background was meant to indicate how the penguins were transported from the Antarctic to Edinburgh; this is likely to prove misleading to the realistic junior and explanation may fail to eradicate the fallacious visual impression.

AS WE GO TO PRESS

NEWS

As we go to press, there is news that an attempt is being made to form a group to bring Mousier Vincent to England. This will be good news to the many people who have been asking us when they will be able to see this superb film. It is a pity that the compromise recently reached between the Board of Trade and the American film industry, should have had the effect of leaving the Continental film people very much in the cold. The enormous tax which is levied on Continental films makes exhibitors in this country think quite a lot before introducing new films.

Andrew Buchanan writes to say that the film which he has made for the Medical Missionaries of Mary is to be called Visitation. It is now through the laboratories and almost ready for showing. It has a commentary spoken by Robert Speight and music provided by Westminster Cathedral Choir.

Mr. Buchanan is writing a book about the film in which he will deal with some of the problems regarding the making of religious films. He has some revolutionary ideas about the production of religious films which should be of the greatest interest to Catholics. We look forward both to the film and the book.
COVER PERSONALITY

JEAN SIMMONS

ONE of the distressing features of film acting is the ease with which certain players deteriorate, morally and artistically. This is a consequence of the artificial and distorted values which the cinema presents on the screen and which, in the nature of things, it is not surprising to find shared to some extent by the less intelligent among the actors and actresses. Particularly is this the case with juvenile film stars. One can recall many a youngster spoiled by the adulation and unnatural attention which surround the film star.

It is always, therefore, with something like incredulous gratitude that one hears of a talented young player who manages to keep a sense of proportion and to remain unspoiled by success. Jean Simmons is such a one. Her rise to fame has been meteoric even by studio standards. In three years, at the age of eighteen, she has the pinnacle of distinction by being chosen to play Ophelia in Laurence Olivier’s presentation of Hamlet. From the moment when she “hopped on to the stage” to sing in The Way To The Stars, she has moved from success to success. The part of the harp player in Caesar and Cleopatra; the native girl in Black Narcissus; a small part in Hungry Hill; Estella in Great Expectations; a leading rôle in Woman In The Hall; all have marked a steady improvement and balance in Jean’s performance. Even that hammy monstrosity, Uncle Silas, could not extinguish or diminish her growing vitality. Now she has reached what many a stage actress regards as the “plum” rôle in the repertory, that of Ophelia in Hamlet, a rôle demanding youth, vitality and outstanding acting ability, a trio of perfections possessed by very few actresses. It remains to be seen what Jean Simmons, under the inspired and expert direction of Olivier, has been able to make of this part, but previews suggest that, difficult as the task must have been for her, she has succeeded in establishing herself as the authentic Ophelia. If so, then she has reached world success at an age when most actresses are beginning to “walk on”.

There seems little likelihood of Jean now being spoilt. She has had the advantages of a normal and healthy home atmosphere. Her screen career has not been allowed to interfere with her home life. Her mother has insisted on that. In addition, Jean has shown a willingness to learn and an intelligent interest in the technical side of her profession that has resulted in a steady growth of poise, elegance and charm. In other words, she has had the sense to realise that the craft of the film player, like any other artistic vocation, demands all that the personality is capable of in the way of creative effort. No artist ever reaches the heights of expression without the discipline of study.

Jean Simmons was born and bred in London. She was educated at the Grange Hill School, Golders Green. She lives with her mother and a brother and sister. Her elder sister, Edna, whom she recently met again after three years’ separation, in America, started her off on her screen career. She suggested that Jean train at the Aida Foster School of Dancing. Her dancing teacher, Mrs. Foster, obtained a small film part for her in Margaret Lockwood’s picture, Give Us The Moon. She was chosen for this part from among two hundred applicants. Since then she has appeared in twelve pictures including the recently-finished Blue Lagoon.

Jean is very popular with the studio hands. She has the happy knack of being interested in others. On every hand one hears stories of her friendliness and natural charm. It is pleasant to know that the searing life of the studio has left her unscathed. She is obviously marked out for world honours in the acting profession. It is satisfactory to know that she will do credit to this country.

JOHN VINCENT.
S. M. EISENSTEIN, MARY FIELD,
D. W. GRIFFITH, ROGER MANVELL,
GEORGES SADOUL, CAVALCANTI

are among those
who have recently contributed to

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FOCUS: A FILM REVIEW

(Incorporating "Catholic Film News")
ORGAN OF THE CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY

Vol. I JUNE, 1948 No. 6

EDITORIAL

ORCHIDS AND NO ORCHIDS

FOCUS has no orchids or blandishments for the Miss Blandish film which Dilys Powell suggests should be put under a special category, D, which denotes disgusting. Writing about this type of film Pope Pius XI says, "...When one thinks of the havoc wrought in the souls of youth and of childhood, of the loss of innocence so often suffered in motion picture theatres, there comes to mind the terrible condemnation pronounced by Our Lord upon the corruption of little ones: Whosoever shall scandalise one of these little ones who believe in Me, if were better for him that a mill-stone be hanged around his neck and that he be drowned in the depths of the sea."

To those inclined to argue that the Blandish film is for adults and not for little ones, I would pass on the verdict of those who know human nature best, that morally and spiritually most of us are little ones. For Christians to see a film which Public Decency has condemned is, to say the least, rash.

For the film Hamlet, Focus has the choicest (verbal) orchids. To Sir Laurence Olivier, to his whole team, and to the British Film Industry, the Editorial Board of this paper offers its gratitude and congratulations. "In Hamlet," says the magazine, Life, "The combination of a dramatic masterpiece and a great actor at his peak is certain to be one of this year's artistic events." No doubt, pedants will continue to amuse themselves by saying that film is an industry and not an art form, but the film Hamlet makes them as voices crying in the wilderness of words.

There is a another film (in another order of course) which deserves a spray of orchids. Andrew Buchanan's, Visitation, reveals in an alive and dignified manner the heroic work of The Medical Missionaries of Mary. Mother, Mary Martin, Foundress of this Order, told me that it was the Pope's Encyclical, "Vigilanti Cura," which inspired her to have this film made. I believe that this film will be the inspiration for other films about religion.

Andrew Buchanan, who calls our age "The Short Age," sees "...An opportunity, perhaps the greatest ever likely to be presented, to produce films about religion as distinct from religious films...films that will mirror the cynical materialist on the screen and make him understand that he is responsible for the Short Age. Films in which cocksure characters who have no time for Christ will say just the things they do say every day, instead of people clad in soft raiments talking in poetic whispers about religion as if it was some fragrant thing of the past entirely unrelated to the world of today. Films which will announce the startling fact that all or nearly all of us are obeying the wrong boss and that if we persist in regarding the State as the only God and obey its commands as systematically as we disregard Christ's teachings, we are doomed."

Visitation has its Premiere at Studio One on June 23rd. We wish it, Bon Voyage.

EDITOR.

James Hadley Chase has written a sequel to *No Orchids For Miss Blandish*. The book reviewer of one of our national dailies describes it as "another saga from the same mould of sex and sadism. The heroine is a homicidal maniac of irresistible beauty. She blinds or murders the men who kiss her. A lot of men kiss her. That is the book." Evidently a fitting successor to the film that is setting the critics and trade a nice case of conscience.

Mr. Chase is, I am told, an inoffensive-looking Englishman, who lives in a London suburb. Clearly he derives some satisfaction from writing the unpleasant novels for which his name is notorious. Equally clearly there are film makers with the same bright ideas; doubtless also inoffensive little men living in London suburbs but not unwilling to profit from the fact that certain perverse types get a thrill and take pleasure from witnessing cruelty indulged in for its own sake.

Persons who pander to the unhealthy tastes of such pathological cases by the production of films such as *No Orchids* and *Idol of Paris* label themselves as the merest purveyors of mental deformity. Those who knowingly exploit sadistic perversion and expose the minds of normal people to contamination for the sake of profit, exhibit a criminal sense of irresponsibility as providers of public entertainment.

The fact that the British Board of Film Censors has seen fit to give this film a certificate for public exhibition indicates the weakness of a system of censorship which rests on a series of taboos, the circumvention of which causes no difficulties to skilful and unscrupulous producers.

*No Orchids For Miss Blandish* is brutal, sadistic, immoral. It is the story of an American heiress who is kidnapped, sees her fiancé beaten and kicked to death, who then witnesses the murder of other members of the gang by various methods of Nazi thuggery, who, when the leader of the gang restores her stolen diamonds and tells her to return to her home, refuses to go and tells him that though he is a murderer and a thief, she loves and will remain with him, who, when eventually he is killed by the police with a tommy-gun, jumps to her death from a skyscraper window.

The film adds insult to injury for it is a second-rate attempt to copy the Humphrey Bogart toughness which does not come off. The "American" accents of most of the players are puerile.

The trade papers are saying that the public is confounding the critics by the way in which it is crowding to the London Plaza. I suggest that the readers of this journal may safely take it for granted that, in company with the best critics of the daily and weekly press, we are competent to give a judgment on this film; that they resist the temptation to boost the film by their attendance and that by means of C.P.E.A. and similar organisations, they organise protests to the cinema managers in their districts against the growing tendency to show such unwholesome films.


Those who were most downcast by the
death of Richard Tauber and the closing of British National Studios may take some heart from this film to end all films about Imperial Austria, especially if they have never been nearer to Vienna than the corner of the Tottenham Court Road. There are the strains of Strauss, uniforms galore in Natalie Kalmus’ technicolor, the Emperor Franz Josef’s familiar whiskers and yodelling up in the Paramounts—all this and Crosby too, who is an American phonograph salesman in love with a Countess. “A common film for silly people” was my first reaction, but perhaps that was too summary. It has its less crude moments, as, for example, in some of the lines given to the Emperor, and I really enjoyed the conscientious psychoanalysis of a female dog by a doctor claiming to be a pupil of Freud himself.

The secondary love interest, also morganatic, between two dogs will not be everyone’s taste. On the rare occasions when an original idea is to be found in a picture it tends to set a fashion. And so I seem to sense that in the cigar-laden atmosphere of “story conferences”, plots are already being hatched to include romantic parts for more of our dumb friends. Perhaps theyearnings of cabaret singers will be paralleled by cats on the tiles. (Love always sounds a melancholy affair for both species.)

There are some assorted ecclesiastics in very un-Austrian costume littered about the set from time to time, the implication being, I think, that Imperial Austria was, of course, Roman Catholic, besides being rather quaint and out-of-date in other ways. The particularly odious type played by Bing Crosby was, I am glad to add, a Presbyterian.

The personality of Roland Culver is submerged in the part of a conventional stage Baron. Was it for this that he went to Hollywood?

A foreword on the screen explains that none of the incidents ever happened. I shouldn’t have minded if the film hadn’t happened either.

MIRANDA. Starring: Glynis Johns, Googie Withers, Griffith Jones, John McCallum, with David Tomlinson, Yvonne Owen, Sonia Holm, Margaret Rutherford.
Producer: Betty E. Box.

Perhaps it was a subconscious memory of a brand of cigarettes called Miranda’s Dream—once smelled, never forgotten—or experience of so many films of the impossible type, which made me feel sure that this one would turn out in the end to be the dream of a man undergoing artificial respiration. But no. This adaptation by Peter Blackmore of his stage play is put over straight. And indeed, given the premises that mermaids exist and that one could be brought to London by a doctor, who palms her off as a patient unable to walk, the rest of the story follows with hilariously relentless logic.

The part of the naively amorous mermaid is a triumph for Glynis Johns, both in its more sirenic aspect and when she wolfs fish and answers a sea-lion back. (Personally I thought the photographic effects—the tail and all that—were very satisfactory.)

I feel bound to say that there are some things which will shock those who consider that the ethics of fantastic forces should be taken au grand sérieux. And I am so nervous about leading people astray that I am putting the picture into Category A, lest some indignant father should write to the editor complaining that, as the result of seeing it, his adolescent son has become entangled with a mermaid.

Q.


I like to believe that the best type of film is a documentary treader with a strong crisp story. In this film a golden opportunity was lost. Lost, I think, through haste. Or, maybe (this is of course merely a private surmise) because the men that matter forgot how impor-
tart is the script. When in November 1946, the American Army Dakota crashed and the dramatic rescue of passengers and crew became world news, Sidney Box smelt a story. In six weeks the script was written, and within a few hours Kenneth Annakin, youngest of Sidney Box’s directing team was en route for the Alps in search of location scenes. Now, I suggest that six weeks is not sufficient time to write a script. The documentary half of this film is impressive, at times it is artistically exciting, but the story which centres around the thirteen characters who are lost in snow-man’s land, sags at the knees. The characters are cliché characters. There is an operatic tenor who is a self-indulgent lump of humanity; a film actress who is hysterical and the complete egoist; an Englishman who is cool, calm and collected; and a foreigner who pinches the rations. The whole bang lot of them run true to type. There is a boy in an iron lung who is always petulant but ends up by making good by performing an act which you are meant to believe is heroic but which in plain language is suicide. (For those weak on their doctrine I must here point out that under no circumstances is one permitted to take one’s own life even when the motive is noble.)

The acting of the whole cast is very good. I particularly admired the acting of Phyllis Calvert and Francis L. Sullivan. And the photography is grand. If by entertainment you mean something you can enjoy today and forget tomorrow you will find this film right up your film street.

E.


It is always pleasant to hear good music well sung, and Nino Martini begins this film by singing O Paradiso, from Meyerbeer’s opera Africana. It is always amusing to see Stanley Holloway and for about ten minutes in this film he is very funny. Hugh Wakefield, Bonar Colleano, and Charles Goldner (the latter as a temperamental film producer) also keep us amused for varying lengths of time (unfortunately, all too short). It must be confessed, however, that this is another of those flops from British studios to which we have now, unhappily, become accustomed. Why should it be so? Here is a story which had possibilities. A cast which, apart from Patricia Roc, is first class. Production and camera work more than average good. Yet the thing limps and creaks like a mechanical circus. The accusing finger points and the offending script-writers and director blush with shame. Or do they? That is the interesting and exasperating point. Do they not know as well as we do that the dialogue is (granting some moments of inspiration) banal to a degree? Does no one see that Patricia Roc and Nino Martini comport themselves like a couple of over-ripe hams? Why is it that, since Millions Like Us, Patricia Roc has never been able to find a part that suits her, or do better with those that do not?

The story is of a famous tenor on his way to make a film in Rome. He misses his train when he comes to the rescue of an English girl in trouble with her pekinese. They wander about during the night seeking food and shelter and end up in prison as vagabonds.

A distinguished lady critic at the Press Show said that One Night With You was far too long as one was unable to sleep for the noise. I sympathise with her. It was a bit much. However, it is worth seeing for the sake of Stanley Holloway and Charles Goldner.

V.


Though not partial to sententious tramps and quack philosophy of the you-and-life type (like that dished out by the popular press) I felt well disposed to this re-issue for quite a time. The
film has some astringent touches, a flair for small part casting and a convincing capacity to depict the New York of boxing rings and dance halls. For a while it seemed to have "got something". If only, like the preacher, it knew how to stop when it had finished. Instead, it slides lamely into an aimless series of clichés—obvious sentiment, Carnegie Hall, and that favourite of Hollywood in the early 1930s, gangsters slugging one another and doubling up in front of the camera. And the last part was further vitiated for me by the fact that James Cagney, as the partially blinded boxer, was made up about the eyes in a way slightly but unmistakably reminiscent of Donald Duck.

A promising but disappointing picture.

Q.


Sylvia Russel (Sonia Dresdel) was a woman who broke up her daughter's married happiness, who corrupted the morals of her maid by giving her smutty novels to read, who led her mild, dog-loving, rose-growing husband, a hell of a life, who finally reached the climax of her sadism by poisoning her husband (Walter Fitzgerald) in order to pave the way (so she imagined!) for a marriage with Walter's friend, Austin Penrose (Cyril Raymond), a man of power and distinction. She, however, underrated Penrose. Penrose would not be drawn into her satanic web. The film tells us that Sylvia committed these crimes because she was frustrated. Frustrated be hanged! She was just a low-down criminal who wouldn't control her lust (worst of all lusts) for power. No, sir, you cannot explain away the sin of pride (and that is what power-mania really is) by calling it frustration. I confess that this sort of celluloid-psychology bores me limp. This sort of neurotic type has been written up and filmed ad nauseam. This Was A Woman has nothing new to say, and what it does say, it says feebly. Sonia Dresdel portrays this brand of neurotic with no inner feeling of conviction or reality. A female power-maniac is cunning, subtle, serpent-like, her tricks are not obvious. Sonia Dresdel is much too obvious, she plays the part with no subtlety, all the time she seems to be forcing on you the particular type she is meant to be playing. In justice to this film I should point out that your sympathy is not drawn towards the frustrated Sylvia. She is sent to prison. But punishment is not the cure for sin. This type of film probes a problem, but never suggests a remedy. And that, I feel, is its chief weakness.

E.

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT:


Chesterton in his magnificent Everlasting Man points out the fallacy that is so commonly accepted by the so-called rationalist, that whereas the Christ of the Gospels was a simple, kindly, uncomplicated moral teacher, the Church has hidden this human character in repellant dogmas and stiffened it with ecclesiastical terrors until it has taken on an inhuman character. "This is... very nearly the reverse of the truth. The truth is that it is the image of Christ in the churches that is almost entirely mild and merciful. It is the image of Christ in the Gospels that is a good many other things as well."

Though this film is produced with great reverence, there is nothing in it to show that its makers believed Christ to be God Incarnate. It is the story of the son of a scribe who, wishing to follow a Leader who would deliver Israel by means of the sword, finds only One who teaches mercy and forgave His enemies. The final scene in the film shows the scribe's son and the Centurion of the Crucifixion walking away, converted by the fact that Our Lord taught His followers to turn the other cheek.

It is this selective attitude towards the Gospel story that makes the Catholic critic somewhat wary in welcoming Bible Story films. "The Church can reasonably be justified if she turns the most merciful face or aspect (of Christ)
towards men; but it is certainly the most merciful aspect that she does turn. ... In any case, there is something insupportable even to the imagination in the idea of turning the corner of a street or coming out into the spaces of a market-place to meet the petrifying petrification of that figure as it turned upon a generation of vipers, or that face as it looked at the face of a hypocrite."

The film is not remarkable as cinema art. It is, indeed, second rate. But its subject compels interest, and it is worth while considered from an educational point of view as a background film. The acting is hardly distinguished save for the masterly performance of Morris Mosovich as the scribe. Here we have the perfection of an actor trained from his youth in the finer points of speech and motion and gesture. His work makes the rest of the cast look terribly amateur.

The sets are, I imagine, the same that are used for the Bible films made for the Dawn Trust Library. For this purpose there is a permanent replica of the Holy City built outside Hollywood in which the New Testament stories are filmed, part by part as the money is collected to make them. The Bible films, of course, being intended mainly for non-theatrical use, show the person of Our Lord. The present film uses only a shadow, and, once or twice, the appearance of a hand.

It is a film to which the family may safely go for something more than entertainment.


This film might be described as a sociological documentary in the form of fiction except that it has none of the merits of good documentary and all the faults of bad fiction. It is a moral tale about the evils which come to girls who set out to have a "good time" without doing much to earn it. It poses a problem but leaves us without an answer. It is a sordid story about a self-willed girl who gets work in a night-club, is framed for a theft, sent to an approved school, escapes, joins up with a Brighton gang of racketeers, is involved with two G.I. deserters who live by theft and violence and ends up serving a sentence of fifteen years' hard labour for manslaughter. It is presumably intended as a cautionary tale for temperamental 'teen-agers and for that reason I put it in Category B., though I should hesitate to suggest it as an evening's entertainment for my young friends. In view of recent violence on the screen, it must be said in fairness that the necessary violence in this film is of a kind that need not disturb normal and disciplined minds.

The film is unequal. Its script is ragged. Its lighting and camera-work is phoney, the editing is harsh and often irritating, the general level of acting is poor. Nevertheless it has its moments. Jean Kent, though unconvincing as a young girl, acts well. Jill Balcon stands out in a small part as a tough girl in the reformatory. Herbert Lom establishes the character of the night-club proprietor as the only real person in the film. Griffith Jones becomes a spiv again and reminds us of his performance in They Made Me A Fugitive.

"Recreation, in its manifold varieties, has become a necessity for people who work under the fatiguing conditions of modern industry, but it must be worthy of the rational nature of man and therefore must be morally healthy. It must be elevated to the rank of a positive factor for good and must seek to arouse noble sentiments. A people who, in time of repose, give themselves to diversions which violate decency, honour, or morality, to recreations which, especially to the young, constitute occasions of sin, are in grave danger of losing their greatness and even their national power.

"It admits of no discussion that the motion picture has achieved these last years a position of universal importance among modern means of diversion."

(Pope Pius XI.)
CATHOLIC ACTION GIRLS ORGANISATION

FILM SUNDAY

THE C.A.G.O. organised a Catholic Film Conference at Manchester on Sunday, April 25th, at Loretto College, Hulme. Father J. A. V. Burke, Hon. Secretary, Catholic Film Society, Paul Dupuis, the well-known French Canadian film actor, and Christopher A. Radley, of Selwyn Film Productions, contributed lectures on aspects of film production and cinema going likely to be of interest to Catholic youth. The conference ended with the showing of two films on “How Talkies Talk” and the “Early History of Film Making.”

Father Burke quoted the Film Encyclical of Pius XI in support of his contention that a positive, constructive, enlightened attitude on the part of Catholics towards the films is the only way in which the dangers inherent in the modern method of highly commercialised film production can be countered and the film turned to good. “It is necessary to influence production of all films so that they may contain nothing harmful from a religious, moral or social standpoint... Why, indeed, should there be a question merely of avoiding what is evil? The motion picture should not be simply a means of diversion, a light relaxation to occupy an idle hour; with its magnificent power it can and must be a bearer of light and a positive guide to what is good.” (“Vigilanti Cura.”)

Father Burke urged the Young Christian Students to equip themselves from the critical point of view. They should realise that to be critical of what they see on the screen makes them more selective; that making their wishes known to the Cinema Industry is one way to ensure that they will get what they want to see.

With regard to films that are unsuitable, such as No Orchids for Miss Blandish and The Idol of Paris, they should be willing to accept the views of competent critics, and resist the temptation to let curiosity take them to the cinema to see the undesirable spectacle.

They should form the habit of letting their cinema managers know their views on films; not only the films they disapprove of, but also those they like and why they like them.

Paul Dupuis said that he was proud to be able to proclaim himself a Catholic film actor. He spoke of the problems of conscience which sometimes confront a Catholic actor when offered films that contain sordid or objectionable characters. He has to decide whether the film as a whole presents vice as attractive or not. He has to think of the effect which his performance will have on the minds of those who see it.

Christopher Radley, having explained some of the technical processes connected with the making of films, spoke of the factors that make for expense in film production and the multitude of operations demanded by modern studio methods: of the hazards which lighting and sound can contribute to the worries of the director. Mr. Radley made a plea for an intelligent appreciation on the part of Catholics to the problems inherent in the production of films. Their interest and understanding could hasten the day when Catholic influence would ensure the highest quality films both from the artistic and the moral point of view.

PENNY A DAY FOR 240 DAYS’ FUND

IF one fourth of the Catholic population in England and Scotland contributed a penny a day for 240 days The Catholic Film Society in England would be able to set up a production unit.

It was the pennies of the Catholic population in France that made the making of the film Monsieur Vincent possible.

Kindly send a donation to:

Hon. Secretary,
Rev. J. A. V. Burke, Mayfield College, Mayfield, Sussex
NEWS FROM THE STUDIOS

Kathleen Ryan's next film is Esther Waters, an adaptation of the novel by George Moore. In it she plays opposite a new screen actor named Dirk Bogarde. This is his first film and the part is the reward of much excellent work in repertory companies in and around London. By all appearances Dirk is another of the galaxy of talented male youth which has broken out over the British film world of late.

Kathleen Ryan breaks new ground in Esther Waters; she plays the part of an English kitchen-maid whose narrow, chapel upbringing is shocked by the horses and gambling which are the business of the household in which she finds herself. This should give Kathleen a chance to show us another side of her talent for character.

Also in the film with her is that great little actor, Cyril Cusack, another of the Abbey Theatre players who will be remembered for the vital performance he gave as the cowardly taxi driver in Odd Man Out.

Cyril has played much on the English stage. During the war he played opposite Vivien Leigh in The Doctor's Dilemma. He is a very conscientious actor and takes the greatest interest in what may be called the philosophy of his art.

Much publicity was given at the time to the announcement that Mr. Rank was putting a film studio at the disposal of the producers of Religious Films. Work has now started on The Wedding Feast, the first of three 30 minute Biblical films at the Gate Studio, Elstree. G.H.W. Productions hope, with the aid of the latest equipment and up-to-date studio, to put the quality of Religious Film Production on the same footing as feature films.

When completed, the films will be available for audiences in Church Halls, Sunday Schools and educational establishments all over the world.

SOME FILMS REVIEWED

NOTE: Category A, indicates adults only; B, adults and adolescents; C, family audiences; D, particularly for children.

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This film gives you more than a peep beyond the Regency façade and you see that things and kings are not always what they seem. George, Prince of Wales and Regent of England, self-styled "First Gentleman of Europe" you see to be no gentleman at all. For a couple of hours you live in a world in which butlers behave like princes and princes behave like louts. Cavalcanti, the director, certainly knows how to create physical and psychological atmosphere. He brings the dead to life and makes the past become the present, you accept his characters as characters, not as puppets. I loved the sequence in which Princess Charlotte stands up to the Prince, her father, who has opposed her marriage to Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg and just tells him what she thinks of him. There is much to admire in this film... its build-up is as nice a piece of technique as you could wish to see; the distinguished colourful period costumes convinced me that the English are now a race of shop-keepers, who sell second-hand clothes, the acting is polished, the direction is finely chiselled; the love story of Charlotte and Prince Leopold is told with dignity and the right amount of pathos; and the script is intelligent and witty; unfortunately, it is the sort of script which seems to come along once in a season.

I particularly admired the acting of
Joan Hopkins who plays the part of Princess Charlotte. She is not stereotyped; she has character and individuality; a lovely voice and very graceful manners. Cecil Parker's acting is, of course, outstanding, but I did not think (and I still do not think) that he portrayed the real Regent, who according to the testimony of his wife (Amy Frank) and his mother (Frances Waring) was a really nasty piece of work. To me Cecil Parker seemed to portray the more pleasant type of roué. But what I want to know is this... Does a profligate, such as was the Regent Prince George, merit a film? E.


Hamlet is the world's most famous play and Sir Laurence Olivier has provided us with its most outstanding performance. There is not here enough space to deal with all the issues and implications which this production will call forth. Certain it is that it will arouse all the ire and enthusiasm of all those who think themselves to be authorities on Shakespeare. This number is great and ranges from those who cry "Outrage!" if so much as a syllable be transposed, to those who are incapable of savouring the profundities and beauties of the world's greatest playwright and are indifferent to the treatment he receives. It includes those who think him impossible to film as well as those who think they know how to gild the lily.

It is not easy to come to a conclusion about the filming of Shakespeare. He is a poet, an artist in words, who makes pictures for our delight by playing upon our intellectual imagination through the agency of hearing. Not for him the mechanical monstrosities with which a later generation dared to smother his immortal lines; not for him the struttings and declamations with which many a dynasty of "great actors" presumed to twist his genius for their own self-satisfaction.

Drama has for long been the slave of two of those means to which it exists as end, namely, stage effects and the thing called histrionics. Scenery, if it does more than suggest Nature on the stage, is outdoing its function. The actor who so exaggerates his passion that the rest of the play dwindles into insignificance distorts the work of the poet he pretends to interpret. Shakespeare was not much hampered by these two obstacles. His stage was of the simplest and his actors, especially the boys who played such parts as Lady Macbeth and Cleopatra, well drilled and their voices trained to clear utterance and ready to do what they were told.

When we are asked to consider the filming of Shakespeare's plays, we have to decide whether what is most Shakespearean, that is to say, the thoughts conveyed and the words which convey them, have the primacy of honour. Film is a medium which tells its story by means of visual images. It is, therefore, a medium which, of its nature,
demands the first place in the order of sensual impressions, for what one sees is more telling than what one hears.

So to contrive the marriage of sight and sound that the words are not submerged by the film, but in fact aided by it demands an artist of outstanding ability and integrity. In Laurence Olivier we have such an artist. He has put forth a conception of Shakespeare which defies the conventions of the stage. Nevertheless he preserves the true order. The version which Alan Dent, the editor of the text, has given him to work upon, has many a drastic cut, but it retains the essential structure of the play. It is in translating this version into film that Olivier shows his genius. The manner in which he uses the camera to emphasise the famous lines, sweeping and fluid movement adding significance to every phrase, suggests exciting possibilities yet to be explored in the use of film and poetry.

The setting is of the simplest though it is of enormous proportions. There is no pillar or stone or corner or stairway that does add in some way or other to the point of the words which are uttered in their proximity. The lofty, grey, mist-enshrouded castle is the perfect frame for the dark deeds and sombre thoughts of those who dwell therein.

Inevitably the omission of one or other of the well-loved lines will distress somebody or other, but the film could not be made without such excision. Only the pedant will refuse to agree that here, perhaps for the first time, Hamlet becomes a really coherent, exciting and moving play. The philosophical analysis of character and motive which Shakespeare packed into four hours of playing time is reduced to two and a half hours of pure cinema. Olivier proves himself to be as firm and sensitive a director as he is an actor. He achieves compactness.

"If Hamlet give the first or second hit
Let all the battlements their ordnance give
The King shall drink to Hamlet's better breath..."
and speed by the unhesitating way he treats the play, a treatment which will certainly ensure that the film has the widest possible appeal without sacrificing anything that a developed audience will consider essential to it.

Hamlet, about which men will discourse as long as the English language lasts, is the story of a man of noble nature, faced with an insoluble problem; the conflict of love and obedience, of duty and conscience, of justice and honour.

It is cast with uncanny perception. Every character seems to fit the skin of the actor or actress who plays him. There is not a false note anywhere. Olivier's acting is a thing of tremendous beauty. His soliloquies, especially the famous "To be, or not to be", are given with great thought and power. The technique whereby the motionless face of Hamlet is seen while his voice utters his thoughts, with here and there a vocal interpretation as the thoughts break out, is most effective. His acting in the sequence during which Ophelia tells how Hamlet, "with his doublet all unbraced... and with a look so piteous... comes before me", is emotionally superb. The highest point is reached, I think, in the scene with the Queen: "Look here, upon this picture and on this". Eileen Herlie, as the Queen, also reaches the peak of a fine performance in this scene. Jean Simmons proves herself an actress of quality in the difficult part of Ophelia. She is helped, of course, by the freedom of the film technique, but she takes full advantage of it. Felix Aylmer, as Polonius, sheds new light on the character of that old chatterbox. Terence Morgan, a new-comer to films, gives dignity as well as pathos to the rôle of Laertes. His personal success, especially in the grave and duel scenes, will earn him bigger but hardly better parts.

It is not possible to do justice to a cast of such first-class players. In addition to the other principals, Basil Sydney's King, Norman Wooland's Horatio, and the Gravedigger of Stanley Holloway stand out. In this fact does the high artistry of Olivier show itself again, for, good as he is, he is not isolated or spotlighted by his excellence; the other players also share to make the film what it is.

The Ghost is a disappointment. His comings and goings are adequately eerie, but his voice is like the sound of Funf speaking. There is a wearying slowness and delay perceptible in the scenes between Laertes and the King and Queen.

There are many moments of special delight. For me these were the pathos of the first soliloquy, the tenderness of Ophelia's farewell to her brother, her tragic avowal of love for Hamlet, her death in the stream while the voice of the Queen tells how it occurred, the death and funeral procession of Hamlet. These are the points I shall look for again and again.
An incident in the famous duel sequence with Hamlet and Laertes engaged in the fight with rapier and dagger before the Danish Court.
VISITATION. The Story of the Medical Missionaries of Mary.
Producer: Andrew Buchanan.
Commentary spoken by Robert Speaight. Running time: 70 minutes.

Pope Pius XI said in his Film Encyclical: "Good motion pictures are able to arouse noble ideals of life, to communicate valuable conceptions, to favour understanding among nations, social classes and races, to champion the cause of justice, to give new life to the claims of virtue and to contribute positively to the genesis of a just social order in the world." He praises those who dedicate themselves to the apostolate of the film and insists that they "must make full use of the technical ability of experts and not permit the waste of effort and of money by the employment of amateurs".

The Medical Missionaries of Mary, that up-to-date, progressive, heroic group of women, called into being by the demand of the same far-seeing Pontiff for fully qualified medical missionaries, have perceived the power of the film as a means of stimulating vocations as well as being a source of revenue to enable the material wants of the missionaries to be supplied. More than this; they have seen how a "production wholly inspired by the principles of Christian morality" may have an elevating effect upon the spirit of the beholders quite beyond the immediate aims of the sponsors of the film.

That is the case with Visitation. It is, to speak boldly, a documentary film which deals with the formation of the Medical Missionaries and their work among the natives of Nigeria. That was the data given to Andrew Buchanan, the producer, from which to make his film. But Mr. Buchanan, also, is a man inspired with the idea of film as a means of encouraging mankind to a higher perception of their duty and Christian heritage. Consequently, when the units which he sent out to Nigeria and Eire returned with some 20,000 feet of film, his was the hand that reduced this tangled mass of camera shots of jungle and bush, of negro men and women and children, of poverty and disease, of leper villages and their shocking inhabitants, of the smiling Sisters and their horrifying tasks, of the priests at Mass, administering Baptism, supervising the building of churches and hospitals, strolling confidently at evening among the lepers, in company with the Sisters, bringing by their presence, calm and consolation to these outcasts of man, it was the technical skill and Christian vision of Andrew Buchanan which cut this unwieldy bundle to reasonable size and gave it its form and rhythm made of it something more than a mere record of scenes seen; made of it a moving chronicle of Man's afflictions and Charity's balm.

At it stands it is a tribute to the cameramen and editor. It is also a tribute to the dignity and beauty of the black races; a reminder to some that negroes are something more than boot-blacks and jazz dancers. It is a tribute to the supernatural charity of Mother Mary Martin whose journeys in Nigeria in 1921 where she beheld the misery and squalor and disease of so many of God's African children, resulted by 1937 in the foundation of a group of women medically qualified as doctors, nurses, chemists, laboratory technicians to bring healing and womanly aid to the suffering, in the spirit of Mary, who, bearing the Infant Christ, went forth on a gracious act of womanly charity to her aged cousin, Elizabeth. By alleviating their bodily misery they prepare the way for the coming of Christ through the ministry of His priests.

The film is, from a purely technical point of view, possibly too long. But the message which it bears, the story it tells and the skill with which it has been edited robs it of the tedium which, otherwise such a film might inspire. Given but a fraction of the charity which inspired its sponsors, its audiences will respond warmly to the call of grace and will answer with their prayers, their aims and the offering of themselves to this marvellous work.

The Missionaries are ready to go to any Mission and to undertake any medical work. Calls from China and India are limited only by the numbers of Sisters available and the funds to equip them there. It is the purpose of this film to stimulate a flow of both these prime necessities.

J. A. V. Burke.
CATHRINE LARVIL*  

INTERVIEWS HAMLET’S GHOST

Further, all the foreign consulates opened their offices there, because it was more convenient for passing merchants of all nations than Copenhagen.

After the suspension of the Sound Dues in 1857, the town had to begin again to fight for its existence. In the harbour enormous shipping docks, which are still important to the Danish industry, were built. Luxurious hotels, like Marienlyst, which have an international reputation, and a number of other bathing establishments, have been built along the beach from Elsinore.

But it was Shakespeare who made the name of Elsinore known to the whole world by choosing the historical castle of Kronborg as the scene for his play “Hamlet”. Kronborg is situated on a small hill facing the open sea, with its pure clear lines, its high straight windows and its picturesque towers, it is one of the most beautiful examples of the Gothic style.

The spirit of Hamlet attracted me, and on a beautiful summer morning I decided to follow his call. From afar can be seen the red clinkstones of the castle shining in the sunlight and the hundreds of years’ old patina of the copper roof in emerald green. White blossoms cover the walls, and as I pass through the gardens, over the drawbridge into the courtyard of Hamlet’s residence, the world of 1498 is forgotten.

First of all, I am magically drawn to the highest tower. As I climb up the endless steps of the winding staircase, my attention is arrested by the heavy locked iron doors which remind me that from here somebody may once have found his way from secret rooms up to the tower, but did not return because a silent grave was prepared him in the sea.

After the tiring ascent I am rewarded by a marvellous view of Sweden, with the ever-changing green and blue waves which stretch out to the infinite. As I sit on the terrace, lost in dreams, looking down to the tall Gothic windows, I...
imagine behind the panes the masquerade of a long lost past. I feel the ghost of Hamlet who indeed, in the solitude of this tower, may well have given way to his melancholy ruminations. On the breath of the wind I hear his voice:

Whom are you looking for? For me, Hamlet?

... suddenly, as if by a conjurer's trick, he appears before me. Dressed in black, he is blonde and pale with that expression of insanity in his eyes, which all the famous actors who have played Hamlet on the stage have revealed. I shudder:

Hamlet? But I thought you died, long ago, in the 16th century?

How can I be dead! I have never lived. I am only a ghost, and as such immortal! To be or not to be, that is the question!

I have been told that your grave is near the castle, with a wonderful monument.

My grave was the creation of a clever waiter who wanted to increase the tourist trade by offering this sensation to lovers of romance in order to raise the consumption of coffee and beer afterwards.

Oh, how profane!

Yes, but conscientious historians in the meantime have insisted on the truth, even though it has been to the detriment of the tourist trade.

My grave is only a monument erected to my legendary figure.

I am very surprised by Hamlet's statements.

But aren't you Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, a son of Queen Gertrude and King Hamlet, who was murdered by his brother Claudius?

Oh please, don't remind me of this horrible story!

In reality I have never existed in this form, but only in the drama of Shakespeare, who chose this castle as the scene of action, because it was more convenient for him to let the Danes utter the unkind truth he wanted to tell his own countrymen. There must even in former times have existed complications with the censorship and the freedom of the press. For this reason Danes need not feel mortified when Shakespeare says: "There is something rotten in the State of Denmark!"

He certainly means England. He has never been in Denmark!

If I understand you aright, your figure is not related at all to the monarchs who lived in this castle?

Certainly not. Shakespeare was inspired to write this drama by an old legend of the Jutland Prince Amled, which was written in Latin by Saxo-Grammatico and there my origin has to be explored which is also proved by the name Amled—Amlode, because "Amlode" means in the Jutland dialect: Fool. It was the Prince who pretended to be mad and in this way have the chance to tell his contemporaries the truth.

Hamlet's eyes have a melancholy expression.

I hope that I am not boring you with the development of my case.

Not at all. It is very interesting to know such a personality as you, who has fascinated, for 400 years, the literary world.

Hamlet defends himself with a modest gesture.

Would you like to know some details about the castle?

Certainly I should!

It was built in 1426 by King Erik von Pommern and called Kronborg. It was only a small part of the present castle, which was completed in 1574 by Frederik II and given the name of Kronborg. It was the largest and most expensively equipped castle in Scandinavia. It is valued at 200,000 dollars, an enormous sum in those days, which had to be raised by the Sound Dues. After its completion, Shakespeare found it worthy to serve as a framework for my tragedy, though he had never seen it.

He could not have found a better place.
I like Kronborg too, and do not intend to leave it in spite of the efforts of the historians who try to remove me to my native place in Jutland. I hope I shall bring the same luck to Denmark as my colleague Holger Danske, the tutelary genius of the Danes who lives, as everybody knows, in the casemates of the castle, and who always appears when Denmark is in serious danger.

Extremely fascinating!

Will you allow me to accompany you to the Hall of the Knights which by virtue of its gigantic measurements and in the simplicity of its style, is one of the most important attractions.

How nice of you! I cannot imagine anything more charming than to be escorted by Hamlet through his own residence!

Hamlet casts with a graceful swing his cape over his shoulder and with elastic steps leads the way down the wing-staircase. We arrive at the courtyard. To the right the chapel door is open. Hamlet remarks my reverent astonishment, and when I enter, he remains discreetly in the courtyard. Probably he remembers Shakespeare’s lack of religion and does not desire to destroy the structure of his legendary figure, even if it is necessary to be told as an excuse that the murder of Polonius was an accident.

After a short rest in the chapel, I return to the courtyard which lies deserted in the sunshine. I find my friend Hamlet in a shady corner. A large stage is erected in the courtyard and Hamlet points in its direction.

Here will be presented the Shakespearean play in the warm summer nights, when the moonlight shines over the castle. The best actors of the world compete for my incarnation in front of an international public.

Splendid, I will attend the next performance.

From the heat of the afternoon sun we enter the refreshing coolness of the Hall of the Knights which extends over the whole floor. I am hypnotised by this overwhelming impression. A tessellated pavement of marble covers the endless area. The light falls from both sides through the high Gothic windows over the white walls decorated with magnificent gobelins. A gigantic fireplace recalls the time when during the winter the red glow of the flames was reflected in the lustre of the marble.

The silhouette of Hamlet moves like a shadow through the Hall, and when I address him again . . . he is gone. The heavy iron keys of the keeper rattle. I just have a chance to slip away before he locks the door. He looks at me, surprised.

Lucky for you that I saw you; I did not notice anybody in the Hall. If I had locked the door, you would have been obliged to stay here the whole night and Hamlet’s ghost is said to appear here after midnight.

You are wrong. Hamlet appears not only in the night but also during the day, and I am not afraid of spirits—it is very easy to deal with them—it is only a question of spirit.

* Catherine Larvil is a writer of considerable renown in Denmark. She is a journalist, critic, playwright and one-time actress. She is a very live Catholic and should be a most valuable contact for Focus in that land of first-rate film artists.

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DO YOU WANT A CINEMA SHOW IN YOUR DISTRICT?

Ask Us To Make Arrangements

We are negotiating with a firm of touring projectionists to take programmes of Catholic and general interest films around the country. Both indoor and outdoor programmes can be arranged.

If you are interested, write to the Secretary, Catholic Film Society, Mayfield College, Tunbridge Wells, so that itineraries may be planned.
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

(It is part of the policy of Focus to allow scope for those interested in *The Apostolate of the Film* to express their opinions, comments and criticisms. A Magazine is kept fresh, interesting and alive by the constructive criticism of its readers. The Editorial Board hopes that readers will make full use of these columns.)

OLD MASTERPIECES

Sir,

The enthusiasm which the April number of Focus has aroused in me has also prompted me to suggest that each issue of Focus should contain a review of some old masterpiece like *Kameradschaft* or *Drifters* which are always turning up at film societies. Most of the readers of Focus know little about these "old masters" and would, I feel sure, appreciate information about them.

Yours faithfully,

J. BRIAN RORKE.

(In a future issue I hope to begin a series of "Film Masterpieces."—Editor.)

BOOK AND FILM

Sir,

On reading the review by "Q" of the film *My Brother Jonathan*, I cannot help feeling that he has never read Francis Brett Young's book. I may be mistaken, of course, but if he had I think he would have felt compelled to be rather more definite in his condemnation of the film. The latter is a sentimental story, with a "pretty-pretty" ending, bearing little or no resemblance to the book.

In the film Jonathan's wife dies, thus making it possible for him to marry the devoted Rachel: his brother dies, thus avoiding further complications: the child lives, thus providing a happy family; and, of course, he himself lives—although the last scenes are rather spoiled by the fact that Michael Denison's wig is so obvious that it is inclined to turn him into a figure of fun.

In the book, the child dies: the wife lives (but only to run away with Jonathan's brother, who is not dead after all, but merely a prisoner); while poor Jonathan himself dies of a poisoned hand sustained through a torn surgical glove when operating on his old enemy, Dr. Craig.

One wonders why a film company bothers to take the title of a well-known book, and then proceeds to murder the plot. One also wonders why critics do not go to the trouble of reading the original book before attempting a review of the film.

If the filmgoer has never read the book, and enjoys sentimentality—he will enjoy this film. To those who know and like the book, the film (not good, in any case) with its complete changing not merely of the plot but in several instances of the characters of the people, is one of the worst examples to date of the inartistic and stupid spoiling of a good story in an endeavour to meet the presumed taste of the film-going public.

Yours, etc.,

A. M. HOWARTH.

("Q" will reply to this letter in our next issue.—Editor.)

STARS AND STORIES

Dear Editor,

I am well pleased with the April issue; I think it is the best yet. I always like to see the bright covers as it means a quick sale. As I sell most of my copies in our church stall, I find that the bright-covered books go the quickest, so please try and keep the covers bright.

Most of my readers have expressed the wish for more photos of the stars and their life stories, and also a photo of Beatrice Campbell, as she is a Catholic and also from Belfast.

Yours, etc.,

G. J. TURLEY.

(Most interesting to hear that Beatrice Campbell is a Catholic. I shall do my best to publish her photo.—Editor.)

DEVIL A MONOPOLY

Dear Reverend Father,

My enthusiasm for the work you are doing will not allow me to keep silent
Dear Sir,

While congratulating you on a most attractive and informative magazine, I should like to comment on certain points referred to in the April issue. I trust that too much heed will not be paid to those who consider Focus too academic. The Catholic who is interested in the cinema will surely take steps to increase his knowledge of it, for example, by studying the critics in the national press, and by reading "Sight and Sound" or "Penguin Film Review." After a time, he will be capable of absorbing almost anything that Focus can offer.

If the approach were simplified, there would be a danger of technical aspects being overlooked, and Focus becoming just another fan magazine. In addition, it must be remembered that film is an art form, and the maintenance of a certain critical standard is essential.

I do not think it desirable that valuable space be devoted to a reprinting of the Papal Encyclical "Vigilanti Cura," as I imagine that this C.T.S. publication will be fairly easily obtained by those who wish either to read it themselves or to pass it on to others.

Reference is twice made on page 83 to the instruction of the public about films shown in the commercial cinema. Of equal importance is instruction of the public about films not shown in the cinemas, that the public may learn that film making is not confined to two countries. In practice, Focus caters for this need, but a wrong emphasis may be construed from the wording used.

May I ask if any additional information is yet available on the Summer School? If this event is held this year, I hope for personal reasons that the last week in July may be chosen. This would coincide with my holiday from a local industrial works. Of course, I realise that the timing of a Summer School would depend on various factors, but having attended the B.F.I. School on Film Appreciation two years ago, I should welcome an opportunity of attending one held by the Catholic Film Society.

Hoping that the C.F.S. and Focus also will go from strength to strength.

Yours faithfully,

Joseph M. Senogles.

(Thank you very much. Your points are good.—Editor.)
CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY NEWS

Summer School. Preliminary Notice

A Summer Film Conference will be held at the Training College, 11 Cavendish Square, London, W.1, from Friday, August 13th to Monday, August 16th inclusive.

The subjects to be dealt with include Film Appreciation, Production, Projection, Educational Films.

Lecturers who hope to be present include Andrew Buchanan, Bernard Knowles, Andre Ruszkowski.

Details as to fees and programme will be available in time to appear in our next issue.

We regret that we have been unable this year to secure premises for a resident Summer School. The success which will, we hope, attend this alternative venture will enable us to make arrangements well ahead for a more elaborate undertaking next year.

We also regret that the dates will, inevitably, disappoint some of our readers. We have been constrained by a number of circumstances over which we have no control. Preliminary applications sent in at an early date will enable us to estimate with greater accuracy, the amount of organisation necessary. Please write to the Secretary, C.F.S., Mayfield College, Tunbridge Wells.

We have already begun negotiations for a series of lecture discussions on the various aspects of film production and appreciation, to take place in London during the winter months.

If there is a sufficient number of interested persons in other parts of the country, we shall do our best to meet the demand for similar lecture discussions.

The Premiere of VISITATION, the feature-length documentary film made by Andrew Buchanan for the Medical Missionaries of Mary, will take place at Studio One, Oxford Street, London, W.1, on Wednesday, June 23rd, at 1 p.m., through the courtesy of D. J. James, Esq., and the Manager, W. Morgan, Esq.

His Eminence Cardinal Griffin has graciously consented to be present and to introduce the film.

The audience will be a distinguished one and all sections of the religious, medical and political life of the country will be represented.

Immediately after the Premiere, VISITATION will begin a tour of the country. Arrangements are being made to show it in all the big cities and towns of the country. We shall be grateful for any assistance in this connection which our readers think they may be able to offer. The object of the tour is to collect funds for the work of the Medical Missionaries as well as to inspire vocations to this truly heroic and arduous life. The film is available in 35 mm. for projection in normal cinemas and in 16 mm. gauge for projection in parish halls, schools and colleges, etc.

O.C.I.C. COUNCIL MEETING

The next meeting of the General Council of the Office Catholique International du Cinema is to take place during the Film Festival at Venice in August. Once again the Festival, as in Brussels last year, has accepted an award from O.C.I.C., to be given to the film which most expresses the power of the cinema to present the best.

It is not generally realised that the much advertised “Prize Winning Film,” To Live In Peace, gained its distinction at Brussels last year when the prize it received was awarded by the Catholic Cinema Office.

The first number of the Catholic International Film Review makes its appearance in July. It will be printed in English, French and Spanish. Yearly contribution £1. Single copies 5/- All enquiries to the Corresponding Editor, Rev. J. A. V. Burke, Mayfield College, Tunbridge Wells.
PROJECTION HINTS

BY OUR EDUCATIONAL PANEL

CHOICE. According to the recommendations of the National Committee for Visual Aids, a fully-equipped Secondary School should have a Sound Film Projector, a Silent Film Projector, two Film-Strip Projectors, an Episcope, a standard Lantern (or an Epidiascope, which combines the two preceding instruments), and a Microprojector. The microprojector would be unnecessary in a Junior or Infant School, and the Sound Projector in the Infant School.

This sounds like a counsel of perfection—or of despair—but in view of the present shortage the Committee suggest that a start be made by providing a film-strip projector and episcope for every school, and sharing a sound and/or silent projector among groups of schools. These are therefore the most necessary: fortunately they are also the least expensive, an important consideration for all. It is advisable to get expert advice if possible when choosing machines, and most Local Authorities are in a position to help; but the following points may be helpful in trying them out.

Machines vary greatly in the brilliance and definition of their pictures, and this does not depend merely upon the wattage of the lamp used. Again, some film projectors are much quieter than others; and sound machines differ greatly in the quality of the sound they produce, especially in reproducing the higher frequencies. For all these reasons it is most important to test the machines in the rooms and under the conditions in which they will be used, and also to keep these conditions constant in comparing the different models, e.g., the lighting, the screen and its position, the acoustics, and the films or slides that are being used.

Certain technical features must also be noted—the machine must be on the right current—D.C. or A.C.—and the use of a transformer or resistance may be necessary. The projection lens must also be of the correct focal length: the commonest type, a 2" lens, gives a satisfactory picture with a throw between 15 and 25 feet. If a shorter or a longer throw is required, shorter or longer focal lengths will be needed. Some makes have interchangeable lenses.

One further point: the simpler machines are often preferable to the more elaborate ones. It is more useful to have a separate episcope and standard lantern than an epidiascope; and a sound projector is not necessarily preferable to a silent machine, even though silent films can be projected on sound machines, and not vice versa. The big machines are cumbersome and complicated, and usually very expensive: moreover it is impossible for them to be in two places at once, so that episcope and diascopé, for instance, cannot be used at the same time. For the same reason, the addition of a film-strip adaptor to an epidiascope is not to be recommended, though possibly a disused lantern (which most schools possess) might be used in this way.

PREPARATION OF THE ROOM. For efficient projection, a good machine is not enough. It depends almost as much on securing the right conditions, in particular the size of the picture, the screen and its position, and the darkening of the room.

A preliminary distinction must be made between projection in the school hall and in the classroom. The hall will presumably be used for showing background films and films of general interest to larger audiences. A good blackout is essential. For the most part sound is preferable, and the reproduction should be of a high quality and the performance flawless: in fact the school hall becomes a miniature cinema. The film in the classroom is a different thing. It is intended to be part of the normal lesson, not a show, and therefore the classroom routine and atmosphere should be disturbed as little as possible. In particular, unnecessary darkening should be avoided by means that will be later described. Moving pictures should never be employed when a still picture meets the need, nor sound when a silent picture will do.

Size of Picture. Beginners generally
have too big a picture, which causes loss of brightness, not to mention eye strain. The width of the picture should be about 1/8 of the length of the room: in the average classroom this generally means a picture of about 30” x 22” (or rather less if a translucent screen is used), and with a 2” lens, the width of the picture is 1/5 of the length of the throw, so that the machine should be 12 1/2 feet from the screen. Under certain conditions, for instance with a very bright light or as has already been said with a translucent screen, it can be still smaller. In general a useful working maxim is: the smaller, the brighter.

Screens. There are four types of surface, each of which possesses certain advantages.

The white screen. Any opaque matte surface serves the purpose—a board or space of wall can be whitewashed, or a piece of cloth, e.g., oilcloth, painted with white matte paint, and white blotting paper also makes a good surface. Thus a white screen is inexpensive and can be homemade; and it is generally useful as it distributes the light evenly over a wide space, though it is not so bright as the other surfaces. It is the best type for a wide room.

The silver screen. This is made with silvered paint, on a board or cloth, and can also be improvised. It gives a brilliant picture to those in front, but the light falls off quickly at the sides: it should therefore be set up in a corner of the room if used in a classroom, as these are generally wider than long.

The beaded screen is similar to the silver screen with the same features increased—it gives a very brilliant picture to those directly in front, but a duller picture to the rest of the audience. It is the make employed in the commercial cinema and is more useful in the school hall than in the usual classroom. It cannot be homemade, and is the most expensive type of screen.

The translucent screen. This can be made of any semi-transparent material: engineers’ tracing paper or tracing linen, ground glass, or one of the plastics like Celastoid or Bexoid. The picture is projected on to the back of the screen and passes through and is seen on the right side. This screen gives a more brilliant picture than any other, and can easily be improvised, at little expense: it is therefore strongly recommended for classroom use. As there is usually not much space to spare at the back of the screen, the throw can be doubled by placing a mirror behind it, which reflects the picture back on to the screen, doubling it in size. The mirror should be set with its centre at right angles to the screen to avoid distorting the picture, but the projector may be at any angle.

Construction. Screens may be variously constructed—a rigid screen can be made to hang or stand; a folding screen can be fixed on rollers like a map, or made to roll automatically into a box or carrier, like a spring blind—or any flat surface in the room may be utilised: a wall or space behind the blackboard, or above it if tilted forward—or the blackboard may be hinged and the surface painted on the back—and many other ideas will suggest themselves. (It is to be noted, however, that the silver and translucent screens must be carefully placed on account of lighting requirements.)

Darkening the room. For shows in the school hall, as has been said, a total blackout is needed and a way must be found of darkening it completely, combined with some means of ventilation: but the old idea that all light (and with it all air) must be excluded from the classroom is now giving way to “controlled lighting”, on the ground that the more the normal classroom atmosphere (both physical and mental) can be preserved, the better. The purpose of using pictures in classwork is to instruct, not to entertain: and to plunge the class into darkness leads to loss of control if not to dissipation, and makes it difficult to question or discuss, and impossible to take notes: in a word the lesson tends to disintegrate.

The room should be partially darkened if necessary, and it will be found that the eye soon grows accustomed to the lighting. Curtains or blinds can be partly drawn, or, if artificial light is being used, a very efficient dimming arrangement can easily be made by shading them on the side of the screen.

If a white screen is being used, comparatively little light can be allowed as it reflects it back directly, so it must be shaded in the same way, but with a silver screen the light can be deflected
by tilting the screen or setting it at an angle, so more light can be allowed. A corner position near the window is often satisfactory, and the same holds for the beaded screen. If a translucent screen is used, no light must be allowed to fall behind the screen (but light in front does no harm, as it passes through the screen and is dispersed). If necessary, flaps or a hood may be added at the back. It can be made like a portfolio, the flaps can be used to protect the screen betweenwhiles.

Success of daylight projection will, of course, also vary with the machine: with an episcope almost complete blackout is needed, but with a powerful modern diascope it will probably be unnecessary to darken the room at all.

Wiring and safety precautions. It is best to get expert advice about installation, but if it is not available, the following hints may be useful.

The ideal connection to the mains is a three-pin power point and it is best to have one put in if necessary. If this is impossible, a lamp socket or wall plug may be used with lamps up to 500 wattage, but there is always the risk that a fuse may be blown. For this reason it is also advisable to have the projector on a different circuit from the lighting; otherwise, if a fuse occurs, the room will be plunged in darkness.

The current and voltage should be ascertained, and a resistance or transformer used if necessary.

Trailing wires are to be avoided, otherwise they may trip up the children, or the operator—and so lead to merriment or to loss of dignity, if not to damage to the machine. They should be looped round a table leg to take the pull, and a connection in the flex is also advisable. Wires may be passed overhead instead, but if they are hanging, something should be hung on them to attract attention.

If adjustments are necessary the cable should be disconnected from the mains, i.e., the plug withdrawn, and not merely switched off. This is particularly important if the lamp has to be changed.

Two other important precautions should be noted—to make sure that the electrical pins are on the "dead", i.e., the machine side of the connection, and the socket on the "live", i.e., the mains side. Secondly, the apparatus must never be used near water.

EMERGENCIES. The most likely breakdowns are—

Failure to start, and stoppages—these may be due to incorrect threading or to loss of loop, or dirt in some key position in the mechanism. To ensure that the machine has been correctly laced and that the film transport mechanism and loops are operating correctly, the "inching knob" should be given a few turns by hand before the current is switched on. This will avoid the disconcerting stoppage of the machine immediately after switching on.

Breakdowns due to dust can be avoided altogether if the operator makes it part of his routine to clean the pictur—gate, sound head and film channel every time he uses the machine and a methodical general cleaning at regular short intervals.

Film breakages—The quickest way to deal with this is to have a spare spool ready and change the bottom spool: failing that, the broken end can be caught into the spool.

Light failure—This may be due to a fused lamp or a blown fuse. For this it is necessary to have a spare lamp at hand and some fuse wire: also a screwdriver.

FURTHER POINTS. In general:
1. Order films in good time.
2. Check them as soon as they arrive.
3. See them through beforehand, also teaching notes if provided.
4. Keep the machine well cleaned, especially the gate.
5. Set up the machine in good time and focus the picture and have all in readiness before the audience arrives—otherwise you will be embarrassed by well-meant offers of help!
6. Test the movement by hand when laced.
7. Switch on in this order: motor, light, sound.
8. Keep an eye on the machine throughout.
9. Switch off immediately if a stoppage occurs.
10. Switch off in reverse order to 7: sound, light, motor.
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COVER PERSONALITY

SIR LAURENCE OLIVIER

VICTORIANS will debate with heat the respective merits of their stage actors and ours. The name of Sir Henry Irving figures largely in such discussions. I make bold to suggest, basing my assertion on books and reminiscence, that the latest of the Knights of the Theatre would compare more than favourably with the first. Gramophone records enable us to gather something of the style and personality of the actors of the past. They do not convince one that Laurence has many superiors in the art and use of speech. His performance in Hamlet is a masterpiece of calculated effect. Films will provide the critics of the future with irrefutable evidence of his power and range. Heathcliff in Wuthering Heights, Max de Wynter in Rebecca, Mr. Darcy in Pride and Prejudice, Lord Nelson in Lady Hamilton, the French Canadian in 49th Parallel, these are among the great performances of the screen. His Henry V remains as a criterion for future film productions. As we go to press, his Hamlet is exciting the critics and whetting the appetites of all who look for culture and distinction on the screen and value the impact of a truly artistic mind on the greatest of the poets and playwrights.

Laurence Olivier was born in Dorking, Surrey, in 1907. He was educated at St. Edward's School, Oxford. His first appearance on the stage was at the age of fifteen when he played the part of Katharine in the Taming of the Shrew at a special boys' performance during the 1922 Shakespeare Festival at Stratford-on-Avon. After the performance, an old lady congratulated him and predicted a future for him. She had a right to do so for her name was Ellen Terry.

Birmingham Repertory and the London stage claimed his attentions during the next eight years, his parts being as varied as Lord Tennyson's Harold and Noel Coward's Private Lives. The production of Tennyson's rather dreary Harold, is notable for the fact that the cast contained two obviously promising young actors. To quote Alan Dent: 'One had a most telling and engaging sort of bluntness, he was Ralph Richardson, now Sir Ralph. The other was the arresting handsome youth who played the uninteresting Saxon Harold himself, smouldering, dark, compulsive, angular in movement, and with a voice with an edge on it like a Saxon battle axe. This was Laurence Olivier, at twenty-one, now Sir Laurence at forty.'

He made his film debut in Germany and then went to Hollywood where he made a series of pictures, now almost forgotten: Westward Passage, Friends and Lovers and The Yellow Ticket. Back in England in 1935 he played in Moscow Nights, As You Like It (with Elizabeth Bergner), Fire Over England and Divorce of Lady X. Hollywood again claimed him for four of his most memorable screen-parts. He returned to England to join the Fleet Air Arm, making, meanwhile 49th Parallel and Demi-Paradise.

His experience during two long seasons at the Old Vic and other London theatres, in which he played Romeo, Mercutio, Sir Toby Belch, Henry V, Macbeth, Hamlet, Iago and Coriolanus, equipped him with the knowledge, background, depth and skill necessary for the production and direction of the two films with which his name as a film actor will always be connected. Henry V has been the cause of more genuine and fruitful controversy among film critics than any other film since the great days of the Russians and Germans established the canons of the art of film. That is a sign and measure of its importance. The experiments he has made in the production of Hamlet will leave their mark on films of the future.

JOHN VINCENT.
S. M. EISENSTEIN,  MARY FIELD,  
D. W. GRIFFITH,  ROGER. MANVELL,  
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EDITORIAL

SADLY OR SERIOUSLY?

It is said, sometimes, that Englishmen take their pleasures sadly. I do not think this is true; but I do think that to avoid taking pleasures sadly we should take them seriously. Seriously in the sense that we should understand what we are doing. Who will deny that we get more fun when playing football, tennis and cricket if we know the finer points? Who will deny that we get more enjoyment from films if we become students of the Art of Film?

But is Film an Art?

Recently I have given some talks on Films to different Catholic organisations. (I have come to the conclusion that there is a desire among many Catholics to take their films seriously); during these talks, sooner or later, cropped up the hoary question: "Is Film an Art?". "How," says someone, "can the film which merely records photographically something which already exists outside itself but does not create, be called an art? . . . It is too mechanical to be considered an art form."

Films offer the widest scope to creative artists. When you come to think of it, the Art of Film is akin to the art of poetry. What the poet does with words, (he creates order, design and harmony, which is to say, he puts mind into his work), the film director does with a series of photographs. When you get a director, a script-writer and an editor who are poets, you get a work of art.

In his book "The Film as an Art" which I recommend, Ernest Lindgren quotes Pudovkin: "To the film director each shot of the finished film subserves the same purpose as the word to the poet . . . Editing is the basic creative force, by power of which the soulless photographs (the separate shots) are engineered into living, cinematographic form . . . editing is the creative force of filmic reality, and . . . nature provides only the raw material with which it works. That precisely is the relationship between reality and the film."

He also quotes Eisenstein who says: "The basic fact was true, and remains true to this day, that the juxtaposition of two separate shots by splicing them together resembles not so much a simple sum of one shot plus another shot—as it does a creation." Good poems are good pictures. Good films are good moving pictures.

Towards the end of his chapter on The Art of The Film, Ernest Lindgren quotes Pudovkin again: "I am sure that sound film is potentially the art of the future . . . it is a synthesis of each and every element—the oral, the visual, the philosophical: it is our opportunity to translate the world in all its lines and shadows into a new art form that has succeeded and will supersede all the older arts, for it is the supreme medium in which we can express today and tomorrow.

In his Encyclical "Vigilanti Cura" Pope Pius XI takes for granted that film is an art. The Catholic International Film Congress held at Brussels last summer opened in the Academy of Arts and closed with solemn High Mass, in the principal church of the city. I thought this was a nice piece of symbolism. It proves that Rome takes the cinema seriously. It reminds us that films can serve art and religion.

I once knew an old lady for whom the principal attraction of immortality was the prospect of meeting Edgar Wallace. Likeminded persons, of whom I cannot claim to be one, will no doubt enjoy this film, the interest of which lies in the sporting rather than the criminological aspect of Mr. Wallace's writing. Here, in contrast to Daybreak, it is the death of a man's horse, not of his wife, which gets him down. This time we are not concerned with the judgments of the criminal courts and the prospects of capital punishment, but with a more august tribunal, the Jockey Club, and the awful fate of being warned off. For the question is not one of mere murder but of "pulling" a horse. But of course that doesn't really happen in the film. They draw the line at that. We have a censor. I wonder the thing can even be mentioned. It recalls the bitter cry wrung from the tortured heart of an Anglican peer when his son and heir became a Catholic: "I'd sooner he had cheated at cards."

It rather surprised me that a racehorse owner should hand over his most valuable asset, a necklace, to an obviously shady lady who has already turned him down on the ground that she only married money, and then expect it back on demand, and also that he should choose a retired burglar as his messenger when he wants to dispatch a £100 note. But what can I, a priest immersed in worldliness, know of the simple, trustful, generous ways of the Brotherhood of the Turf.

Those more familiar with his works than I am assure me that Edgar Wallace's books are always clean. In this film, however, this praiseworthy characteristic is offset by the way in which people seem to lie and forge and get away with it.

Q.


All the way through this somewhat untidy plot, I was comparing the American and the English conceptions of drama. Only a few days before, I had seen Counterblast, a good English film, and I have come to the conclusion that dramatically, America is a very long way behind us. Whereas your English film is coherent in plot, your attention being directed to the working out and culmination of the story, the American film is episodic, your attention being directed rather to the individual incidents; and this is the medieval, primitive idea. Consequently, the American film is necessarily sensational and pageant-like. Thus it is a very crude generalisation, and there are exceptions of course; but it is true of Body and Soul. Even with the synopsis before me, I find it hard to follow the sequence of events. You are, apparently, started off at the end of the hero's career, and taken back to the beginning to watch his progress develop; then you come back to the point you started from and go on from there. It is all very confusing to the English film-goer, though you can forget these hitches in the excitement. Irrelevant incidents abound. Why did Charley Davis quarrel with his wife? Why was Shorty Polaski killed? Why at the climax of the film, when the fight has been "fixed", does Charley change his mind and knock out his challenger in the last round? "I'll kill him", he says from between clenched and bloody teeth; and he pretty well does kill him, the poor boy.

Some of the acting is good and some of it is bad—very bad. The fixed, tense expression on Anna Davis's face which remains throughout the film—she disapproves of everything except her son's wife—says a lot for the stamina of Anne Revere, who obviously has done exactly as the producer has told her; but it is
poor production. John Garfield acts smoothly and consistently throughout, except in the shots of the last fight where he overacts to the point of boring you. The sixth form, schoolgirl effect put over by Peg Born, acted by Lilli Palmer, is, I suspect, unintended. And there are two things which I strongly dislike: one is a child actor using American slang, and the other is what occurs here—an American girl trying to speak with a "cultured" English accent. It has a soft, namby-pamby effect; and when wedded to a dull, undistinguished dialogue, the effect is plain ugliness.

I was so struck by some of the dialogue that I wrote it down in the darkness. Looking at the scrall when I came out, I found that one sentence actually was "It must be very lonely for a girl all alone." Well, of course it must. "All wasted, all gone down the drain" was another. (I thought that was said by the champ at the beginning of his life. But it was said at the end of his life at the beginning of the picture? Follow?)

Canada Lee, the coloured trainer (Ben Chaplin) was the most satisfactory of the cast, excluding perhaps John Garfield himself. He has a quiet, confident, artistic manner which makes you want more of him, but he dies of a blood-clot on the brain.

Even if you are a boxing fan, there is not much here. There is not much attempt at real boxing technique, and most of the effect is secured by "trick" photography. Even the last fight is dull, as is required by the plot.

In this film, incidentally, Hazel Brooks makes a first appearance. There is nothing brilliant there; but if she has not made a dazzling start, she is as good as anybody else.

S.


Press and wireless remind us these days that relations between workers and management are a very important factor in all economic experiments. Trade Unionists and Y.C.W., as well as the general public may find much that is of topical interest in this British film. There is no question of bitter strikes, hunger marches, and baton charges. Instead we have the fairly intelligent story of Peter Pettinger, the man with a grouse in the Overend Limited manufacturers. He is not just a tub-thumping agitator against the capitalist system. His campaign for a social Utopia is further embittered by a feeling of personal grievance. He claims that his father gave the Overends an invention of great commercial value and that he received none of the financial rewards to which he was entitled. The climax is reached when Mr. Overend dies and leaves both his fortune and his factory to Peter. The rest of the film deals with the way in which this reversal of fortune affects the man whose one cry was: "Down with the Boss!" William Hartnell is almost perfect as the factory demagogue. His one weak scene is the fight in the engineer shop. I am not very bloodthirsty, but there was not one decent punch in the whole business! Amongst the minor characters Pettinger's mother (Elliot Mason) deserves full marks. To my mind the story does not allow Mary Morris as Pettinger's girl friend enough room to heighten the "human interest" for the ordinary film-goer's taste. However, script writers seldom get the praise they deserve, and it should go on record that there they have done a very fine job in giving us an intelligent and genuine dialogue throughout the whole film.

M.


Eddie Frame (Eric Portman) was a barber who used to make occasional short trips on business to York, Exeter, Manchester and suchlike places. You’ve guessed it? Yes, he was the hangman. But he used a professional name both for his daily business and his sideline, so that when he gave up hairdressing after inheriting his father’s barges, and went to live on one of them with his newly married wife (Ann Todd), she had no idea of the nature of the business which took him away from her for a night occasionally. Though she loved him and was faithful to him, she was lonely when he was away and inclined, half against her will to dilly-dally with a handsome and persistent seaman called Olaf (Maxwell Reed).

One day a condemned man was reprieved the day before execution and Eddie came back earlier than was expected. He found the seaman on the barge late at night and there was a fight. Eddie was knocked overboard and not seen again, and later a body was identified as his and Olaf convicted of murder. Frankie, Eddie’s wife, had lost no time in committing suicide, but Eddie had actually swum to land. After reading what had happened he determined that his last execution (he was nearly due to retire) should be of the man condemned for his own murder, but, he considered, morally responsible for Frankie’s death. At the last moment however, he could not go through with it, told the truth to the authorities and then hanged himself, not with the humane apparatus to which he had professional access, but like any amateur in the back parlour of the barber’s shop.

“What a morbid story!” you may feel inclined to say. But in fact there is a remarkable lack of morbidity in the treatment, no glimpse of the scaffold or any other gruesome details; implication is used rather than representation. Melodramatic as the subject is, there is a reserve, an artistic reality which contrasts with the crude artificiality of a film like The Brothers. Eddie is a pleasant enough man, the same type perhaps as the hangman in the Dominion who, when asked by a journalist friend of mine if it were true that he had to have a drink before he was able to officiate, replied: “No. I don’t think it’s right to send a man into eternity with your breath smelling of spirits.” Indeed there is an idyllic quality in his courtship which I found distinctly appealing. And I also liked Jane Hylton’s study of a barmaid.

The film has something of a history. It was originally shot in 1946, and, according to the press, has not been without its difficulties in connection with the censorship. Now it has appeared just when there is such controversy about the possible unemployment of hangmen. I understand that at one time the idea was considered of putting the whole story in a framework of contrition and Christian hope, but pagan preferences prevailed and instead the unhappy man dies senza religione, senza moralita, senza niente (without religion, without moral principles, without anything), to use a phrase I once heard in an Italian barber’s shop. There lies embedded in the film a warning of the folly (if nothing else) of committing suicide. If Frankie had refrained from suicide because it is never right, she would actually have been able to live happily with her husband. But no attempt is made to elicit such a salutary lesson, and the unreflective filmgoer may well miss it. Not so long ago a man committed suicide after saying that what was good enough for Sir Bernard Spilsbury and Mr. Winant was good enough for him. And it is well known that there are people who solve their problems according to the behaviour on the screen of their favourite stars in similar circumstances. If any grief stricken widow or widower should ask themselves what Ann Todd or Eric Portman would do, I should commend the possible consequences to the very careful consideration of those who issued this picture in its present form.


This is the film which won for Ronald
Colman the much-advertised "Oscar". It is certainly a tour de force for Colman who is seldom off the screen for more than a few sequences at a time and it makes considerable demands on his repertoire of facial expressions. It is an essay on the ever-popular theme of schizophrenia, this time about an actor who becomes so obsessed by the characters he plays that he lives the parts in real life. When he plays Othello, with his twice-divorced wife as Desdemona, he grows jealous and kills a fair-haired street-walker whom, in his insanity, he imagines to be his wife.

At the age of 57 years, Ronald Colman still retains the charm and good looks which endeared him to the film fans of the silent days. I have a vivid impression of his first appearance with Lilian Gish in The White Lady. Beau Geste probably established him in more hearts than did any other of his films. A Double Life, despite its weaknesses of improbability and want of balance will prove to be a popular film.

It is worth noting how his stage style differs from his camera style of acting, though, in truth, if he really acted as he does on the stage as Othello, he would deserve all the rude remarks the critics could lay their pens to. This applies also to Signe Hasso. She has never redeemed the promise she gave in House On 92nd Street.

Average entertainment for uncritical audiences with good acting from Ronald Colman to make it worth while for the discerning.


I came away after seeing So Evil is My Love feeling that I had seen a good film. It wasn’t the story. That was good enough as a story, but it was another semi-psychological murder yarn and I have had enough of that sort lately. They are all so negative and destructive, and they harp so much on what is vicious in human nature. It is about time that the emphasis swung over to what is noble and constructive in the achievements and capacity of human nature.

The story tells how an unscrupulous adventurer plays on the uncontrollable infatuation which a simple widow develops for him to degrade her to the level of a thief, a blackmailer and, ultimately, a murderer.

The story has strength, an easy-to-follow sequence and is presented with vigour and understanding.

The acting is brilliant, and it was this which really made me think it a good film. Ann Todd is outstanding. She has to present a whole gamut of emotions: simplicity, duplicity, infatuation, remorse, strength, weakness and so on, and she does it all with an accomplished ease and a convincing realism.

There are one or two patches of silly dialogue, but they are so obviously silly and out of place that they do not matter.


Peter Cheyney has a reputation as the writer of competent, streamlined detective fiction. His stories and characters are quite amoral. It is odd that of his enormous output, Uneasy Terms is the first to be filmed. Now that it has been made one cannot see any urgent reason why it should have been. True, it is an efficient, neat, thrilling, nicely photographed piece of work and the acting is adequate; but it is so very like a hundred other films dealing with similar situations that one is not conscious of having missed anything while waiting. Raymond Chandler and Humphrey Bogart have let us into the secrets many times before; Night Clubs; Secret Doors leading to the Chief Crook’s Sanctum; Sinister Serving Men; Horrid Attempts to dispose of the Private Detective; Heroine behaving in a Highly Suspicious Manner; Unprincipled Private Investigator who inevitably scores over the Official Police.

Peter Cheyney’s pet sleuth, Slim Callaghan, is a ruthless, conceited, bullying he-man and Michael Rennie plays him with great élan. He out-
Humphreys Bogart and is much better-looking than Richard Powell, and the fight with which he puts an end to the gang has some semblance of likelihood, the way he plays it. Also, one can understand what he is talking about, which is more than can be said for lisping Humph.


Titles can be so misleading, as the lady said when she had been to The Song of Bernadette under the impression that it would be musical comedy. There is no bride in this picture until quite near the end and even then she can hardly be said to go wild. The story of a writer of books for children falling in love with his illustrator, even when it is unusual, fails to be really interesting for long.

I for one always enjoy the uningratiating Master Jenkins ("What have you got there?"—Ants—to put down people's backs''). And I thought June Allyson was at her best when simulating the uneasy gravity of unforeseen intoxication.

A film to pass the time, but hardly to write home about.


Many people would say that Paolo Banchi, the hero of this film, was a fool. Maria, the lovely signorina whom he befriended, said he was the most generous of men. He was. But his generosity, his kindness and his courtesy brought him an avalanche of trouble. One morning while on a crowded train he offers his seat to Maria who looks ill. Before nightfall she has confided to him the cause of her sorrow and begs him to save her from the wrath of her family by pretending to be her husband. On this plot is built a comedy which is delightful.

No over-advertised stars appear in this film, which maybe is the reason why it shines with such beauty and artistic simplicity. In one or two places the tempo tends to become a bit slow, apart from that I would say that it is faultless. It presents a human, credible story, fine acting, superb photography, smooth continuity, music which pleases, yet which does not intrude, crisp direction and the whole story pulsates with a joyousness which is infectious.

Immediately there comes to my mind the spontaneous joy which wells up in the heart of the bus driver when he hears that he has a son . . . round the lovely Italian lanes he spins at breakneck speed, singing the vibrant songs of his country, as he performs dare-devil tricks which you would hardly see on a racecourse; but everything is all right for though his heart is in heaven his mind and brain are on the wheel. When he pulls up, there are drinks all round to celebrate the golden gift of his new-born son.

In this story you meet real life and real people: it is full of little warm asides and little warm human touches which linger in the mind. For instance, the way Paolo looks at the statue of Our Lady bearing the Infant speaks volumes. There is a moment when Maria's father breaks down, but you are spared the embarrassment of seeing him cry, he does so with his back to you. All the people you meet are authentic, unpainted people; they are people you would like to chat with over a glass of their home-distilled wine. You will like Maria's family and the picturesque farm where she lives. Her grandmother (his bald head looks just like an egg) is a unique character who stays up all night, because his snores keep the family awake, and plays draughts with himself.

This film is drawing the crowds. If it comes your way don't miss it.


This film was made in 1919, under Felix Weine's direction in Germany. It treats a very morbid subject with the touch of sheer genius. When you have
seen it you really feel you know how a madman sees the world through the lens of hallucination. It is the story of a madman’s delusion told by himself.

There is no helpful sound-track in this silent film—it has to rely on the power of the visual image. But what images they are! They succeed in projecting the darkness of the broken mind. As the film unfolds, it takes on the dream-like reality of a nightmare. As in a bad dream, houses are tilted, landscapes become crazy, trees grotesque. In a sunless world space and time lose their dimensions. Surrealist backgrounds to the scenes rob them of perspective and depth. The doors are not square; the rooms are elliptical, the furniture is angular; the very characters take on a distortion. Sequences are rushed. Time cases. The diaphragm of the ancient cine-camera opens and closes. The edge is taken off reality.

Against these sprawling geometric patterns sequence follows sequence, each improbable and fantastic yet bound together by a madman’s logic which is infinitely smaller than life. The murderous somnambulist is tracked down with remorseless logic. The same logic uncovers his controller, Dr. Caligari, who is none other than the Director of the lunatic asylum in which the madman is. Syllogism without sense, logic without life, the endless revolutions of a lunatic around the limited circle of his thought.

The Germans are masters in analysing morbid states of the mind. The paranoia of Dr. Mabuse, the frustration of The Murderers are amongst us, and in this film the power of delusions. They do it so well, perhaps, because they are the nation of Schopenhauer, who taught that the world was evil and the worst of all possible ones; the nation of Hegel and Fichte who said the world existed only in the mind. In this film you see the saddest of all worlds as it existed in a madman’s mind.

It is, indeed, a limited subject on which to expend so much genius. To those who can take it, the film offers a superb mosaic of the fragments of a broken mind. For myself I did not relish watching a man, as it were, crawling round a giant spider’s web—pattern after pattern of great dusty strands, going round and round and getting nowhere, while only those who watched could see the spiderly logic which bound the grotesque structure into a geometry of its own.

L’HOMME AU CHAPEAU ROND.
(The Man in the Round Hat.)

Film reviewers have had such an enervating time as a result of the fourth-rate, mainly British, films that have of late been presented for their consideration that when, for a change, they are asked to look at a second-rate French film, they are apt, I fear, to exaggerate its qualities.

Though it has the incomparable Raimu as star, L’Homme au Chapeau Rond is but poor fare as French films go. One of its main weaknesses is the tendency on the part of the supporting cast to over-act. The result, especially in the case of Aime Clariond, who was so impressive as Cardinal Richelieu in Monsieur Vincent, is almost grotesque. Perhaps it is due to the perfection and finish of Raimu’s performance that the other players look so distressingly mannered.

The story, from a novel by Dostoievskevski, is one of those studies in morbid psychology for which he is famous and which owe their pitiful, passionate, fatalistic qualities to the sufferings he endured at the hands of his political enemies. It is about an elderly widower who discovers that his wife has had affairs with other men and that the child he thought his own is, in fact, the daughter of one of his friends. His affection for the child turns to hatred and he sadistically uses her to destroy her father. It is a horrid film but one which adults of formed and balanced views may well enjoy. The dialogue is salted and rather more Gallic than is thought proper in this country.

There is one scene of a hanged man which, in view of the Censor’s sensitiveness about Daybreak, it is rather astonishing was left uncut.
A Thoughtful Film For Thoughtful People

GENTLEMAN'S AGREEMENT.
Starring: Gregory Peck, Dorothy McGuire and John Garfield.
Producer: Darryl F. Zanuck.

Racial and religious controversy are subjects that have been for a long time outlawed from the screen. Now it seems that we are likely to have a series of them. That is not a bad thing on the whole. There is a sufficiently large and, I think, intelligent, proportion of cinema-goers to provide an appreciative audience for adult films which pose a problem, whether social or political. We have recently seen Strange Incident and Boomerang, both dealing with the question of the workings of justice. We have had Crossfire, dealing with the thorny problems of anti-Semitism, and now, with the memory of that excellent piece of film-work still warm, we are presented with another, also excellent, dealing even more pointedly and controversially with that dynamitical issue.

The purpose of a controversial film should be to present the issues in such a way as to help towards a solution of the problem. If it is so presented as to arouse still more feelings already exacerbated by the controversy itself, it is then a fit subject for the Censor's cutting-scissors. I do not think that there is any case for the Censor in the presentation of Gentleman's Agreement, though I do know one film critic of an eminent daily who expressed himself as completely outraged by the film. He is an extreme case of the unreasoning and unreasonable anti-Semite. However, it is a fact that in Gentleman's Agreement as in Crossfire, no attempt is made to indicate the cause of anti-Semitism; we are shown the social and moral effects of the disease, but it is never hinted at nor suggested that there is a historical background to the question. Nor is it suggested that other races and other religions have suffered similar persecutions. This is a pity for it weakens the case and diminishes the sympathy which it is the purpose of the film to state and to enlist. One is left with the exasperated feeling that one dare not voice one's qualifications of the question put by the film without being denounced as an anti-something or other. That is one of the unhappy conditions of the times. People are anti or pro this or that. Is it no longer possible honestly to be able to see both sides of a question?

There have been other films which have stated a partisan point of view and have been withdrawn when circumstances altered the alignment of the belligerents. One remembers the anti-Soviet films Comrade X and Ninotchka which disappeared when Russia became our war-time ally; there was also Blockade, the anti-Franco film with its passionate denunciation of blockading as a weapon of war, which also disappeared when we went to war again and had to make use of that same weapon. Incidentally, I have seen it stated in both British and American film literature, that the American Legion of Decency campaigned to have Blockade boycotted because it was anti-Franco. I find that difficult to believe, for the Legion's oft-stated purpose is the moral classification of films and they do not concern themselves with other considerations. But even supposing that they did, in this instance, is it not curious that the film ceased to appear on our screens when the message it preached became embarrassing to us?

Racial or religious animosities and prejudices are profoundly un-Christian sentiments and we are grateful to the promoters of this film for reminding us of the uncharitable depths to which they can plunge otherwise kindly individuals when such animosities and prejudices are allowed to colour personal and national relationships.

The story tells us of a young newspaper reporter who is given an assignment to write a series of provocative articles about anti-Semitism. In order to do this he poses as a Jew and realises through the indignities and intolerance shown to him and his little orphaned son, the position of the Jew in society. Even the girl to whom he is engaged proves to have a deeply-rooted prejudice against Jews, lurking under her outwardly-professed tolerance.
Many films that teach a lesson are badly produced and indifferently acted. *Gentleman's Agreement* is different in both these respects. The production is on the high level that is Hollywood's best. The script, based on the novel by Laura Z. Hobson, is refreshingly direct and lucid with some special moments of enlightenment. The acting reminds us of the standards reached by films like *Best Years Of Our Lives* and *Mr. Deeds Goes To Town*. Gregory Peck is outstandingly impressive as the newspaper man, Phil Green. He is backed up in many scenes with Anne Revere as his mother. Particularly moving was the scene when the mother, suffering a heart attack, is attended by her son, in desperate fear lest she die. Anne Revere's acting here and through the film is strong and powerful. Dorothy McGuire is one of the best of American stage players. That means to say that she is always reliable on the screen, given a part that she can believe in. She has it here. Her acting as the girl in love with Phil Green is of the high order of tragic excellence. Another actor who, in my experience, seldom reaches competence or conviction, is here admirably cast and admirably plays. That is John Garfield in the rôle of Dave Goldman, a Jewish friend of Phil's. The supporting cast is well-chosen and plays well. Celeste Holm and Albert Dekker and Jane Wyatt are specially good. Little Dean Stockwell as Phil's son is not very attractive but that may not be his fault. Few screen children are tolerable for very many films and he was already beginning to look precocious in *The Green Years*, his first.

From the moral point of view one must register the usual protest that divorce is taken for granted. Phil Green is anxious lest the divorced husband of his fiancée may still have a chance to win her affections. A sad and muddled state of things but accepted by a lot of sad and muddled people as inevitable.

Three short stories about a bride's dress, her veil and her pearls, strung together to form a unity in a manner which I think is successful. If you are not in search of ideas and just want a couple of hours off duty this film will give you reasonable return for your money. If you are looking for stars you will not be disappointed you will even see a new one; Paula Valenska, and in case the refrain: "Twinkle, twinkle, little star, how I wonder what you are", runs through your mind I am publishing her photo and a notice of her. About this film the blurb says: "There is a romance in every wedding but perhaps never so much as in the wedding of Chester-Barratt and Frank Moody." I failed to see the romance but perhaps I couldn't see it for the muddle. The muddle that abounds is very funny indeed. I always like Roland Young's humour. In this piece he is particularly amusing and Paula Valenska plays up to him admirably.

Born on July 2nd, 1922, at Melnik in the wine country, thirty kilometres from Prague, Paula Valenska was brought up on a goose farm, and slightly shocks her austerity-reared English friends by emphasising how she hates roast goose.

Even as a child she had a lovely singing voice, and when she was ten years old a talent scout from the Prague radio heard her at a school concert and persuaded her parents to let her make her first broadcast. Since then she has been continuously "on the air", and nowadays has her own weekly programme.

Paula had no thought of becoming an actress, in fact she started to train as a teacher. After her first week's training she became ill with diphtheria and since she had missed the beginning of that year's curriculum she took a secretarial course instead, and for sometime led a curious twofold life—

in the evenings a popular young radio starlet and by day a junior secretary in the offices of the Vacuum Oil Company.

The Director of her radio programme insisted that she was wasting her talents and persuaded her to attend the Prague Conservatoire. A very unassuming person despite her gifts, it was four years before she was sufficiently satisfied with herself to accept the offer of the National Theatre at Brno where she played for a year in everything from Molière to Shakespeare. Her first film test, however, brought her offers of screen contracts within half an hour, and in the last three years she has played in many of the most successful films made in Czechoslovakia. One of her pictures was seen here during the Czech Film Festival week—"Men Without Wings" which won the award at Cannes last year.

This picture is from a novel by Dan Tetheroh. To forestall criticism I must state that I am entirely unacquainted with Mr. Tetheroh and all his works. I might also state that the acting is consistently good, though Ida Lupino finds it hard going at times, as well she might.

When the credits faded out and I saw a cock (or rather a rooster, for this is an American film) crowing just like the Pathé trademark, I said to myself: "This is going to be a film about a Farm." Rather of the Cold Comfort type too. For Mrs. Saul always stays upstairs, pretending to be ill. Farmer Saul is a disagreeable type, and their daughter who rejoices in the name of Libby (which reminds me vaguely of something they feed to cattle) has quite a stammer. Rejoices isn't quite the word, for she mores most of the time, except when tripping out to the Woods. (Bright music.)

She also falls for Barry Burnett, a convict who is working on a road nearby until he escapes during a landslide. Barry has a heart of gold but if anyone corrects him he breaks their jaw, and sometimes kills people before he has time to think. But you would hardly believe what love does to him and Libby. It cures her of stammering and makes him stop trying to bump people off with a gun and confine his activities to making passes at them with a scythe. Given time I believe she could have trained him always to use a humane killer, but unfortunately the sheriff's men shoot him and he dies in her arms.

The End? Not quite. What does Libby do? When I saw her on the edge of a cliff I bet heavily that she would end up over it. But Libby was not so dumb as we thought. She actually did what girls always do in real life. She married another guy. Q.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The two following films were not reviewed at the time of their Press Show. To complete our lists we give a brief notice, herewith.


An entertaining but theatrically muddled story of an Irish girl with paranoid urges. Midnight organ-playing, mad dogs and strong men murdered by a slip of a girl add to the improbabilities and absurdities of this melodrama. Brilliant acting by Siobhan McKenna. Amateur Dramatic standard from the rest.


Technicolored Scottish glens and treachery à la Hollywood. Brilliant sunshine enhancing faces and summer dresses of a bygone age in a Scotland that never was. Cowboy-style film transplanted to the Highlands and dressed in kilts.

RE-ISSUES


A. W. Mason stories seem timeless. This one about the North-West Frontier, diplomacy and treachery, colour and romance, brown skins and pukka sahibs all tricked out in discreet Technicolor is certain of a popular welcome.


The second re-issue of a masterly and entertaining film made in 1938. Suspense, in the best Hitchcock manner, mystery and action together with the delicious comedy of Naunton Wayne and Basil Radford render this one of the most worth-while of repeat programmes.
German scientist (Mervyn Johns) assumes identity of an Australian who is due to do research and whom he kills.

In the laboratory, Mervyn Johns makes a grave slip in asking for a drug, Polosol.

The Commandant asks Mervyn Johns to attend a non-Nazi.

Robert Beatty is glad to have Nova Pilbeam to brighten up the Research Laboratory.


This is a well-constructed story which will provide you with an enjoyable afternoon's entertainment. There is little irrelevant interest, and the complications of the plot are never allowed to get out of hand.

The ingredients are an escaped German Nazi brute, bacteriology, the future war, laboratories, and the phlegmatic English mind in violent contrast to the German fanaticism and lack of resilience. It is in this that the picture will stand up to the most cavilling criticism. The acting of Mervyn Johns as the German scientist avoids our usual clap-trap, and shows intelligence and talent in the interpretation. Robert Beatty as the English Dr. Rankin is perhaps just a little the frank, open, conventional Englishman, but he is very consistent throughout and his boyishness rings true. Nova Pilbeam is certainly a great actress; one detail I noticed: more than any other actor in the film she is a master of facial expression. Recoil and reaction to conversation she acted subtly and with complete conviction. Margaretta Scott, who had the subordinate rôle of Sister Johnson, was more stereotyped than the others, but the small part obviously cramped her powers somewhat.

There is a very serious atmosphere running through the whole film, and questions are raised which give the Catholic film-goer something to think about. We accepted the atomic bomb. But how is that different, morally speaking, from bacteriological warfare? Dr. Bruckner, the German scientist, puts it to the parson in the train (John Salew...
was the padre, and they called him Father; and his collar was too tight for him) and the parson runs off into pacifism and says that all war is wrong. Nova Pilbeam in the part of Tracy Shaw pleads for the children, but why should she be right and the German wrong? Only the Catholic has the true answer.

In these unanswered questions the film gives a true-to-life portrait of the English mentality. And it does in other ways too. There are asides and situations, usually involving that delightful actress, Marie Lohr, which are typically English and which will evoke laughter from English audiences only.

The music was another thing which was successful. So often in a film where there is a sinister atmosphere and dramatic situation the composer forgets his ancillary position, and the musical effect becomes a nuisance; but here the balance is kept and the music does not become obtrusive.

But, alas, not all things good can be said about the film; for the ending is plainly vulgar. The symbolism of the German being destroyed by rat poison, is tolerable, I suppose, but the thing is laboured and one becomes thoroughly embarrassed by it. At the best of times patriotism is an emotion which you do not wave about; when it is waved about, and identified with hate, you feel affronted.

S.

THE SONG OF BERNADETTE.
Running time: 150 minutes.

It is good hearing that the Song of Bernadette, interrupted in its long run in Regent Street by the flying bombs of 1944, has now been revived at the Tatler Theatre, Charing Cross Road. To see this film a second time was to be confirmed in the belief that Hollywood really can, if it sets its mind to it, produce a picture that is truly a religious film while it is also a thrilling story. There are the Christian virtues in this film, and an understanding of them by the actors. There is humility, compassion and faith. Of course the production was given a tremendous start by Franz Werfel's "novel" (and of course that book was given a tremendous start by the Blessed Virgin herself and her pupil, Bernadette). But Hollywood has been worthy, in this production, of such high inspiration. The touch of "love interest" can be more than forgiven to the producers; it is not on record, but it might easily respond to reality. The thinnest ice they had to traverse was the incident of "Sister Marie Theresa Vauzous!". An English nun who was at Nevers with Bernadette and has seen the Song vouches for it that all this passage is an imaginative travesty of the facts. Given an improbable part Gladys Cooper carries it off with extraordinary skill, save for the stiffness which the film world thinks inseparable from nunhood. It would have been quite enough, and quite as poignant, to bring out that the nuns as a community were directed, and were careful, to ignore the whole Lourdes incident through a (possibly undue) fear of the results for Bernadette of any other policy. Then the scene of the call made upon the dying saint by the ecclesiastical authorities for confirmation of her testimony is almost comically exaggerated. A lack of balance and common sense in bishops and nuns might be the natural conclusions from these two incidents of anyone not conversant with Catholic life. A belief that the mere truth can be made dramatic is too rarified a faith for Hollywood! The acting in this film is of a very high class, and in the writer's opinion is at its finest in the part of Louise Soubirous, the visionary's mother. Never for an instant does Anne Revere act for acting's sake, as does for example Aubrey Mather in the Mayor (but so amusingly that he is to be forgiven). Charles Bickford's Peyremale is of course a triumph. He is more Irish than French but is unalteringly right in a very difficult post. There is scarcely any weak spot in the cast: a rare thing even in the greatest films and plays.
MUSINGS OF A SCRIPT-WRITER

THE blast of the V2 which had landed near one of the Lewisham Junction bridges, had just about permanently wrecked the old King’s Hall cinema. The back of the building was nonexistent, but the façade and part of the auditorium was still upright.

I was on one of my London walks, during which I chew over ideas for new screen plays, and on this day of early spring this year, I had decided to have a look at Greenwich Park.

I had got cut at Lewisham Junction, intending to walk up from there and across Blackheath, past a house where our family had lived during part of World War I. On seeing the old cinema, however, I wandered over to give it a closer inspection, for it was there that in 1914 I had first become a film fan.

No one was about and as there were no restrictive barriers, I walked up a side entrance and stood inside the shell of the building, just about where the one-and-ninepennies had been.

Looking round, I could pick out the quaint Grecian figures, still visible on the remaining walls, and all at once memories of old films seen there came back to me: comedies such as Tilly’s Punctured Romance with Charlie Chaplin, Marie Dressler and Mabel Normand; The Lady of the Lake, with Flora Finch and John Bunny; dramas such as Quo Vadis and The Last Days of Pompeii (1914 edition) and The Queen’s Love, a French colour film with Sarah Bernhardt.

Time was getting on though, if I meant to get to Greenwich Park and so, turning away, I left the old cinema rotting behind me and started my walk up to the Heath.

I soon realised that all thoughts of a new screen play had vanished from my mind, and in their place were the memories and mental pictures of those old films.

After a while, a train of thought took form in my mind. Leaving out technical improvements, through what phases had the cinema passed since those days, for better or for worse?

In those far-off days, when the British and American film industries were in what we call “their infancy”, there seemed to be two broad rules of thumb for telling film stories, one for Comedy and one for Drama.

In Comedy, one’s social conscience was given an exuberant holiday, in watching characters indulge in things you would have given your right eye to do.

Disregard for officers of the law went so far as booting policemen on their backside. A contempt for conventionality was illustrated by clinching an argument with a custard pie. Seeing these things which one had sometimes wildly felt like doing oneself, provoked sympathetic cheers from old and young alike, and I’m sure that to quite an extent, at any rate as far as the more mature members of the audience went, this acted as a safety valve to the pressure of social behaviour.

On the side of Drama, the rule was roughly this. Truth and right won through in the end and villainy got its just deserts. But even here, the violence we saw in the comedies, was present.

No doubt the fact that a story had to be told in about half the number of reels than is usual today, excluded any chance of indulging in subtleties. The actors had to establish situations literally in the broadest of gestures and the evil-doer had to be uncompromisingly trade-marked by the sheer horror of his deeds.

There were, of course, some departures from these general ideas in the comedies of Marie Tempest, Billie Burke and Marguerite Clarke, but in the main, films had simple themes and were told in highly-coloured narrative.

Now what was good and what was bad in this graphic form of story-telling? On the good side let us say that these old film dramas were not unlike the classical stories of our youth. Truth and justice were upheld and there was no chance of sympathy for the wrongdoer.

On the bad side, the inherent violence could be calculated to have an effect on a weak or unstable nature. My own memory of what effect films had on me and children of my age, was that when we were not playing “dug-outs” we frequently attempted to emulate the exploits of William S. Hart (Pearl White
for the girls). This appeared to have no more than a physical effect and because of this a first-aid box was always on hand. It was used frequently.

The years rolled on and during holiday time I should say that I visited the cinema about once a week.

Like most cinema-goers, I soon began to have my favourite heroes and heroines, and a little later on, my favourite type of screen story.

I saw stars such as Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd and Bebe Daniels. I can't truthfully say I ever saw Theda Bara as the family censorship would not allow it. New and different stars came into my ken. Lewis Stone (now of the Hardy Family series), Alice Day, William Farnum, Betty Balfour and Coleen Moore. As for the themes, there were some changes too, but I must admit the cinema chiefly attracted me for the reason that it offered me glimpses of the countryside and foreign lands. It was perhaps the fact that living in the London suburbs, the cinema satisfied me in this respect, but whatever it was, the desire has remained, to be satisfied less these days than ever it was before. But to return to our muttons. In general, the basic rules remained. In comedies one was given a release from one's pent-up desire to play the fool, and in Drama, right and wrong had their separate rewards, but several different methods of approach became evident, especially in Drama.

From now on I'm talking in terms of Hollywood, our own industry then being practically at a standstill. The first thing that struck me was the feeling for dressing drama expensively. Expensive houses, expensive clothes and expensive accessories and I don't think Hollywood has ever looked back on this particular trend.

People of normal wealth lived in forty-roomed mansions with interminable staircases. The "femme fatale" was always more richly clothed than the heroine, and although the "f. f." always came to a sticky end, this fact was inclined to be over-ruled by the fact that she looked a darn sight more attractive than our virtuous maiden. One envied her as one did the expensive background of the wicked business man. Social significance was here, but the boomerang was that the cinema-goer became fascinated and preoccupied by unreal luxuries. Another approach, more healthy and intelligent perhaps, was that of satire.

Such a film as Forbidden Paradise with Pola Negri as a Kuritanian queen, and Adolphe Menjou (his first film?) as her intriguing but humane prime minister, was a case in point. It was a peculiarly clever dig at the old romantic royal drama. I am now talking of the nineteen twenties! Charlie Chaplin even, was engaged on a film which was to be reflected later in Monsieur Verdoux. This was called A Woman of Paris, and was the story of a rich woman and a struggling young artist. It had its problem to deal with, too. It observed the difficulties, not of two classes mixing, but of two different ways of life. Chaplin wrote and directed, but did not appear. Then, of course, came the more important pictures, The Ten Commandments, The King of Kings, and The Four Horseman of the Apocalypse. These were followed closely by such war films as What Price Glory.

All during this time, another series of changes was taking place. Comedies became longer and more subdued, while dramas became still longer and more subtle.

In fact, both in Comedy and Drama, the violence was going out. The two began to intermingle and in the process the very definite characters of villain and hero became less easy to identify. True enough, for the adult mind this was stronger and more intellectual meat, but for the weak mind, whether educated or not, there grew a danger through this confusion of identities. This brought films to the end of the silent period.

Came the talkies. The novelty was fascinating and we began to learn American. But that, was not all of it. As the novelty wore off and the transatlantic phrases became part of our own language, another side of film story telling came to the fore. The distraction by the spoken word from the visual image and the attention that had to be paid to this spoken word.

With this came the realisation to those who wrote for the screen or to those who chose the subjects, that philosophies could be illustrated through the story. This was both good and bad. Bad in this respect that loose philosophies could do more harm than more definite ones. In fact the dear old cinema, like
so many story-telling forms in the past, became the medium of persuasive ideas rather than the medium of entertainment and the chronicle. It would be wrong, though, to say that good philosophies did not join battle in this open forum.

Personally, however, I'm inclined to become impatient with a talkative talkie, and long for the camera to show me the open air.

The tendency to dress Drama expensively was growing apace. Today, this has become so highly organised that our famous "femme fatale" is, in America, the shop window for Fifth Avenue or the Rue de la Paix (U.S. branch); while here at home she has the exclusive blessing of the Board of Trade for export purposes.

All this brought me to my final thought. Is the cinema today an art or an industry? This question has been thrashed out time and again. Famous critics have searched their souls, have decided for "industry" and have then promptly had second thoughts on seeing another important picture. This, to my mind, seems to make it plain that it is both an art and an industry. It is industrial because all over the world there are buildings where, every week, a new film is shown, and in other parts are bigger buildings in which the films to show in the smaller buildings, must be made in the necessary quantities. The cinema is artistic in that it is an art of telling and re-telling stories, and I don't think it could be put plainer than that. In the old days there were good and bad story tellers. We have never known who the bad ones were because it was the good ones which lasted. So will it be, I hope, with good films of the past, present and the future. Anyway—art can make us laugh too.

With this thought I entered the gates of Greenwich Park and began to walk towards the Observatory buildings.

Bernard McNabb.

SOME FILMS REVIEWED

NOTE: Category A, indicates adults only; B, adults and adolescents; C, family audiences; D, particularly for children.

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THE POPE AND THE PICTURES

By Hugh MacKay, O.F.M.

DURING the war thousands of British Tommies had their first glimpse of the Vatican. Previously some of them thought of it as the G.H.Q. of an occult power plotting terrible things. They found it was the headquarters of something which wields world-wide influence. One expects then, that any Orders of the Day which issue from it will deal with subjects of international importance. Many such communiqués made by the Pope and addressed directly to the Bishops of the world and through them to the rest of Christendom are called "Encyclicals". They are, as it were, official Government directives, which have to be brought to the notice of the general public in language it can understand.

They are usually written in Latin, the official language of the Church and official translations appear in the Vatican paper Osservatore Romano. In recent years the Papal condemnation of Fascism and Nazism were in the first instance written and published in Italian and German. Although they are not of themselves infallible pronouncements, all Catholics are bound to accept them with internal and external obedience. This, however, does not mean that they have not great interest for non-Catholics. Oftentimes they deal with truths of the social, political, educational, and moral order which flow from the principles of right reason, accepted by all men of goodwill. Naturally, no Pope would dream of writing on any important subject unless after deliberation and consultation with the experts on the subject matter of the encyclical. Keeping these simple facts in mind, we can see the significance and importance of the action of Pope Pius XI in writing a special encyclical, "Vigilanti Cura", on the subject of Films. The whole encyclical can be considered as a reply to the question: Why does the Pope interest himself as Head of the Church in the Film Industry? The answer is:

(a) Because of what has happened in the Past.

(b) Because of the unique importance of films in the Present.

(c) Because of the target to be aimed at by Catholic Action in the Future.

THE PAST

"Vigilanti Cura" appeared on June 29th, 1936, but Pius XI points out that on previous occasions, in 1930 and 1934, he had spoken of the possibilities of the film industry not only to the Bishops and Clergy, but also to "all right-minded men who were solicitous for the public welfare". The days of the crude silent movies were over. Red Indians no longer rode flickering and fearless round covered wagons at Eagle Pass, but in their place was a spate of sordid productions with crime and sex as their main attraction. The ordinary British Catholic was inclined to pride himself on not bothering about the films, though France, Belgium, and Holland had already put them in the forefront of Catholic Action. To counteract an attitude of apathy, the papal letter pointed out at the very beginning how the American Legion of Decency had to be formed against the moral exploitation of the uncritical film-goer. This was no mere piece of Mrs. Grundyism. "Far from you was the thought of doing damage to the motion picture industry, rather did you arm it against the ruin which menaces every form of recreation which in the
guise of art, degenerates into corruption... Not only Catholics but high-minded Protestants, Jews and many others accepted your lead and joined their efforts to yours in restoring sane standards both artistic and moral to the cinema.” Public reaction was swift and decisive. Since that time there has seldom been any serious challenge to its authority, and some of Joan Bennett’s and Greta Garbo’s earlier films would never be allowed out of Hollywood today.

PRESENT

In the second part of the encyclical the Pope deals with the power of the cinema in the present. “Recreation in its manifold varieties has become a necessity for people who work under the fatiguing conditions of modern industry, but it must be worthy of the rational nature of man, and therefore must be morally healthy... A people who, in time of rest, give themselves to recreations which violate decency, honour, or morality, to recreations which, especially in the young, constitute occasions of sin, are in grave danger of losing their greatness and even their national power... there is no means today of influencing the masses more powerful than the cinema... it must be elevated to conformity with the aims of a Christian conscience and saved from depraving and demoralising effects... On the other hand, good motion pictures are capable of exercising a profoundly moral influence upon those who see them. Not only do they afford recreation, but also they can arouse noble ideals of life; communicate valuable ideas; impart a better knowledge of history and the beauties of one’s native land and of other countries; present virtue and truth under attractive forms; create or at least favour understanding among nations, social classes and races; champion the cause of justice; give new life to the claims of virtue, and contribute positively to the birth of a just social order in the world... And here We record with pleasure that certain Governments, in their anxiety for the influence exercised by the cinema in the moral and educational fields, have with the help of upright and honest people, set up reviewing commissions and instituted other agencies in an effort to direct the cinema for inspiration to the national works of great poets and writers.”

FUTURE

The answer to the last question can be found in the third part of “Vigilanti Cura”. “Why indeed should there be question merely of avoiding what is evil? The motion picture should not simply be a means of diversion, a light relaxation to occupy an idle hour—with its magnificent power, it can and must be a bearer of light and a positive guide to what is good.” This is a field for Catholic Action in which bishops, priests, actors, authors, directors and audience can all play their part. Reports from the 4th Congrès Internationale Catholique du Cinéma held last year in Brussels show that many of the Pope’s recommendations have been put into operation. The encyclical proposes the establishment in each country of a Permanent Film Commission. This should be composed of people versed in film technique, with a thorough grasp of the doctrinal and moral teaching of the Church and a sound critical sense, and enjoying the confidence of the bishops of the country. The Vatican is certainly interested in films. It has given us a lead which we should follow.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CINEMA CLUBS

Sir,

It appears that Mgr. Adamson and I are really much more in agreement than the contrary. I certainly agree with him that it is regrettable that Cinema Clubs seem, in some cases, to be partaking of the functions of a home or church. Where this is the case, it can hardly, I think, be laid to the account of the Cinema Clubs themselves. Rather does the fault lie with the parents who are inadequately aware of their responsibilities. This is a problem which the Church has had to face for many a long year. In so far as the Cinema Clubs are inculcating loyalty to Church and Nation, they are, surely, doing well. We need not be too sensitive about that, though it is made a matter of cheap sneers in some, anti-religious quarters.

What is really troubling us is the fact that so many children are entrusted to the supervision of managers who, however excellent in other ways, cannot all be expected to be expert in this very delicate and onerous duty. There is also the question of the commercial aspect of the Cinema Club. This, I think, can be easily exaggerated. Naturally, the cinemas are out to make profits, but in the case of the films which the Rank Organisation has made and is making for children, I think it has been established beyond doubt that, so far, they have been more concerned to provide the right type of films for children than to amass profits. To that extent I repeat what I said in the article which has caused this correspondence: "It is something which we Catholics, should do all in our power to encourage and applaud." I certainly agree also with Mgr. Adamson that it would be more desirable to provide family films than films restricted to child audiences. Actually, family audiences are able to enjoy the films already provided for children, in a way that, perhaps, an audience of adults alone would not.

Yours faithfully,

J. A. V. Burke,  
Hon. Sec., C.F.S.
did not know) were produced by a lady who was present. They were passed round. I was most impressed at the balanced and sane approach of the reviews and articles and so too were all present including a local Anglican and a Methodist clergyman. The Anglican minister disturbed the gravity of the proceedings by being convulsed with laughter at Q’s review of Idol of Paris. This, he said, is the funniest thing I have ever read and then he quoted the words of the review: “This film is like a bassoon solo, you never quite know whether it is meant to be funny or not.”

It may interest you to know that your review proved so acceptable to Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

Yours, etc,

JAMES ETHERINGTON (Rev.)

(Thank you very much for passing on this testimony to Focus. It may interest you to know that one of Q’s witty remarks won a guinea reward for someone who sent it to “The Strand”.—Editor.)

Dear Sir,

I would like to add my thanks for such a magazine as Focus—it aids our Y.C.W. Section considerably in suggesting to girls the films they should see.

You would perhaps like to know too, how well it is received in non-Catholic circles. Each month at the restaurant where I dine, my friends ask “Hasn’t that Film mag. come yet?” If so, quite a discussion ensues, usually in the end notice being taken of the critics’ remarks. One of my copies also finds its way into a doctor’s waiting-room, and is read by many.

Good wishes to Focus and thanks for its help.

Yours sincerely in Christ the Worker,

JOAN HART.

(Good wishes to you and to your branch of the Apostolate.—Editor.)

I PROTEST.

Dear Sir,

Once again I protest! The review of Drums Along the Mohawk is not what we want. It is regretted that “E.” was bored, but it is not of much interest. We want to know: (a) what the film is about, (b) the standard of production, (c) and very much lastly, what the reviewer thought of it, and why. If he had told us why he was so bored, we might have had some information upon which to decide whether or not to go and see it. If the reviewer merely says he didn’t like it, we are no further forward. His dislikes may very well be our likes.

While complaining, I might as well go on to complain about the review of Farrebique. We provincial film-goers are busy men and what we want to know should be pithily expressed for quick consultation before hazard ing our 2/6. Could not this sort of essay be put in an editorial?

On the whole, however, I must say Focus is admirable and very useful. By the time films reach here the general opinion of the critics is long forgotten and these reviews are very handy.

Yours truly,

H. A. J. WALTON.

GRAHAM GREENE

Dear Sir,

Your reviews of The Fugitive and of Brighton Rock, and also your “Interview with Graham Greene,” in an earlier edition of Focus, rivets our attention on his outlook towards life.

He portrays with strong realism the deep antagonism between the needs of a man’s soul and the needs of his body. It almost recalls the old Patristic teaching that life is a struggle between Christ and the Devil in the arena of the human soul.

For a novelist of his calibre this theme is excellent. There is the Black of Pinkie and the White of Rose in Brighton Rock; the Black of the whiskey Priest and the White of his sacerdotal Grace in The Power and the Glory. John Ford used it with great effect in filming The Fugitive.

So far, so good, but the technique does not quite fit the theological facts. The facile optimism that human nature is so good that it cannot go wrong is heretical Pelagianism. This Graham Greene debunks. But to say that it is so bad as to be utterly corrupt, rotten wood covered with a thin veneer, is equally wrong, and smacks of Manichaeism.

Somewhere between the extremes stands the right conception. I suggest that Greene has not found it. His realism is partly cynicism. His Black and White approach allows no twilight. His readers might well remember that while he scrapses the whitewash off the sepulchres, God, as in Genesis, is looking at the world and seeing that it is good.

A. KEENAN.
CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY NEWS

Summer Film Conference

The Summer Film Conference (August 13th-16th) will take place at the Training College, 11 Cavendish Square, London, W.1. There will be lectures on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday, beginning at 10 a.m. (Sunday morning beginning at 11-15 a.m.). There will be three lectures a day. The evenings will be devoted to visits to West End cinemas. Arrangements are being made for accommodation at special terms to see Hamlet, The Red Shoes, Oliver Twist, and, if it has begun its London run in time, Monsieur Vincent.

A midday meal at a hotel will be available for those who wish to take advantage of this arrangement.

The lectures will include: The Principles of Film Criticism; Film Production, Script-writing, Direction, Children’s Films; a Talk by a well-known actor on the problems of the actor, and a Brains Trust, at which a Critic, an Actor and a Producer will answer questions on all points of film technique.

As we go to press, there are negotiations still going on to secure an interesting panel of lecturers: Andrew Buchanan, Cyril Cusack, Andre Ruszkowski (just back from a tour of U.S.A. and Latin America), Mary Field, Freda Bruce-Lockhart, Campbell Dixon, and others.

The fees for the lectures will be 7/6 a day; 5/- for members of the Catholic Film Society.

The latest date for receiving entries is Saturday, July 31st. Further details will be published in the Catholic Press.

From Script to Screen

We have been offered the rights of Andrew Buchanan’s little classic on film making: From Script to Screen. We propose to publish it as a handbook on the subject which will be of the greatest use to those who are concerned to do something more than talk about Catholic Film Action. One of these days we shall see a group of film makers dedicated to the work of making religious films purely for the sake of using the medium of film for the service of God. When that day comes, it will be due in large measure to the vision and patience and generosity of Andrew Buchanan.

Help is needed

Our office equipment is of the most austere pattern. Our staff is of the smallest. Even so, we are, at present, unable to recompense our helpers as they deserve and justice demands. When the day comes that the Powers That Be decide to let us have more paper we may increase our circulation to the extent that Focus becomes an economic proposition. Until that time, it is still necessary to address envelopes, lick stamps and do other menial but urgently needful tasks. If there are, within the London district, a few persons willing to come to The Blue Cottage, 69 Sumner Place Mews, S.W.7, one or two nights a month to help in these humble capacities, they will be rendering the cause of Catholic Film Action a considerable service.

Information Wanted

We are trying to compile a list of films, standard and sub-standard gauge, amateur and professionally made, which may be in the possession of Religious Orders, Convents, Colleges and other similar institutions. If anybody knows of such films we shall be grateful for the information. We wish to find out to what extent film has been made use of by Catholic organisations in this way. We may also be able thus to begin a Film Library which will be profitable to the owners of the films as well as to the general Catholic public.

Lecture to Nurses’ Guild

On June 7th, Fr. Declan Flynn, O.F.M., gave a lecture on “The Church and The Cinema” to St. John and St. Elizabeth’s branch of the Catholic Nurses’ Guild. About 50 nurses were present. After the lecture the nurses and their chaplain, Fr. McGuiness, turned their critical guns on the speaker and a lively discussion followed.
AIDS IN THE TEACHING OF RELIGION

By Our Educational Panel

AGENCIES:
C.T.S. Catholic Film Library, 30/40 Eccleston Square, London, S.W.1.
Dawn Trust, Aylesbury, Bucks.
V.I.S. Information Service, 188a Battersea Bridge Road, London, S.W.11.
Bloud et Gay, 3 Rue Ferou, Paris, 6e.
S.E.F. Office Scolaire d’Etudes par le Film. 22 Rue du Quatre-Septembre, Paris, 2e.

OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY. Film Strip. (C.T.S. 01-05. Bonne Presse.
Hire: 1s. first day, 6d. extra days.)

1. Outline of Scripture history from the Creation to Joseph, in 40 coloured pictures. Brings the stories of Genesis to life for children. The drawings are accurate and in good taste, and the colour restrained, though sometimes too sombre. The treatment is reverent and dignified, and there are no jarring notes. Titles in French. Suitable for children over 9.

(The rest of the series was not seen.)

THE LIFE, MIRACLES AND TEACHING OF JESUS CHRIST. Film strip. (Bloud et Gay, AD I, Nos. 1-20, Price 75 frs. each.)

A series of illustrations of the life of Our Lord. Simple, pleasing and devotional pictures with French captions. The following strips were reviewed:

1. L’humble Vierge Marie: charming.
2. Le mystère de Noël: some of the pictures beautiful. Words suited to children, full of tenderness as well as respect.
3. Les Leçons de Nazareth: the same, with practical remarks inviting the imitation of the Holy Child.
4. La vocation des Apôtres: pictures quite good, text very good.
5. Le Sermon sur la Montagne: good, except that the figures are rather too small.
6. 8. 9. The Parables: Not very striking—just pleasant: are pictures required here?
10-13. Les Miracles: evident desire to show the Goodness and Power of Christ, so as to inspire the children with faith and confidence in Him.

15-19. La Passion: to be recommended.
20. Pâques: full of the spirit of Easter hope and joy.

GOSPEL STORIES. Film strips. (Dawn Trust, JKF. price 20s. each.)

Beautiful series. Our Lord reverently portrayed, local colour and characterisation good, photography excellent: but most of these strips spoiled by addition of gratuitous imaginative detail and anecdotes for which there is no warrant in Scripture, which renders many of them almost useless for educational purposes.

18. Jarius’ Daughter: just the note that would appeal to children. The little girl and a small friend hear Jesus preaching. On their way home they visit Lydia, the woman with the issue of blood, who goes to find Jesus. The child is taken ill at home and persuades her father to overcome his prejudices and ask Our Lord to come. Beautifully done—Our Lord strong and tender, the children natural and charming.

17. Blind Beggar: Not so well done as previous strip. Costumes baggy and untidy.

15. Man of Faith: Photography very good, but more liberty than usual taken with the text. Of little use.


21. The Rich Young Ruler. Pleasant pictures, not too crowded. But this strip has more than its share of apocryphal additions.


JFK 20. Call of Matthew: Well done: one or two disconnected and pointless additions, e.g., Mother’s birthday—otherwise clear and convincing. Some captions indistinct. Should be gone through beforehand in order to be prepared to supplement.
MANGER TO CROSS. Film strips. (Dawn Trust. DFS 1, 2, 3. 9s. each.)

An older series than the last. Photography rather harsh and the cut-outs are ugly. Our Lady unattractive. The pictures of the Passion much the best.

THE RITE OF LOW MASS. Two Silent Films. (Hiring charge 7s. and 12s.)

Celebration of the Mass. (C.T.S. 2 reels, 35 minutes.)

My Sacrifice and Yours. (C.T.S. 2 reels, 30 minutes.)

Either of these two films would be an excellent aid to a classroom exposition of Low Mass, and being silent both allow of adaptation to a wide range of age and needs.

The Celebration of the Mass sets Low Mass before the audience very much as one sees it in church, the back view of the priest predominating; so, although frequent side shots are given and include all the outstanding and vital moments, the impression left on the child is the same sense of frustration as he or she experiences at Mass when unable to see “what he is doing now”. In contrast to this a child’s first comment on the second film My Sacrifice and Yours was “I like it because you can see the priest’s hands.”

My Sacrifice and Yours gives the better view of the priest’s actions but the pace of running is too great to the point of seeming irreverence. It shows no congregation, surely a serious omission in the corporate and public act of worship; the children who saw this film at once inquired, when only the server approached for Holy Communion, “Why are there no people?” Further the choice of lettering for the captions is bad: it is too ornate to be read by juniors, and such lack of simplicity is hardly fitting in “a visual aid”. Otherwise the photography in this film is very good.

The Celebration of the Mass takes much the same pace as the actual celebration. There is a congregation, a group of children who appear at the Communion rails; family groups would be a more normal congregation and contribute to build a better ideal. The captions are clear and well placed; there is also an excellent introduction showing the priest in the sacristy preparing the chalice and vesting, actions and objects being well distinguished. But the feature of this film which specially appeals to the young audience is the insertion of “interpretative visions” relating the actions of the Mass to their underlying realities; for example, at the time of the Gospel Our Lord is seen preaching to the people and, as the priest takes the host into his hands for the consecration the scene fades for a few moments to show Christ at the Last Supper taking the bread to bless it. A connection is made with the Old Testament sacrifices also by the introduction of a priest of the Old Law offering a holocaust.

NOUVEAU CATECHISME DES DIOCESES DE FRANCE. Film strips. (S.E.F.)

A set of 20 strips for use of Catechists, in three parts—Truths to believe, Commandments to keep, Sacraments to receive—with three accompanying handbooks. Evidently planned by skilled and experienced Catechists, for they move backwards and forwards, choosing examples from Scripture, Church History and modern life, with the familiarity of those who are at home in the House of God. The strips would make a magnificent aid to teaching if only the pictures were better: but many of them are inferior. The series would be difficult to use in England, for they presuppose the knowledge and use of the French Catechism: but the conception is admirable, and it is hoped that we may one day have something similar in this country.

ORDINATION OF A PRIEST. Film strip. (C.T.S. No. 65. Hire as for first.)

A good series illustrating an important subject. It gives a clear idea of the Ordination ceremonies, and its interest is enhanced by the fact that the officiating prelate is the great Cardinal Mercier, pontificating in his magnificent baroque Cathedral of Malines. It is hoped that a film of an Ordination will some day be made: till then, a film strip is the next best thing.
LIVES OF THE SAINTS. Film strips.
(C.T.S. Hire as for first.)

No. 22. St. Francis of Assisi. Very good pictures, nearly all contemporary. Photography could be more distinct. Lecture notes available and necessary. Not suitable for young children: his life should be known beforehand.


No. 20. St. Joan of Arc. Good. Consists of well-known pictures inspired by the story of Joan of Arc, together with those of picturesque places connected with her and monuments erected in her honour. There are no captions or titles, but the sequence is chronological and easy to follow. Lecture notes are available.


No. 63. St. Vincent de Paul. Interesting pictures illustrating the Saint's eventful life—churches and homesteads of the Landes, life among the Barbary corsairs, devotion to the service of the poor and outcast and foundation of the Ladies of Charity.

No. 82. St. Thérèse of Lisieux. Rather disappointing. There are no pictures of the Saint's family, nor of herself as a child. Many of the pictures one expects are included, but some are poor, and there are no titles.

HISTOIRE DU CHRISTIANISME. Film strips. (S.E.F.)

Another big enterprise, similar to "Nouveau Catechisme" above. Could be adopted more easily in this country; but the drawings are not good enough to warrant whole-hearted recommendation. 28 strips.

Next month's article will be devoted to "Films for the Junior School".

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PENNY A DAY FOR 240 DAYS’ FUND

IF one fourth of the Catholic population in England and Scotland contributed a penny a day for 240 days The Catholic Film Society in England would be able to set up a production unit.

It was the pennies of the Catholic population in France which made possible the making of the film *Monseur Vincent*.

Kindly send a donation to:

Hon. Secretary, Rev. J. A. V. Burke, Mayfield College, Mayfield, Sussex

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COVER PERSONALITY

GREGORY PECK

ACTING is a profession that brings out the worst in a man: the worst, that is to say, in the man who watches the acting! It is a curious fact that many men feel little sympathy for the actors who move across the screens of the world. Maybe it has something to do with the reputation for artificiality and glamour which surrounds the studios. Truth to tell, life in a studio can be anything but a bed of roses, it can be the most soul-destroying, wearisome mode of earning one's bread and butter. Nevertheless, there's a type of wavy-haired, baby-faced, pearly-mouthed, impossibly svelte young man for whom men feel an instinctive dislike. The less said about them the better.

On the other hand, there are some film actors for whom one feels a comradely attraction; a sense of certainty that they could prove to be reliable friends and likeable companions. Gary Cooper, Spencer Tracy, Walter Pidgeon are of this type. So also is Gregory Peck. There is some element in their personalities which, however unsuitable or absurd the rôle they may be playing, they are able to transmit to their audiences; an element of sincerity and integrity which makes one feel that they are real persons, men of flesh and blood, something more than puppets manipulated by a skilful director.

This was apparent even in the monstrous Duel in the Sun in which Gregory Peck played one of the most unpleasant roles I have ever seen on the screen. In The Keys of the Kingdom, the film which first brought him to the public notice, he scored an immediate success. This was a result of the sincerity of which I have written. People felt that here was a young priest who really had a vocation for the hard life of the mission-field. He was something more than an actor playing a part. He was a man feeling it. Granted that Cronin's story left much to be desired on the score of actuality and orthodoxy, still, the character of Father Chisholm was one which might easily have been made objectionable had it been played with less than the sincerity and warmth which Peck imparted to it.

In his latest picture, Gentleman's Agreement, one is aware of the same wholehearted sincerity for and sympathy with the character he is playing. As the young journalist who pretends to be a Jew in order to study the problems from the closest possible angle, he makes one feel the indignation which he himself is experiencing, the anger and exasperation which his treatment calls forth. It is a rare ability to be able to do this and it is to be hoped that Gregory Peck is able to find the right sort of rôle to exploit his gifts to the full.

He was born in 1916 in La Jolla, California. He attended the University of California after a boyhood spent with various ambitions, among which was the desire to build boats and, after the local doctor had bound up the blisters brought about by his devotion to boat-building, the thought of a medical career! Active in all school sports, he was particularly keen on rowing and might have been an athlete had he not had a spinal injury which turned his attention to the University Dramatic Club. He was, as a result, bitten with stage fever and set out to conquer Broadway. Several hard jobs were the prelude to his obtaining a two-year scholarship at the Playhouse School of Dramatics. He toured with Kathleen Cornell in plays like The Doctor's Dilemma and played on Broadway in Emlyn Williams' part and play Morning Glory. A number of artistically unsuccessful plays brought him a great deal of personal praise from the critics and the attention of the film producers. After his second film, The Keys of the Kingdom, he found himself in the unusual position, for a young actor, of being under contract to four major studios at the same time, involving 12 pictures in four years. He has not been uniformly fortunate in his film rôles, but we have seen enough to make us want to see more and to be certain that we shall see better things from Gregory Peck.

JOHN VINCENT.
FIRST ANNUAL
CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY CONFERENCE

AT THE TRAINING COLLEGE,
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LECTURERS will include
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WHAT JOHN WANTS TO KNOW IS—

THE other day I met my friend, John, with whom I talked about many things. Eventually the Cinema came into the conversation and we argued after this manner:

John: Talking about the cinema ... er ... what exactly are you people who work for the Catholic Film Society trying to say and do?

Me: Apart from giving Catholic news about films, we are trying to accept this modern invention as a medium of serving life and religion.

John: Come! Come! Aren't you taking yourselves too seriously? I mean, aren't you taking the Cinema from the realm of recreation and giving it an emphasis and an importance which it was never meant to possess?

Me: No! Surely you must agree that whatever has the power to express ideas: good, bad or indifferent, must be regarded as something above mere recreation ... Playing golf or playing marbles, walking in the country, knocking around billiard balls or a football or a cricket ball are recreations, they do not express ideas about life; it would be absurd to take these from the realm of recreation: but because films have power to express ideas, they cease to be mere pastimes. Mind you, I am not trying to say that they cease to be a form of recreation.

John: That sounds all very nice, but—not a cigarette?—the ordinary person who goes to the pictures does so to get a good laugh or a good cry or to escape from something or other or someone or other. Unless I've got things all wrong the average picture-goer is not interested in ideas.

Me: My dear John ... you are talking out of your hat. Films like Hamlet, The Red Shoes and Visitation rise up to contradict you.

John: What do you mean?

Me: These films express ideas about life. Because they are not just stuff and nonsense they are playing to big houses. Hamlet has brought to the multitude a love of the Drama. The Red Shoes will bring to the multitude the civilising influence of the Ballet which is the poetry of movement. Visitation, made by Alexander Buchanan for the Medical Missionaries of Mary has made many people realise that religion is not something divorced from life, but that it is living in the truest sense of the word.

John: All the same, (I'll be honest about it ... I haven't much use for the Cinema as an art form) I can't work up any enthusiasm for the Apostolate of the Film.

Me: Have you read the Pope's paper on films?

John: Come! Come! Aren't you fellows reading too much into that particular encyclical?

Me: That's really funny! In this country we are just beginning to explore 'Vigilanti Cura' and to realise its wisdom and common sense.

John: And what are you DOING about it?

Me: Sorry, I really can't stop to tell you ... I must be getting along. I think you should attend the Catholic Summer Film Conference which will be held at the Training College, 11 Cavendish Square, London, W.I, from Friday, August 13th, to August 16th inclusive.

John: I'll think about ... Goodbye.

Me: Make a note of the dates ... August 13th to August 16th inclusive.
The Cinema, An Instrument of Education and Culture

The importance of the cinema as an influence in individual and mass-psychology and as an instrument of culture and propaganda has been particularly recognised in the recent setting-up in Paris of an association which will establish a centre of Filmology to study the psychological and physical reactions of the film on the picture-goer. The movement is well supported by the intellectual classes, and its representatives are organising a world congress to discuss the method and rules of the new science with a view to enlisting full and active international co-operation. The aesthetic, psychological and philosophical sides of the cinema are to be discussed, and a comparative study made of cinematographic language.

However, pending these researches, the cultural and educative possibilities of the cinema can be roughly outlined, and the immense powers in the hands of the film magnates— for good or ill—broadly assessed.

In point of time it was the Catholics who first took an active interest in the psychological influence of the cinema, and through their constancy, perseverance and solicitude they were able to point to its dangers and benefits particularly where the young were concerned. The attention and interest of right-minded men were further stimulated with the coming of the sound film in 1926, for they saw that the cinema was penetrating further and deeper into the moral and social sphere. An attempt was made to bring moral and social principles to the aid of the censorship laws which were promulgated from 1912 onwards. The latter were too general and confused in themselves and had been left to the mercy of censors ignorant of the art of public entertainment and incapable of gauging the effect of a film on an audience. In 1917 American producers and distributors decided on a 25-point resolution which was the forerunner of the Production Code of 1930. This system, freely accepted without any sanctions save moral ones, and established with the assistance of the Rev. Daniel A. Lord, S.J., rested on a conviction that the screen had an extraordinary power of impressing its message and characters on the spectator, often without the latter's consciousness of it. However, it was not fully or faithfully applied and in 1934 came an outcry from the American Catholics, led by their Bishops, against the evil influence of the cinema, which resulted in the foundation of the League of Decency. Their example was followed elsewhere; the aim of the movement was to enlist public opinion against the unscrupulousness of producers in trading upon the baser instincts of the picture-going public.

The Catholic attitude was signally defined in the Encyclical 'Vigilanti Cura', which complained that the educative and instructive potentialities of the cinema were often sacrificed to an appeal to the sinful passions and the desire for profit; it described cinematography as a true object-lesson capable of teaching good and evil more effectively, as far as most men were concerned, than mere abstract reasoning. The cinema held a position of unique importance, the Encyclical continued, in respect of those on the threshold of moral maturity.

Efforts to organise the use of films in schools—begun in France in 1911—did not reach the formulation stage until 1945, when a programme was drawn up by M. Lebrun, Secretary of the Commission du Cinéma Educateur. M. Lebrun's main points were that films must be supplementary to and not a substitute for the teacher; hence they must be silent ones, except in the case of precision subjects. They must obviously be graded according to the mental capacity of the pupils, and technically perfect.

The educative value of the film was being appreciated and applied in the science faculties of Italian Universities as early as 1914; and in the United States, Canada and Greece wide use was being made of it for the teaching of Geography and other school subjects.

Turning to the film and culture, a review of the past is less gratifying. So
far, the philosophers and students of culture have not accepted the friendship of the screen, and although some of the movements in modern art, such as the German expressionism and the French "avant-garde" have made it part of their equipment, their experiments are without popular appeal. Again, the failure of certain authors to educate the taste of the picture-goer by lending their literary works to be filmed is another indication that filiology must have a language of its own.

And now for the future. Let us first examine the possibilities of the film as an educator. The moving picture not only acts most forcibly on the vision but gets behind this to the subconscious where it stimulates instincts, brings certain sentiments to the surface and creates aptitudes and tendencies much more effectually than, for example, press or radio. The secret of the cinema lies in its power of getting its ideas home to the spectator without giving him time for subjective interpretation. They become part of his psychological patrimony before he has time to examine and accept or reject them. While he sits in the dark, in physical and mental repose, his appetites for knowledge and emotional satisfaction are spoon-fed, and he himself, so to speak, is distracted by the development of the plot. It is this power of "leading on" the spectator that the Church is anxious should be used and not abused. A film, to quote Pope Pius XI, should be a work of art in the fullest sense, raising up the mind, through intellectual ideals, to God. It can indeed very simply dramatise the fundamental Christian conception of life as a conflict between right and wrong—as was done very forcibly, e.g., in the famous picture "Western" (although here we must point out that the means by which right was vindicated were generally Machiavellian). Again, the specifically Catholic successes—Pastor Angelicus, Going My Way, and the rest—furnish a very encouraging proof of the validity of our theories on the cinema. It is true that Protestants in America complained that the producers were not giving them proportionate representation, but these replied (and proved their contention by pointing to the picture One Foot in Heaven) that the fault lay with the Protestants themselves who were so divided in view that they could not register a unified interest. But, controversy aside, the Catholics have certainly broken the ground as far as the mass of cinema-goers are concerned, and productions like M. Vincent and the Italian picture Guerre à la Guerre show that we are following up this good start in various countries.

While fostering this good side of the cinema, however, we must not turn a blind eye to the bad side. We have still to contend with a great deal of evil, wrought particularly on the young, by the facile optimism or the morbid and hopeless pessimism portrayed in so many productions. A continued and careful vigilance must be maintained if our youth are to be saved. We are up against business interests, and our only way to combat their potential evil influence is to get together and implement and honour our conviction that the cinema is an instrument of education; that it is an international fact which must be saved by an international campaign fought in the moral, social and artistic plains.

As to culture, the film's value lies in its capacity as an organ of propaganda. The kind of propaganda put across in films of the "spectacular" type—biographical, historical and psychological pictures—is largely to be deplored on account of the dilitantism and the desire to achieve effect at any cost manifested in their presentation. Such a tendency does not exist in the scientific-documentary and didactic classes of film which are exclusively factual, and whose value as instruments of culture is self-evident. But in the case of the ordinary documentaries we must again beware of false propaganda. These films can certainly contribute to a mutual understanding between peoples, and we are glad to see that they have engaged the attention and interest of some of the best scenario-writers.

To conclude. The cinema is by its very nature a means of education and an organ for the diffusion of ideas, and as such has a profound influence over public opinion, either to corrupt it by its evil lead or incite it to good by its positive lead. Our duty as Catholics is to assure that the balance swings to the side of good, either by reducing the weight on the evil side or augmenting it on the good.

TuRı VasALı.
From Shepherd to Showman

When one takes into consideration the fact that, in the early days of the new-born cinematography, nearly fifty years ago, Denmark was one of the leading film countries, this may seem all the more surprising. Danish names are connected with the very first experiments with the film as art. The Nordisk Film Company was founded in 1905 by Ole Olsen, a man with a most extraordinary story. From being a shepherd he became a showman, touring the market towns of the country with his collection of attractions. When the first rumours of the invention of the film reached him, he felt, with prophetic insight, that there was going to be gold in celluloid. He ended his life as a millionaire patron of the arts, his home a veritable museum.

After a modest and successful beginning with short films intended as light entertainment, he conceived the ambition to create something more artistic in the film world. In between sensational subjects such as, for example, The Lion Hunters, an emotional affair in which real lions acted and were killed, we find him producing films treating of literary subjects and containing a complete story, something quite new in those days. These films had had a wide international success but were especially successful in Germany. Danish films had a reputation for good direction and acting. Two names that were notable at this time were those of Betty Nansen and Bodil Ipsen. A film called The Four Devils, after the novel by Herman Bang, became a sensation.

Pioneer Period

Asta Neilsen's masculine contemporary in Denmark was Waldemar Psilander, a name which once caused the most excited flutterings in the female heart. He won an international reputation. He was not content to rely on his extremely handsome appearance; he looked for serious problems in the films he made. In The Evangelist, he played the part of a priest who devoted himself to helping people in the slums. A. W. Sandberg, a very able film director, had his first great success with Psilander in The Clown. At the height of his career, Psilander became a victim of melancholia and found life insupportable. He committed suicide. It was said that one of the causes for his melancholy was his inability to disentangle himself from the attentions of stupid women.

Ólaf Foss, an excellent artist, was Psilander's successor in the new company level to the status of the Cinematographic Art. Until the advent of this remarkable player, film actors had tried to convey their story to the spectators by means of pantomime reminiscent of gymnastic exercises. Asta Neilsen evoked the participation of the audience in the story of her ability to express the finest nuances of feeling by means of her sensitive face, her large, fascinating eyes, her humanity. In short, she animated the screen.

The dramatic break-through of Asta Neilsen inspired numerous artists and producers with the ideas that have since led to the further development of the film. All those who, today, enjoy the modern movies, should spare a grateful thought for this exquisite artist who might justly be designated, if one seeks for comparisons, the Duse of the Cinema.

Her first film, which brought her immediate success, was The Abyss, written and directed by Urban Gad, who later became her husband. After this brilliant début, the first German film company, Tobis, attracted the two most important personalities in Danish films. In Germany Asta Neilsen had a triumphant career. Besides Urban Gad, who wrote and directed most of her films, she also had Lubitsch and Leopold Jessner as directors. One of her most interesting performances was in Hamlet.

I. PIONEERS OF FILM MAKING

The Danish film today plays the part of a Cinderella in the world of film. Danish films are little known outside the countries of Scandinavia. What are the reasons that, apart from a few exceptions, they are relegated to a modest place beside the domestic fireside, awaiting, perhaps, the coming of a fairytale prince?
which the latter had founded shortly before his death, after leaving the Nordisk Film Company. Fonss acted in several well-known films and later went to Germany.

Other important names of the pioneer period in Danish films are those of Alice O’Fredericks and Lau Lauritsen, senior, who was for a long time a leading man in the Nordisk films. These two created the famous couple “Long and Short” (Mutt and Jeff), the tall thin man and the little fat one, who resembled Don Quixote and Sancho Panza so much that it was obvious that they should play the legendary couple in one of their films. They produced 40 films and almost attained Chaplin’s popularity, though they lacked his deep philosophic sense of humour. Theirs was more a knock-about comedy based on funny situations.

**Carl Theodore Dreyer**

Holger Madsen and Benjamin Chrisrensen (the latter worked several years in Hollywood) were also well-known names as film directors. But the greatest Dane in film history is without any doubt, Carl Theodore Dreyer. He was first a journalist and entered the movies by writing sub-titles and scenarios. Then he took to editing and worked in the technical department until the chance was given to him to direct his first film, *The President Of The Jury* (1921) which did not have much success but was valuable that it gave him experience as well as an opening. His second film, *Leaves Of Satan’s Book*, already bears the impression of Dreyer’s personality, and is an attempt to catch the metaphysical by means of the camera and to symbolise it by light effects. Satan appears in the four sections of this film, each time with a different mask, his purpose being to fulfil his diabolical mission of bringing suffering upon humanity.

In 1928 Dreyer left for Paris and there made *The Passion Of Jeanne d’Arc* and *Vampire*, the two films which placed him in line with the great classical names of the film art.

The silent epoch in Danish films was completed by two magnificent Greenland films, *Eskimo* and *Laila*, both directed by George Scheevooigt for Nordisk films.

*(To be continued)*

### SOME FILMS REVIEWED

**NOTE**: Category A, indicates adults only; B, adults and adolescents; C, family audiences; D, particularly for children.

**Reviewed in “Focus”**

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FILM REVIEWS

By Our Panel of Priests


Here is Hollywood's first attempt to make a feature film about the ballet. It will be interesting to compare it with Pinewood's Red Shoes when that appears. M.-G.-M. seem a little tentative and apologetic. For cinema audiences the ballet is regarded as something of a pill which needs to be coated with back-stagery and a Margaret O'Brien story. The combination is not conspicuously successful.

This is not a picture for balletomanes. It is pre-Diaghileff in spirit. Extracts from ballets are short. (The fragment of Prince Igor is emasculated.) But there is a particularly good recording of some of the music of Swan Lake. There are moments but not enough of them, when colour and movement are noticeably easy on the eye, and one interesting experiment in the use of silence. A lady sitting near me commented on the ungracefulness of skimpy ballet skirts.

I am partial to Margaret O'Brien, but here she has little chance to do the stuff she does so well. Perhaps this is due to increasing age; perhaps she is overwhelmed by the ballet-hoo. The film "introduces" Danny Thomas. As the Mr. Paneros whom he portrays is a cross-bred character by whimsical Greek out of Schnozzle Durante, I fear that my reaction is not unlike that of the young man who declared an introduction with the words "'No, thank you. I've seen 'er before."

Talking of introductions, to introduce the uninitiated public to the ballet is clearly a task that needs the tact and skill of another Dobson and Young. If these lines should ever meet the eye of a producer, I should like to commend to him most earnestly the potentialities of La Boutique Fantasque. It would be an eye-opener for those who suppose that ballet is all either dying swans or unintelligible modernity.

Q.


This film mingles the theme of that outstanding poem on peasant labours, Farrebique, with Sussex Gorse, the grim saga by Sheila Kaye Smith. The result is the finest piece of French commentary on peasant ways since La Fille Du Puisatier. It is the story of a man whose attachment to the soil is such that he sacrifices everything to it: his family, his affections, his neighbours, his moral sense; and he dies, lonely and tired, stricken down as he ploughs the relentless soil.

The film is based on a novel by Gilbert Dupé and consists mainly of exteriors which, while they sacrifice something of the pin-pointed definition to which one is accustomed in the average studio production, more than make up for the missing glamour by the exquisite photography that takes its place. In addition, the acting is of that calibre that takes one right out of the atmosphere of the studio; it is actual, real, true to life—it might almost be factual film in the hands of a master director.

La Ferme Du Pendu is a grim and serious parable which makes little concession to the softer, gentler instincts; nevertheless, out of the main interplay of lechery and covetousness arise some lessons that are fundamental. The inexorable retribution that follows on habits of selfishness, whether physical or mental, is admirably suggested and a welcome sermon on the evils of abortion is put into the mouth of one of the characters. A little farm girl, the victim of a man's unbridled appetites, is sent to the local quack to have her child destroyed. He, unexpectedly, declares that it is a greater sin to destroy the fruit of a man's seed, even when it is born unwillingly, than it is to shed a man's blood and he refuses to commit the crime.

It is not a film to be recommended
indiscriminately, even to adult audiences. It is one of those pictures that yield more to those who are willing to contribute a little thought than to those who are merely seeking to be entertained. All the players are excellent, but perhaps Charles Vanel as the land-worshiping François, and Lucienne Laurence as Marie, the little servant girl, deserve a special tribute.


An overbearing old lady who lives in the past (that's Martita Hunt, of course), an overborne sister, gentle yet somehow sinister (that's Barbara Mullen, equally, of course), an illegitimate son (that's supposed to be love), an Irish accent (that's funny, that was), Sally Ann Howes in her underwear (that's somebody's idea of Box Office) and a mildly whodunit murder (and that's that).

I don't know anything about Emery Bonett's novel *High Pavement*, which this is "from", but I thought the script of the screenplay a bit flabby.

If you read about young Miss Howes having her "first really sophisticated starring part" and wonder what it means, it means that she can wiggle her nose at men now.

As every line was spoken with audience-conscious clarity, as every theatrical convention was observed, I could almost smell greasepaint. But when I was offered a sandwich after the show, I just couldn't fancy any more ham.

GREEN DOLPHIN STREET.


This is a most untidy film. To me it seemed like a loose leaf photograph album put together any old how. There seems to have been no attempt to create order, design and harmony. The shots are banged together after the manner of things which are not intended to last long and as for the story ... well ... only the ultra sentimental will take it to their hearts. It is about William Ozanne (Richard Hart) who goes to sea to become an officer and a gentleman, but who goes to seed instead, well almost to seed. While in China he slips his ship, hides from the law in New Zealand, writes to Marguerite Patourel (Dona Reed) the girl he left behind him and asks her to come out to marry him. Please note that William wrote this letter when drunk! Instead of writing the name Marguerite, he writes the name Marianne. Believe it or not, Marianne (Lana Turner) who is Marguerite's sister and the pushing type, accepts the proposal. William (what a man!) hasn't the courage to tell her that it is Marguerite whom he wants to marry. (Which goes to prove that a sailor should be sober when he proposes.) There is no fun in being uncomplimentary, but apart from some good photography, everything else about *Green Dolphin Street* is very green indeed. For example, when mamma Patourel is dying, she sends for papa Patourel; amid gasps she makes a speech in which she reveals to him for the first time that when she married him she did not love him but that as time went on she found he was such a good fellow that she began to love him and so on and so on and when she stops talking and dies papa P. flops down by her bedside, joins his hands and dies also . . .

All sorts of false things happen in this film. There is an earthquake in which the rocks (on the "lot") tumble down with terrific speed, in which the earth (on the "lot") quacks and quakes and turns and twists and does all sorts of funny things . . . BUT . . . the chief characters survive, with nothing worse than smudges and Marianne gives birth to a bonny babe.

The film runs for 141 minutes. Alas, a reviewer has his obligations. I stuck it out right to the silly end, when I saw Marguerite, in the presence of William and Marianne, being received as a postulant into the Order of St. Peter (never heard of such an Order), in a phoney convent away up on the top of a whacking great rock where Dame May Whitty who looks like a member of the Women's Land Army acts as Mother Superior.

E.

It's pronounced "Shy-en" and it's a town in Wyoming, wild Wyoming of 1867. There is always something about a western that takes you agreeably back to the childhood of the cinema, and this is a well made western. The material is inevitable—rocky background, stagecoach, hold-up, small town, saloon, sheriff, etc.—but it is handled individually. And every time the coach started to move I was delighted, because of the first rate tune which always accompanied it.

For the benefit of those who scan these columns primarily with a view to shielding their offspring from every breath of impropriety, I must remind you that the ideas of entertainment and feminine costume prevalent in the saloons of the period were not conceived for the furtherance of the Christian virtues.

No one has suggested that this is a re-issue, but I thought I saw Lord Tyrrell's name on the certificate. Q.


This is a documentary film which tells the story of the men responsible for maintaining the pilots who guide liners and merchant ships in and out of our British harbours, and who keep the lighthouses and buoys that form a protective network around our coasts against the hazards of rock and shoal. It is interestingly told and beautifully photographed and should be very acceptable to those who look for something unusual in film presentation. V.


In case you don't know (I didn't), a baby-sitter is someone who looks after children when parents go out. There was something very unusual about Lynn Belvedere, the answer to Mrs. King's advertisement. Your guess is as good as mine as to what that was (especially as my guess was wrong).

After a prelude of twanging vocal harmony the film gives the impression that it is going to be a regrettable long version of those short American domestic farces which usually run for about twenty minutes. But once Clifton Webb appears it never looks back and becomes a live, original satisfactory piece of escapist nonsense.

The script is well written and deserves a special bouquet because, beneath the nonsense there is revealed unobtrusively yet unmistakably a non-contraceptionist outlook.

Q.


A detective thriller with a complicated double-crossed plot that is not always easy to follow, about a man who hires a private investigator to discover the whereabouts of his recently-married wife. The ladies in the film look so much alike and the accents are often so difficult to follow that one reviewer at least was left with the feeling that the wrong person had been killed. Maybe he was prejudiced.

A moderate amount of the now inevitable Commando-type rough house takes place; the police do their best to arrest the detective; the girl whom you know is The Girl does her best to act suspiciously and the man you thought was the Murderer turns out to be only a sentimental bigamist.

A film that the Trade papers would describe as "competent murder melodrama with popular appeal", but which we feel should be described as "the usual efficient offering for pagan audiences". However, do not let that stop you from seeing the film if you are a Franchot fan. V.

However variable John Ford's direction may be, one is always certain of a feast of photography in his films. Fort Apache is not one of his best but, as in The Fugitive, the brilliance of his camerawork tends to conceal deficiencies in plot and acting. One has the feeling that he has overworked this particular vein. He used the desert elements so magnificently in Stage-coach that it is hardly to be expected that any subsequent use of them could be anything but second best.

The story tells of a Civil War General demoted to a colonelcy in the Arizona Desert. His pig-headed conceit and intolerance of lower-ranking veterans of Indian warfare lead to his sacrificing the lives of his regiment in a fatuously ineffective expedition against the Indians whom he has betrayed. For the honour of the regiment, his blunder is concealed by his adjutant and posterity is supposed to regard him as a hero.

One wonders whether this is an episode of American history with which one ought to be familiar or whether it was just a good idea for a film. In any case, it would seem to be limited in appeal mainly to American audiences which is, perhaps, why the film seems to drag so intolerably. The last 30 minutes, however, are packed with the best Indian-warfare mixture with Apaches wheeling round dwindling Pale-faces with blood-curdling cries and unerring marksmanship.

The acting of Fonda as the martinet colonel is excellent but the other players are merely competent, with a somewhat dumb show from the rapidly maturing Shirley Temple.

It was pleasant to see Mae Marsh again in even a small part.

Good family entertainment in which the children may sleep for the first 60 minutes.


This film examines in a cursory and tentative manner the causes that make for matrimonial shipwreck in America. Housing shortage, bad living conditions, incompatibility and deterioration of moral standards are put forward as the chief causes. The Catholic Church is given credit for maintaining its consistent attitude on the question of divorce while the other religious groups are shown to be reluctantly driven towards accepting it in certain circumstances.

Among the remedies which the film praises are the Marriage Guidance Councils. Unfortunately a most unattractive and probably pathological type is shown as the man best fitted to provide the needed psychiatric advice. The film ends, rather naively: "Despite today's insecurity, marriage, approached creatively, intelligently and earnestly, still promises greater happiness than any other course in life". That is what the Church has been saying for centuries and the means available is the Grace of the Sacrament.
The sweet reasoning of his wife, the bitterness of the disillusioned Military Attaché, Major Kulin (below), contributed to Igor’s change of heart.

As a story *Iron Curtain* is interesting. It is easy to follow. It has its moments of suspense. It is well directed. The director has created that peculiar mentality which men living in fear generate. If the acting is not of a distinguished order, it is of a true order. Dana Andrews plays Igor Gouzenko with integrity. Gene Tierney, his wife, is emotionally sincere. Eduard Franz gives a good performance of the disillusioned Major. In fact the whole cast deserves praise, for all help to tell a story which, precisely because it is true,
demands better acting than if it were not true.

**AS A DOCUMENTARY**

As a documentary it gives the impression of sincerity and objectivity. Facts and acts are allowed to speak for themselves. It does not set out to debunk Russian Communism but in recording the story of the Russian plot you see the personal and family sorrow, the joylessness, the sense of fear and frustration which it brings to its disciples; you are made aware of its false idealism, its duplicity, its phoney race-mysticism. One well-known critic said that there is nothing in the film to show what brought about Igor's change of heart. I thought this was obvious. The sweet reasoning of his wife; the impact of the freedom around him; the free way of living and thinking of a democratic people; the disillusioned Military Attaché, Major Kulin, mentally and morally cracking up in the calcutta of Communism; the sullenness of his co-mates, contributed to his change of heart and head. It needed courage to tell the truth; as the blurb says: "To bring the Truth from behind the Iron Curtain, the man who told it must live in hiding for life".

**IMPORTANT FILM**

I do not think that this is a great film but I do think that it is an important film. In an address in 1946 Pope Pius XII said: "Christian civilisation will rest on the firm rock of Christianity, on the acknowledgment of a personal God, on the spiritual dignity and the eternal destiny of man or on the unfeeling omnipotence of a materialist state, without any ideal beyond this world, without religion and without God... One or the other of these two possibilities will come to pass." I think that this film is important because it will make some people think seriously about Russian Communism.

In 1945 a Russian Spy Plot was set up
"Please, Sir, I want some more." John Howard Davies who plays the part of Oliver was chosen from 1,500 applicants. He is nine years old. He has never acted before.

Oliver Twist (John Howard Davies) is conducted by Mr. Bumble, the Beadle, through the Parish Workhouse, where the Paupers are picking oakum. Mr. Bumble is played by Francis L. Sullivan who has appeared on the London and New York stage and in many British and American films. Some of his best remembered films include: "The Wandering Jew," "The Drum," "Pimpernel Smith" and "Caesar and Cleopatra".


It was inevitable that Oliver Twist should be filmed and almost as inevitable that David Lean should direct it. His individuality and his success as an interpreter of Dickens in Great Expectations indicated that. He and Stanley Haynes wrote the script. Cuts there obviously had to be, and since each lover of Dickens will no doubt have his own ideas of what ought not to have been cut, it is useless to enter into controversy about that. Alteration and re-arrangement are rather a different matter. These have sometimes been undertaken "to make for better balance and dramatic value". But the question arises whether anyone could have a better sense of the balance and drama of this story than the author himself.

Again, since the book provides more material than the film can possibly deal with, is it really a gain to introduce extraneous elements of considerable length? The terrific storm at the beginning, for example. It is all very impressive certainly, but its inspiration comes more from Disney than from Dickens. I saw Josephine Stuart battling against the wind and the rain in the studio, and she certainly deserved the director's "Well done, Jo. Now run along and get dry." But was her journey really necessary? Wasn't it a bit too something-they-do-in-the-films, like the mob with torches at the end. There was a conventionality too, I thought, about Fagin's nose. And there seemed to be something of cinemato-graphic self-consciousness in the "asking for more" sequence, as if we were being told in advance: "The famous 'I want some more' incident is coming now; you mustn't miss it".

There is nothing self-conscious about the camera work though. This is a case of ars est celare artis. An exceptionally difficult task has been accomplished admirably, as might be expected of the photography in a film with which Ronald Neame is connected.
Great pains were taken to ensure period authenticity. It was all the more surprising therefore that when there was a shot of the interior of a magnificent Gothic building, the relevance of which was sufficiently subtle to escape me, it should contain an altar with a cross and two handsome candlesticks, instead of the typical frowsty pre-Oxford-Movement Communion Table of the early nineteenth century.

The Cockney accents are really good, but amidst them Oliver always speaks educated English, in spite of his workhouse upbringing. You can attribute this, according to taste, either to his gentle blood or to the difficulty a nine year old actor might find in assuming an accent.

The casting was excellent. Robert Newton is at his best as Bill Sikes. Alec Guinness could hardly have been surpassed as Fagin. Francis L. Sullivan makes the most of the pomposity beneath Bumble’s cocked hat. British Henry Stephenson came from Hollywood to play kind Mr. Brownlow. Kay Walsh reveals something of the submerged humanity of Nancy. Mary Clare makes a distinct contribution to the film as Mrs. Corney. And John Howard Davies has been supremely well chosen and directed for the part of Oliver.

The sets are by John Bryan (a little too “setty” at times, some have thought), and the music by Sir Arnold Bax, with the Philharmonic Orchestra under Muir Matheson, and Harriet Cohen at the piano.

So much for the trees; now for the wood. If I have at times seemed captious, I must not be thought unappreciative. The picture is an achievement. It is notable for cohesion and reserve, both characteristics of a work of art. The murder of Nancy and other scenes involving violence are handled with restraint. The lack of any love interest is cleverly compensated for by the heart appeal of John Howard Davies. While the sociological implications, so characteristic of Dickens, are not watered down, they are not laboured either, nor ever underlined by the pointed insinuation of contemporary parallels, a favourite device of second rate films. If the picture bores or repels you, it can only be because the book would bore or repel you even more.

Some will tell you that the film is a masterpiece. I consider that it falls short of that. See it, and make your own decision.
Catholic Documentary Acclaimed Success

It has been interesting to note the reactions to the Medical Missionary film, Visitation. The reviews in the Catholic Press have all been generous without being sycophantic. Nevertheless, it is the secular press to which we have turned most eagerly. And here we have been gratified too. The sturdy and hard-headed Cinema Weekly, one of the Trade journals, says: "A film of unusual interest ... a first-class documentary which, to use the expression from the popular viewpoint, is not marred by being self-consciously religious in its treatment. It includes some of the most vivid studies of existence in a leper village that have ever been made ... and is noteworthy for its fine photography."

The political and economic implications of the film are well indicated in a passage from West Africa, a weekly newspaper circulating throughout Nigeria, Gold Coast and other parts of the Continent. "The film runs for just over an hour and, of its 6,500 feet, not one is wasted ... It is a positive film. Immediate reaction is that here is a film which focuses on achievement ... There is poetry in this film but it is not the poetry of sentiment nor is it nostalgic for the past. Without medical knowledge, without modern invention, without the enthusiasm born of true education, the lives of the lepers who people this film would have been lived out in the misery and despair associated with the name. Instead we see lepers for whom life has hope of physical recovery and the solace of everyday routine."

The well-known authority on negro problems, Mr. A. J. Siggins who writes extensively for the African and American press, sees in the film an instrument for the uplifting and enlightening of the negro races. He writes: "I am anxious that the work which your Missionaries are doing should be more widely known, not only because of its intrinsic value to the Nigerians but because of the urgent need to let coloured peoples know that white materialistic imperialism is not the only thing Europeans are capable of offering. White materialism has failed, but no Government is offering a substitute. You are offering true Christian self-sacrificing service to suffering humanity and that is the only way we can hope to win the confidence and goodwill of these peoples, plundered over the centuries by white imperialists. The end of it is quite clear; the coloured races will turn to Communism to gain their freedom. The more your Missionaries can do now, the better it will be for all of us ... I am not a Catholic but I see that quite clearly. That is why the film interested me so much. South Africa is in a terrible state. You are showing how to save their bodies and their souls and so save our own."

(Continued on page 190)
CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY NEWS

IN spite of the difficulties that have surrounded the organisation of our First Annual Film Conference, we have been fortunate in securing the cooperation of a distinguished band of speakers. It is to be hoped that our members will make every effort to avail themselves of the opportunity of hearing expert views on the elements that contribute to good film appreciation.

We offer our apologies to those who hoped for a Residential Summer School. It was too much to arrange with so few to help. With an eye to the future, we shall learn the lessons which the present Film Conference will teach us and begin at once to make the preliminary plans for a residential school next year.

Another apology is due to a number of correspondents who have written for information of one kind or another. We have delayed answering them in order to be sure of our answers. The result has been a growing pile of letters that can only slowly disappear.

Incidentally, we hope that correspondents will forgive us if, during August and September, letters take longer than usual in eliciting a reply. Our small staff will be away.

The first reactions to Visitation have been most gratifying. Catholics and non-Catholics alike have recognised that here we have, perhaps for the first time, a truly religious film, showing the life of supernatural charity being exercised at the present day. It is easy to show the life of a long-dead Saint and to miss the point that his work lives after him. Here one sees saints in the making, serving man for the love of God.

Visitation has had a season at the Hammer Theatre in Wardour Street, London, and has been shown in Putney and Barnes. The Sisters have a heavy task ahead of them arranging for the journey through the country. The Hierarchy have warmly welcomed this positive piece of Catholic Film Action. We shall be glad to hear from those who wish to have the film shown in their district. It is generally better to have it shown in a proper cinema where possible. Substandard (16mm.) copies will eventually be available for those colleges and convents which have their own projectors.

At a recent Committee Meeting the Catholic Film Society welcomed its Chairman, Abbot Upson, O.S.B., after his long tour of the U.S.A. Father Abbot visited all the major studios and made many valuable contacts. He was accorded every facility by the Rank representatives in New York. We take this opportunity of extending to that Organisation our grateful thanks for this and many other examples of their friendly co-operation.

Abbot Upson also met and talked with the Officers of the American Legion of Decency. The Legion has done a valuable work for Catholic morality over a long period of time. It is sometimes forgotten that, until the Legion began its altruistic labours, films in Hollywood were sinking to the lowest depths of mere money-making sensationalism. The Code which put a stop to the slide to infamy, and which is now accepted as the guide for motion picture producers in the U.S.A., was largely the work of the Legion.

We are already making plans for an interesting winter programme. First on the agenda is our First Annual General Meeting at which we hope to meet as many of the members of the C.F.S. as possible. Preliminary information is that it will take place on a Saturday in October. We hope to be favoured with the presence of our President, His Eminence Cardinal Griffin.

It is sometimes said (and with reason) that the South keeps all the centres of Catholic activity to itself. In order to counteract such an idea among the members of the C.F.S., we hope to be able to arrange Film Conferences and Meetings in the big provincial towns. With the cordial help of the Catholic Truth Society, which has so many flourishing branches in the provinces and which is the de facto Catholic Film Library and Film Distributing Organisation, it should be possible to arrange many interesting functions in the provinces. If clergy and laity who are interested and are willing to help will get in touch with the Hon. Sec., we should soon see a very flourishing extension of Catholic Film Society activities.
How do Catholics on the Screen React?

By William H. Mooring

"HOW do Catholic actors and actresses react when they are asked to play in objectionable screenplays? Are they not under moral obligation to refuse?" Often the query is put by non-Catholic people, quite legitimately, to put on the spot those Hollywood celebrities who, while known to be Catholics, have not always refused doubtful assignments.

Currently Mourning Becomes Electra, because it has been highly touted by certain film critics—notably by some Catholic ones—as a probable Academy winner, has crept into this line of enquiry.

What, for instance, induced Rosalind Russell, a Catholic actress, to accept the principal rôle in Dudley Nichols' adaptation of the mournful Eugene O'Neill story of the Mannon family? Most of its members were mentally and morally twisted.

The mother (Katina Paxinou) took away the admirer of her daughter (Rosalind Russell) and accepted him as a lover. She caused the death of her husband (Raymond Massey), whereupon the daughter, consumed by jealousy and hate, goaded her brother (Michael Redgrave) to shoot the man. Together they told their mother her lover had been murdered and mocked her grief so that she committed suicide.

Even before this it was apparent that the relationship between this mother and her son, a war-wrecked youth, was at least in the emotional sense, an unnatural one. Once the mother had committed suicide, her daughter began to grow so much like her that her brother developed this same strange and repulsive interest in her and she in him.

Both brother and sister had suitors but their efforts to restore balanced and natural interests within the family were fruitless and eventually the brother killed himself. The sister, now spurned by the man who would have married her and correctly described by him as evil and wicked, shut herself in the family home, had the shutters bolted and vowed to make it her grave. "May God forgive you" were her fiancé's last words to her and to this she replied, "I can forgive myself", a clear confirmation of an attitude which throughout the story indicated renunciation of God and His laws.

The words were those of Eugene O'Neill. Miss Russell, the film actress, merely spoke them. But can she as a Catholic forgive herself for speaking them?

That is what lies behind this oft-repeated question concerning Catholic movie actors and their concept of how they should use the talents given them.

The struggle—if in fact there be one—lies between artistic ambition and conscience. Mourning Becomes Electra offered an opportunity for impressive histrionics and no one will be likely to argue that Rosalind Russell failed to grasp it. She gave the performance of her career and may well receive an Academy reward for her personal achievement.

In the final analysis, however, her skillful use of talent, may not do more than prove her proficiency in her art. What will this example of that proficiency have achieved? That is the underlying question upon which all those people who attend movies to be entertained and maybe to enjoy a sense of edification, base their query.

They suspect that art which serves no good purpose cannot be good art. And they wonder out loud how an alert, intelligent Catholic actress can begin to justify the use of fertile ability to such barren ends. The answer to the question put obviously becomes an individual one. Some Catholic actors—though not too many of them—have been known to refuse rôles in films which disturbed their consciences. More of them have pleaded that no matter how evil a screen character might be they are right as Catholics and screen artists to play it, provided in the story the evil is presented as evil and therefore, undesirable. That probably would describe Miss Russell's attitude.

How many Catholic actors and actresses in Hollywood take this problem to Mother Church? How many turn to their Confessors for the answer when ambition to do their best as artists tugs at a conscience which urges them to do their best as Catholics?

(Reprinted by courtesy of the Editors of "The Tidings" and other American papers.)


GOOD WISHES FROM AUSTRALIA

Dear Sir,

Please accept my sincerest congratulations on Focus. The April issue reached me today and it struck me as being perhaps the best of the four issues so far. I was very attached to the C.F.N. but find that Focus supplies all that the C.F.N. had to offer along with a greatly enlarged "Readerscope" and many new features of great interest—the Book Reviews and the illustrated section to mention but two. Your monthly review will surely stimulate the interest of all its readers in the film as an art form and will help to develop in them what has been lacking for so long in the vast majority of the film-going public—a really critical outlook on the filmfare "dished up" to them. I wish Focus every success and trust that it will enjoy an ever increasing circulation.

The Young Catholic Students' Movement here in Australia (which has as its members the senior students in our Catholic secondary schools) in times past made use of some of your reviews in its monthly paper "Rising Tide". Focus is one of the few sources of sound criticism open to us from which we can get reviews of films in advance of their screening in Australia. By using your reviews we can help the students in their choice of films, while at the same time developing their critical powers.

With renewed wishes for the continued success of your excellent review, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

Fr. F. M. Chamberlin.

GRAGHAM GREENE

Sir,

Your correspondent uses our reviews of The Fugitive and Brighton Rock as pegs on which to hang his insinuations of heresy against a man who has been numbered by discerning Continental critics as "one of that small number (of writers) contributing something positive to the enriching of man". It does not need my untheological pen to defend him against such charges. Learned priests, both secular and regular, have performed that office in the weekly and monthly Catholic journals. I will content myself by asserting that nowhere in the writings of Graham Greene can it be shown that he holds the view, attributed to him by your correspondent, that human nature "is so bad as to be utterly corrupt". On the contrary, it is one of the merits of this writer that he provides us with plots that indicate that, in spite of man's wickedness and corruption, the power and glory of grace are able to transform and the mercy of God to uplift even the most hopeless, humanly speaking, of erring mortals.

One thing has constantly to be kept in mind when reading the novels of Graham Greene. Less than any other writer that I know does he assume the style or function of a creator with regard to his characters. Let a passage from a letter to the Tablet illustrate what I mean. It is written by the Abbot of Downside about The Heart of the Matter, Greene's latest novel. "It is not the author but one of his characters, with a communicable knowledge more limited than that of the novelist and his readers, who gives it as his opinion that Mr. Scobie loved God. Scobie tries once or twice to excuse his own behaviour but he seems unable to convince even himself. Mr. Greene probably felt tenderly towards Scobie—as who would not?—but surely the whole drama of the last few moments of Scobie's life lies in the question whether or not he turns back to God at the end—a question which is meaningless if Scobie's breaches of the moral law were justifiable either in his own or the author's eyes."

Reaction to the novels of Graham Greene provides a proof that the widespread ability to read, which is a result of modern education, should not be taken as indicative of an equally widespread ability to understand what is written. The film and the novel are both dangerous when forced on the attentions of a large and heterogeneous public. This danger consists in the fact that they are easily absorbed by relaxed minds. Neither the novels of Graham Greene, nor the films derived from them are, in my opinion, dangerous in this sense. The reason is that both are far too profound in implication (even the films) to be at once exhausted of their content by the casual reader or cinema-goer. They are more apt to annoy the superficial mind than to undermine it.

J. A. V. Burke.
BROKEN JOURNEY

Dear Sir,

I always appreciate E’s criticisms and the one about Broken Journey in the June number of Focus is no exception. But may I, with all due respect, query one point?

In this film, in order to save the lives of his fellow travellers, a boy in an iron lung asks the pilot to take the batteries which work the lung and use them for the wireless. E. stigmatises this act as suicide. Is it?

To start with, was the boy ever obliged to use the iron lung at all to keep himself alive? Isn’t an iron lung one of those “extraordinary means of preserving one’s life” which the Catholic moralists say you don’t have to use?

But be that as it may, have I got to believe that to dispense with the use of an iron lung is direct self-slaughter, and therefore wrong in itself? I would much prefer to think of it as an act which in itself is neither good nor bad, but becomes good or bad according to the motive for which it is done. If the boy did it intending to kill himself, perhaps there would be room for an accusation of suicide. But if, as in the film, he intended to save the lives of the others and unwillingly permitted his own death, surely he is a hero rather than a suicide.

What is going to happen when the film of Capt. Scott comes out? Is E. going to tell us that Capt. Oates, that “very gallant gentleman”, was guilty of suicide? Or is there some difference between his case and that of the boy in the iron lung?

Weak in doctrine, admittedly,

But always willing to learn,

I am,

Sincerely yours,

ETHEL M. FOX.

What you write is correct.

According to Catholic Theology:

1. The direct taking of one’s own life is a mortal sin if done on one’s own authority.

It is also forbidden to do something from which death will accidentally follow, if one has suicidal intentions in doing it.

2. Indirect Suicide is in itself forbidden, but may be permitted for a proportionately grave reason. One kills himself indirectly if, without the intention of committing suicide, he knowingly and willingly does something which not only has an intended good effect, but from which death also follows. It is presupposed that the good effect results from the action as immediately as does death. Therefore, it is permissible to leap from a dangerous height to escape burning to death, especially if there is some hope of escaping death from the fall. Thus, too, it is lawful in wartime to blow up an enemy fortification or ship, although one foresees that his life will be lost in doing so. (“Moral Theology” by Heribert Jone, J.C.D.)

“E” says:

“In my review of Broken Journey I made it clear that I was not impressed by its story. I thought the characters and their acts were false. I still think so. The general impression which I received from this particular sequence did not lead ME to think this was a clear-cut case of the law of double effect. My immediate reaction was to think that this act of the boy in the iron lung would give a handle to those (and they are many) who hold that man can control birth and command death. I was concerned to safeguard the duty which man has towards his own life in real life.

A SUGGESTION

Dear Sir,

With reference to J’s letter in the May issue of Focus on “Initial Activities of Film Making”, which can be commenced without money, may I be allowed to offer the suggestion that the Hon. Secretary and present members of the Catholic Film Society get together and set up a correspondence course on the following subjects:

1. Theoretical and practical application of Photo-Play Manuscript; in other words, “Play-Writing for the Cinema,” with its technical preparation of the script, “Silent”.

2.
2. Elementary Photography, Lantern Slide Making, proceeding to Motion Picture Photography, Theoretical and Practical, and then follow-up with Photographic trick work.

If you intend to set up your own production unit, you must be well acquainted with every branch of Motion Picture Technique, theoretical as well as practical, before you attempt to spend money on the production of even a short film.

You must combine theoretical knowledge with practical knowledge; to ignore this spells Failure.

I agree with you—there’s still plenty of work to be done.

M. J. McManus.
(No. 112 membership.)

(Your suggestions are good, but what a staff we should need to run a correspondence course.—Editor.)

MORE HELPFUL THAN EVER

Dear Father,
Might I congratulate you here on Focus—we think it’s excellent, and in this new form it’s more helpful than ever.

With every good wish, and asking a remembrance for our Y.C.S. Movement in your prayers.

Betty O’Brien,
National Secretary, Y.C.S. Movement,
Melbourne.

PENNY-A-DAY ADVENTURE

Dear Rev. Father,
I have joined the Penny-a-Day Fund, and am delighted with the idea. It enables folk like myself who are only able to do little things, to join in a very big adventure. I have nearly nine shillings in hand, as soon as it reaches a pound I will dispatch it to you.

Wishing Catholic Film Work in all its various branches great success.

Edith Ackerman.

"Recreation, in its manifold varieties, has become a necessity for people who work under the fatiguing conditions of modern industry, but it must be worthy of the rational nature of man and therefore must be morally healthy. It must be elevated to the rank of a positive factor for good and must seek to arouse noble sentiments. A people who, in time of repose, give themselves to diversions which violate decency, honour, or morality, to recreations which, especially to the young, constitute occasions of sin, are in grave danger of losing their greatness and even their national power."

(Pope Pius XI.)

PENNY A DAY FOR 240 DAYS’ FUND

IF one fourth of the Catholic population in England and Scotland contributed a penny a day for 240 days The Catholic Film Society in England would be able to set up a production unit.

It was the pennies of the Catholic population in France which made possible the making of the film Monsieur Vincent.

Kindly send a donation to:

Hon. Secretary,
Rev. J. A. V. Burke, Mayfield College, Mayfield, Sussex

GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGED

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Film Strips Useful for Work with Juniors

By Our Educational Panel

NOTE.—This month's article was announced as being devoted to 'Films for the Junior School' but is actually concerned with film-strips only. This is because the reviewer has temporarily lost the use of the cine-projector, which has gone for an overhaul; we hope that a second article later may deal with films. But as a film-strip projector is a more general possession at present, and as film-strips are probably the most useful visual aid in the junior school, the limited scope of this article may not be a disadvantage.

LIBRARIES:

G.B.I., Gaumont-British Instructional, Aintree Road, Perivale, Middx.


V.I.S., Visual Information Service, 168a Battersea Bridge Road, S.W.11.

B.I.F., British Instructional Films, Mill Green Road, Mitcham, Surrey.

Cartoon Film-Strips, 157 Hamilton Terrace, N.W.8.

Wallace Heaton, Ltd., 127 New Bond Street, W.1.

THE STORY OF THE SHIP. (G.B.I., Nos. 59 and 64. Hire 28. 6d. Sale 15s.).


One valuable line of approach to History for Juniors is through the development of the things they see and know as the essential elements of their own lives: houses, ships, trains, etc.; these interests form centres round which they can and do build up a substantial body of factual knowledge which they are likely to remember, and are quite as useful as the traditional 'periods of history' for training in habits of work and thought. Some excellent film strips have been prepared for use in these "lines of study" which will help towards accurate knowledge and true imagery of things of the past; and of these the above named are examples.

*The Story of the Ship* is a simplified form of the three strips for seniors called "The Development of the Ship". It has two aims: "to demonstrate how the ship has developed from primitive origins and to show the child the kind of vessel in which men sailed at each important step in the world's history". It appears successful, especially as regards the earlier type of vessel; the comparative size and complication of later vessels might have been more emphasised. The range is from a simple log to the Queen Elizabeth, and includes Egyptian, Greek, Roman types, though mainly concerned with British ships. Most of the pictures are from models in the Science Museum, Kensington, and for London children the strip would be most useful either in preparation for a visit to the Museum or in discussion afterwards. Actually Juniors could take more detail. They are avid for this kind of knowledge and would drink in information about variations of rigging and building, etc., while it is precisely in imparting such information that a film strip could be ideal. The teaching notes are good and name further sources of information.

*The Castle* is the first of a series of strips on Medieval Building. Beginning with primitive earthworks and timber palisades, this strip deals principally with the medieval development of the castle. There is a sufficiency without a surfeit of detail. The functional aspect is clearly exposed by showing the weapons against which the castle had to stand, and to meet which its form was modified and developed. Finally the subject is linked with some modern means of defence and it is shown how the dual purpose of fortification and dwelling gave rise to double descent and influenced the Victorian castle home as well as the block house. The castles used to illustrate the theme are still standing and therefore the strip can in many places be related to local interests. Further, the stimulating exercise suggested in the teaching notes will open the eyes of the children to features of building in their locality and perhaps start an environmental study.

*The Evolution of the English Home* is an excellent series. Full and clear details of construction satisfy the child who inquires very much about the "how" of everyday things and has probably made his own primitive attempts at building in the back garden. The notes accom-
panying the first two strips of the series (the only ones so far seen by us though others are now available) are full, and suggest use with senior classes only; but children from eight to eleven would find them within their compass and the full notes should be a boon to the teacher faced with every variety of question. Actually the Anglo-Saxons was shown by us to a class of nine-year-olds who found it the most interesting and "meaty" film strip they have had this year.

A special difficulty arose in the making of Part I: "surviving remains of the earliest known British habitations are so fragmentary and so few that even the specialists find it difficult . . . to agree as to their original shape". The author had either to admit the obstacles to be too great or else with the assistance of enlightened artists attempt to fill in the gaps with a series of conjectural reconstructions which, based on the available evidence, should convince by reason of their probability in the light of accepted knowledge. The second of these alternatives has been taken and the author has made it "his aim throughout, where specific examples cannot be represented, to illustrate a type of hut rather than to attempt a necessarily imperfect picture of any one example of which insufficient facts are known".

The first strip contains 39 frames of which 19 are concerned with primitive types of shelter, and the last 20 with Roman domestic life in Britain, including details of heating, wells, pumps, baths, etc. Various stages of development from primitive to civilised life are shown to exist contemporaneously: barbarity is not only of the past, nor civilisation, only of the present: for instance, the reconstructed lake village is studied in 5 frames of which the last is a lake village still to be seen in New Guinea; an African hut of today is compared as regards construction with the huts of Glastonbury; and other examples might be cited. There is a sense of reality in this correlation with present customs and survivals, e.g., the charcoal-burner's hut, which is especially appropriate to Juniors and is truly educative. All the pictures are clear and present their information fully but without confusion.

Part II deals in 31 frames with Anglo-Saxon homes, their construction and interior furnishing and the manner of life they supported, to the eve of the Norman invasion.

CONGO PIGMIES. (V.I.S. No. 544. Sale only. Price 5s. 6d. All ages). TWO PENNY HALF PENNY JOURNEY. (G.B.I., Price 15s. Age 11 to 14).

HARVEST TIME. (B.I.F. Sale 7s. 6d. Age 9 to 13).

Like History, Geography is best appreciated by juniors when approached through a special interest; just as the traditional exposition of History in logical and chronological lumps is found boring to tears at this age, so too the complete survey of a country under neat headings which collect strange assortments of facts is of little use in the junior school. Too many of the geographical film strips seen are therefore not recommendable for children under eleven. One good exception is Congo Pigmies; it presents the primitive life which appeals to children in clear and interesting pictures taken from Dr. Paul Schebesta's "Among Congo Pigmies". It shows the forest background of their life, their physique compared with the Negro and the European; intimate views of their life (children at play, old men smoking, etc.); how they build and furnish their homes; their ways of hunting and feeding; their dress and ornament; their music, dancing and amusement. But no notes are supplied and the teacher may find it necessary to read Dr. Schebesta's work to answer the "how" questions which are bound to arise; it speaks well for the strip that the reviewer greatly desires the book.

A different type of Geography film strips for juniors is that which deals with the services and organisation of our daily life and shows those heroes of our childhood, the engine driver, the postman and the dustman, about their business. Of this sort is Two Penny Halfpenny Journey. Though marked for ages 11 to 14 it would be of use also with younger children who were studying, for example, Communications or the Post Office. Actually it is derived from two films: The Postal Service (sound) and the Postman (silent) and is intended for revision of these. It shows pictures of collecting, sorting, transport and delivery of letters and refers to foreign mail and to the manner of packing and addressing one's mail. It is captioned and has accompanying teaching notes which suggest good questions and subjects of investigation.

Harvest Time illustrates the various stages of harvesting corn, by hand and
by machine, stacking sheaves in the rick and an elevator at work. It could be useful for town children with very little country experience, but the photography is disappointing.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS. No. 1
Compiled by John Lade. (Cartoon Film Strip. Sale 9s.)

"How does it work?" is a frequent question in the junior school. Here is the answer as regards the virginal, spinet, harpsichord, clavichord, piano, organ, Hammond organ and carillon. Clear diagrams show how each instrument makes its notes, by plucking or striking, and gives a general idea of the possibilities and limitations of each; the introduction to the forerunners of our piano, the instruments for which famous musicians, e.g. Bach, actually composed on pre-piano days is completed by reference to records by which these instruments can be heard. Probably children of ten or over would best appreciate this strip, but it has been used with a class of eights and nines who were very interested. There are no teaching notes but the captions are clear to mind and eye.

ERRATUM. The price of the Dawn Trust Film Strips is 10/- each, not 20/- as stated in the previous number.

CATHOLIC DOCUMENTARY ACCLAIMED SUCCESS
(Continued from page 182)

There are other equally interesting and valuable tributes from other individuals and journals but this is sufficient for the moment to show that in presenting Visitation we are doing something that has repercussions beyond the immediate bounds we had envisaged for ourselves. Which is precisely what Pius XI said would happen. "Good motion pictures are capable of ... creating understanding among nations, social classes and races ... are able to contribute positively to the genesis of a just social order in the world."

J. A. V. B.

The book of the film "Visitation" (see Review, page 191) may be had from the Sisters after an of the "Showings" or from The Manager, The Blue Cottage, 69 Sumner Place Mews, London, S.W
BOOK REVIEWS

Visitation. By Andrew Buchanan. Published by the Medical Missionaries of Mary for the Catholic Film Society.

"Film," says Andrew Buchanan, "is a fleeting thing—seen today, gone tomorrow." The book Visitation has been written in order that there might be a permanent record of the film of the same title. Those who have seen this fine documentary film can only be grateful for such a record, while those who miss the film are fortunate in being enabled, by means of the book, to acquaint themselves with its inspiring content.

The film Visitation was made by Mr. Buchanan for the Medical Missionaries of Mary, and is a moving account of the wonderful work carried on by these nuns, all of whom are doctors or nurses, amongst the native population of Nigeria. Mr. Buchanan describes the making of it as his greatest privilege during more than twenty years of film-making.

Written in clear, concise style, the book is divided into two parts. Part one describes the making of the film from the moment when Mother Mary Martin, the Superior General and Foundress of the Medical Missionaries, first approached Mr. Buchanan, until its completion many months later. Many and formidable were the difficulties that had to be surmounted, even to the sending of a unit to Nigeria by road, and in describing them Mr. Buchanan gives much information that is applicable to film-making in general. We follow the development of the film from the completion of Mother Mary's original script until the final process whereby the commentary-plus-music tracks and the visuals are wedded together on one film.

Part two tells the story of the film itself. It is an account of the realisation, after years of prayer and preparation and wearisome delays, of one woman's dream. Mother Mary Martin, or Marie Helena as she was then, first went to Nigeria in 1921 and the sight of the sufferings of the African people filled her with a determination to devote her life to their alleviation. Not until 1937 was she able to begin her work in Nigeria, and the eleven years that have elapsed since then have been years of amazing achievement. The book treats in particular detail of the work done for African women and children and for lepers, hitherto the outcasts of humanity. The account of the Ogoja Leper Village, where more than five hundred lepers live and are tended by the sisters and by those of their own number who are able to work, is of absorbing interest. Many of the slighter cases are cured, whilst the incurables are cared for and everything is done to make their lives as bearable as possible.

The book ends with a description of a Profession at Drogheda, the Mother House of the Order; a new sister dedicates herself to the work of healing. As Mr. Buchanan says, however, "This story has no end. It will continue for as long as there is suffering in the vast expanses of the world."

A theme of such high inspiration calls for careful treatment and a real understanding of the supernatural motive that lies behind the work of the sisters. Mr. Buchanan, always keenly aware of the supernatural charity that runs like a flame through their lives and is the mainspring of their heroism and complete disregard of self, proves himself well fitted to be their historian.

M. Moultrie.


There are few books dealing with the film which can safely be handed to the layman without either the danger of boring him on account of their fatuity or overwhelming him by reason of their technicality. Dr. Wollenberg has the happy knack of speaking simply without seeming to condescend. He calls his book an illustrated guide to film appreciation. It is based on a series of Cambridge University Extension lectures and deals adequately for its purpose with the history of film, principles of production and aesthetics, with style and economics. The illustrations not only fill up space, they add to the instruction which it is the book's purpose to provide—something unusual in books about films.

A Foreword is contributed by Oliver
Bell, the Director of the British Film Institute, and there is a thoughtful chapter on the Influence of the Film with which to end the book. Mr. Bell says: "Those of us who are concerned in some degree to consider the implications of this new invention, are always astonished at the indifference displayed towards the new medium by people who could claim in other respects to be fully educated. This is the greater misfortune as never was a medium more in need of intelligent interest and guidance than is the film." This echoes our own attitude so faithfully that we feel sure that Dr. Wollenberg’s effort to remedy the state of things deplored in the Foreword will meet with the warmest approval of our readers.

J. A. V. B.

The Film Hamlet

"The film Hamlet", edited by Brenda Cross and published by the Saturn Press, Baker Street, S.W.1, at seven shillings and sixpence, is a distinguished production worthy, in every way, of Laurence Olivier’s great film. The purpose of the book is, in the words of the introduction, "to set on record the main experiences and opinions of the important executives and technicians concerned with the making of Laurence Olivier’s Hamlet". The result is a complete, intimate and enlightening account of how the film took shape.

In Sir Laurence Olivier’s own article "An Essay in Hamlet" the director-producer-star takes us into his confidence and tells us how he first conceived the basic idea of the film and the way he worked it out. He reminds us that it should be considered as an adaptation of "Hamlet"—an "Essay in Hamlet"—rather than a film version of the play.

On the technical side, Desmond Dickinson, director of photography, discusses the advantages and disadvantages of deep focus photography and helps us to appreciate the problems of lighting and perspective which he had to face and which he solved so successfully. These are but two of some fifteen contributions which, with carefully selected illustrations, make "The film Hamlet" such a pleasure to read. A suitable sub-title of the book would be —"A Study in Collaboration"—for only the most competent and enthusiastic collaboration could have produced such a work of art as Laurence Olivier’s Hamlet.

J. F. Hogan.

British Film Year Book. (Skelton Robinson, 22 Chancery Lane, W.C.2. 1947-48. 382 pp. 21/-.)

Rather late in the year we notice the current issue of the British Film Year Book. It is edited by Peter Noble, that ubiquitous writer on subjects theatrical and filmic. I must confess that I consider it remarkably poor value for the money it costs. Its most valuable content is, or should have been, its Reference Section. In fact it has the most curious omissions both as to persons and details.

The accompanying articles include informative, stimulating, provocative contributions from the pens of C. A. Lejeune, James Agate, Anthony Asquith and Michael Powell, among others.

J. A. V. B.


In spite of the 50% increase in price, this is still the best value for money to be found among the floods of film literature which inundate the bookstalls. The present issue is one of the best. It has several articles dealing with various aspects of the script-writer’s contribution to film making. Cash Down and No Credit, by Guy Morgan, is particularly useful. "It is ironic that the script-writer’s greatest grievance should be, not against the technical manhandlers of his script, but against fellow-writers—the critics. The film critic’s habitual lack of mention of the screen-writer’s part in film production is held by the majority of screen-writers to be the greatest single limiting factor to the proper function of their craft." Focus critics please notice. Dialogue for Stage and Screen, by Clifford Leech and Type-Casting Screen-Writers by Martin Field are also to the point. Roger Manvell is, as always, interesting and informative in The Poetry Of The Film. An article on the films of Fritz Lang, by Lotte H. Eisner, is yet another of the spate of tributes to this great but decreasing German director which decorate the film reviews.

J. A. V. B.
COVER PERSONALITY

DAVID LEAN

"THE Director is the invisible star of the picture," says Andrew Buchanan. "The players are entirely in his hands and the strength or weakness of a performance can be usually traced to the Director." Intelligent people have realised this for a long time. Our readers are intelligent people; they will not be unduly surprised therefore to find that this month we devote our Cover Personality to one of the most important of British Directors, David Lean.

One of the objects Focus has in view is to induce its readers to study films. Those who are discriminating will have noticed already that what makes the difference between one picture and another is not the name of the star nor the story, nor the scenery. In those pictures that you notice as "different", it is the hand of the director which is responsible. Just as a dozen conductors will impress their own special quality of musicianship upon a well-known and often repeated symphony so will the skilful and really poetic director leave his mark upon the films he makes.

David Lean is, as film directors go, comparatively new. He has directed six films whereas John Ford, for example, has made more than a hundred. Yet it is true to say that Lean has left his mark upon his films with a touch as sure as that of Ford. Furthermore, Lean has the right to say that he has yet to make an artistic or box-office failure. That is, indeed, a distinction. To quote an article written by David Lean in Penguin Film Review No. 4: "In terms of Wardour Street and Hollywood, big money-makers are automatically good films, and small money-makers are automatically bad films. There is no such thing as a good film that does not make money." That was written cynically of course, but, unhappily, it is only too true that the yard stick of financial success is the one by which films are judged by the majority of producers. It is also only too true that artistically worth-while films are seldom financial successes, as the money lords count success.

Hence it is all the more to the credit of David Lean that he has, hitherto, evolved a formula in film that combines high artistic integrity with a wide and warm appeal to the general public. Even Brief Encounter, that most perfect of films, despite the general impression to the contrary, has proved a box-office success. It remains to be seen whether The Passionate Friends, in which Lean directs Claude Rains, Ann Todd and Trevor Howard, repeats the triumph of its six predecessors.

David Lean, at 39, can claim to have learnt his film-making the hard way. He started as a number boy at Gainsborough Studios in the days of silent films. Since that time he has mastered every branch of film-making. He early learned that the secret of many successful films lay in the cutting rooms. He spent much time and patience watching the best (and worst) American films in order to learn the tricks of the trade. His first big chance in England, after a period in Paris as editor for Paramount, was the job of cutting Elizabeth Bergner's As You Like It and Escape Me Never, Pygmalion, 49th Parallel and One Of Our Aircraft Is Missing were other films which owed something to his faultless editing.

On the last-named film he became associated with Ronald Neame, a connection which led to the perfect team-work of Cine-guild pictures. Noel Coward called him to direct In Which We Serve, the success of which was followed by a free hand in Coward's subsequent films This Happy Breed, Blithe Spirit and Brief Encounter. But the film which made his name known to the general public was the magnificent Great Expectations, made with filial care and devotion to the beloved Dickens. Oliver Twist has proved that the first Dickens film was no mere "lucky break"; it is the result of years of hard work and experience together with a poetic imagination and a patience that is rare among film directors. To watch David Lean at work is to see an artist in the act of creation. It is to be assured that, in the hands of the right man, the making of films is indeed, an art. Lean is one of the half dozen men at work in Britain today who are really important contributors to the Seventh Art.

John Vincent.
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Vol. 1 No. 9

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FOCUS—May be obtained from: The Manager, "The Blue Cottage,"
AM very happy to have this opportunity of speaking to such a distinguished gathering on what must surely be a unique occasion—"unique" in the sense that it is the first occasion of its kind in London, though we earnestly hope that the Catholic Film Society which has organised this Premiere will see to it that it is not the last.

Before speaking a few words about the film you are to see, I should like to emphasise the fact that the Church has always taken a constructive interest in films as a popular and important means of entertainment and instruction. Its function has not been merely that of a censor and just twelve years ago Pope Pius XI himself wrote the encyclical letter "Vigilanti Curae", laying stress upon the cinema as a field for the apostolate. In this country we have the Catholic Film Society which, with its limited resources, is performing a magnificent task. Many of you will know of its monthly Review Focus with a circulation of 6,000—a circulation which would be larger but for paper restrictions. Under its able secretary, Father Burke, the Society is making wonderful progress in this country and making its influence felt in the cinema world. We are most grateful to Father Burke for all he is doing. He is really the man behind tonight's show.

In his encyclical, the Pope insists that when Catholics make use of films, they should employ the best professional methods in order to achieve the best results. We can never be satisfied with second-rate and amateur productions. The Medical Missionaries of Mary have followed this advice and the film which you are to see may take its place with the best documentaries ever made. Mother Mary Martin, the foundress of the Congregation, wished to show the charitable work undertaken by the Missionaries for the people of Africa. She wished to stimulate both the material charity, without which it would be impossible to secure the necessary medical equipment, and the spiritual charity which must be the basis of all such activities. In Mr. Andrew Buchanan, who made this film, she found the ideal co-operator and of his success you will be able to judge for yourselves. I am not going to tell you the story of the film for you will see this in a few moments. It reveals the deep faith and confidence of the one who founded the Society and who was undaunted by delays and set-backs and who overcame almost insuperable difficulties. It is the story of exquisite Christian charity combined with the latest that medical science can provide. It shows how the precept of the love of our neighbour, by alleviating human misery and affliction, expresses the charity we must show to Almighty God. I am not even going to tell you of the story of the making of the film, for I understand that an excellent little book, written by Mr. Buchanan, and telling of the immense difficulties which had to be overcome, is on sale here tonight. But I cannot let this occasion pass without expressing our thanks to Mr. Buchanan and his team for all they have done. I must also say how really grateful we are to the management of Studio One for so generously placing this Cinema at our disposal this evening.

We need not anticipate that London will soon be filled with posters advertising that Visitation will be shown at all the West End cinemas. The film will, however, be presented non-theatrically or privately throughout the country and it is hoped that those present here tonight will show their interest in the film and its object by inducing other people to see it and support its aims.

There are many others who should be thanked for their help in the making of this film. May I just say a very general "Thank you" and in this I include the audience for their very presence. I hope that you will all enjoy this film as much as I did when I saw it privately a few weeks ago.
Pictorial Method of Spreading the Faith

Digest of an article by Rev. Fr. Scharmach, of the Missionary Society of Sacred Heart, in which he gives a very interesting account of the impressions which a film picture on the life of Our Lord made on the natives of the Island of New Guinea, in the Pacific.

For many pagans, the pictorial presentation of Christ's life was their first sermon, and a very convincing one. What they saw on the screen they fully believed to be actually happening, and even accounted it an experience of their own. The fact was demonstrated by their spontaneous shouts and exclamations, their expressions of compassion, their sobbing and weeping, their anger, their sadness, their joy, during the various scenes.

"Gur ko teip oh! Oh, our dear Lord! How could the cruel Pilate allow Him to be so terribly beaten!"

At the scourging and the crowning with thorns, sobs and moans could be heard everywhere in the audience and tears flowed unheeded down many a dusky cheek.

"Oh, how painful! What a heavy cross they have given our Saviour to carry! And how He has fallen with it! It has borne Him to the ground! Oh, our dear Lord! Come, let us take the cross and carry it for Him. We are the guilty ones, after all."

At the crucifixion, when Jesus was mocked, some of the natives were provoked to laughter at the grimaces of the thieves. But immediately these few were sharply rebuked. "What! Do you actually laugh? Do you dare to help the Jews deride our Redeemer?" Whereupon the laughing quickly disappeared.

After the death of Jesus, when lightning flashed through the darkness and the earth trembled, I heard some Sulka tribesmen remark:

"Now, did you see that? You said that the evil spirit causes lightning and earthquakes. But here God the Father sent lightning and the earthquake because His Son has been murdered."

The effect produced by the pictures was not merely a momentary revival of faith. Primitive natives have but few topics of conversation, for they know nothing of books or newspapers. So the film show gives them something to talk about for months. And this is exactly what the shows are meant to do: to get the people to discuss the truths of our Faith, explain them to one another, and then follow them in practice.

Though Lent occurred several months after the showing of the pictures, one pagan chief told his tribe:

"The time has now come when we should mourn for Jesus who was put to death for us. Hence no dances or revels are to take place in my district. God the Father might be angry with us and think that we dance with malicious joy at the sad death of His Son."

In some places, when the women saw Jesus being carried to the tomb, they wanted to begin chanting their mournful Sulka dirges, but were prevented by some who thought it would cause a disturbance in the performance. At the Resurrection of Our Lord, they rejoiced:

"Oh, our dear Lord! He lives again, and He has no wounds! How beautiful He is!"

A native of the Sulka tribe, already grey with age, who at the other times never attended instructions and services, was very deeply affected by the vivid scenes of Our Lord's life. That very night he hastened back to his mountain village and, having called together all those who had remained at home, he burst forth in a loud reproachful tone that sounded from the hills:

"Here we sit at home, and what have you learned? I went down there and saw with my own eyes Him who came to us from heaven, who allowed Himself to be beaten and to be nailed to the Cross for our sake; who paid for our crimes with His blood! They killed Him, but He came back to life
of His own power. Then He returned again to heaven and they say that He will come once more to judge us. Woe to us if we despise His Lotu (religion) as we have hitherto done."

This midnight harangue was not without effect. Early the following morning a whole line of old, grey-haired men came to the catechist and begged him to inscribe their names on the list of catechumens. Henceforth they too wanted to attend the instructions for baptism. Those who had not seen the moving-pictures sent me a petition to show them again at my next visit.

Some of the old Sukla heathens were especially indignant at the massacre of the children of Bethlehem. The affair was discussed in minutest detail in their villages. Several, who themselves were responsible for many a poisoning and assassination, showed themselves especially aroused.

"Such an ugly, mean trick! they muttered. What! The scoundrels would murder our Lord! If only we had been there! We would have way-laid them and then let them have a dose of their own medicine with our clubs and spears!"

All in all, the films are an excellent means of teaching religion by the pictorial method and they give the missionary and his catechists very useful opportunities to get in touch with the natives.

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**IN THE PUBLIC EYE**

The Catholic Film Society Conference had the pleasure of hearing Mgr. John J. Devlin on Sunday at Cavendish Square. Mgr. Devlin is Parish Priest of St. Victor's Church, Hollywood. He is also the priest delegated by the Legion of Decency to advise the studios on matters of Catholic interest in films.

Mgr. Devlin, who is on holiday in this country, was born in Cork, Éire. He was for a time at school at the Salesian College, Battersea. An amusing story is told of his efforts to ensure that the script of *The Bells of St. Mary's*, the popular Bing Crosby film, conformed to the requirements of the Legion of Decency. The first treatment presented an illegitimate child who is instrumental in bringing her parents to the Church to be married. Father Devlin pointed out that this was improper. After a great deal of discussion during which Father Devlin pointed out that the child could be the instrument to bring the separated parents together again, as was eventually done in the film, Leo McCarey, the director wired Father Devlin: "All right Father, marry them!"

It is most exasperating to read, as one does, of the interesting films that are made, or being made, in other countries which it seems unlikely that we shall see in this country.

Mexico, after the highly-praised film about Our Lady of Guadalupe, we now hear that one dealing with Mary Magdalen is in process of production, with Medea de Novara in the title rôle and Luis Alcoriza playing the part of Christ. Problems will naturally be raised as a result of this interpretation, but, as far as this country is concerned, the Censor will not allow the public presentation of a film with Our Lord in it.

That is not to say that a society such as the Catholic Film Society could not arrange the showing of such films. But it involves an organisation of distributing and exhibiting executives on a scale which, at the moment, we could not undertake. But if our readers were sufficiently interested, it could be done. What offers?
THE DANISH FILM

By Catherine Larvil

II. THE COMING OF THE SOUND FILM

Before pronouncing a judgment on the present state of Danish films it may be useful to know the governing factors behind this sudden change. The German and American film industries had made in the meantime substantial progress and acquired already a remarkable position in the Scandinavian countries. But the first incisive change in Denmark was involved by the advent of the sound film.

Denmark was, because of her language, unable to participate in the international market. But foreign films met with the same difficulties. Denmark is chiefly an agrarian country with round about 300 cinemas. In the capital, Copenhagen, are some 50 cinemas, and of this number perhaps 10-15 were in a position to present international top ranking productions because they alone had the corresponding audience.

The remainder of the 300 small cinemas in the country are patronised by clients who prefer films in their own language instead of reading complicated sub-titles. Of necessity smaller productions based on simple rural stories were made out of consideration of the character of the population, the costs of which had not to exceed more than it was possible to recover in Denmark or at most in Scandinavia.

The three principal Danish producers are Nordisk Film, Palladium Film and Asa Film. One of the greatest handicaps for these producers is that the government takes 60% of their receipts in the form of duty. The remaining 40% has to be divided between the producer and the owner of the cinema. Therefore the possibility of a profit from a film is impossible if the production costs exceed 200,000 crowns (£10,000). It is obvious that this fact was decisive in the further development of Danish films.

Series of indifferent pictures were produced and the first creative spirit to invade this mediocrity and to return to psychological problems was Benjamin Christensen with Children of Divorce (Nordisk Film). He was the first artist of repute of the earlier silent period to return to the Danish industry.

It may be surprising that the new Danish film industry made no use of the veterans of the film art. The old élite—Urban Gad, Asta Nielsen, Theodore Dreyer, Olaf Fones, had long ago returned to their native country. Was it a kind of revenge on the "prophets" who, in accordance with the eternal saying, had left their country to widen their horizon? Or was it just by chance that they were forgotten and lived retired in the shadow of their glory? Urban Gad was the first to obtain a licence to manage a cinema. It is one of the Danish peculiarities, that not everybody who wants, may run a cinema. The right has to be given by the government and generally personalities meritorious in the world of films were preferred. Olaf Fones had to wait about ten years for such a permission. He is now the manager of the World Cinema, the greatest in Copenhagen.

Asta Nielsen, who certainly could have been very useful with her rich experience in film work and with her artistic sensibility, lives more or less in retirement since her return from Germany. She has waited since 1936 for permission to manage a cinema—she would be by that means at least in contact with the chief interest of her life. The publication of her "Memoirs" shows she has remarkable talent as a writer. Urban Gad, her former husband, died last year at Christmas.

From the old pioneers there remain only Alice O'Fredericks, Bodil Ipsen and Lau Lauritzen, jun., the son of the former Nordisk manager, who worked without any interruption in Denmark before the coming of the new sound film. Alice O'Fredericks, who generally directs, together with Lau Lauritzen, jun., usually makes comedies and light entertainment films, but was also successful with two social subjects.

Bodil Ipsen, one of the most popular Danish actresses, has become a very influential film director. She also directs together with Lau Lauritzen, jun. They attracted international attention for a Danish film called The Red Meadows, an excellent work, very realistic, an interesting document on the Danish Resistance Movement.
Another sensational production from the same couple was *Derailed*, a very keen story of a young woman who loses her memory and as a result comes into criminal surroundings. Characteristic is the transformation of her personality responding to her new environment and her assimilation in the "milieu" until she returns to her normal life and behaviour. Both are Asa films.

Palladium Film's great Resistance film, *The Invisible Army*, directed by Johan Jacobsen, will shortly be shown in England. The film creates tension from the first until the last moment and does not pretend to be more than a clearly-directed document of the sacrifice of men for their ideas.

The great event, not only in the Danish but also in the world film industry is the return of Theodore Carl Dreyer, after an absence of 11 years, with *The Day of Wrath* (Palladium Film 1943). The film was shown in England in November 1946, and in France in the spring of 1947. One had not for years seen this surgeon of souls, this painter in films on the screen. His long silence enabled him to say with more effect what he had to say—and the echo of the audience and the press was in the same strain.

Nobody will easily forget this Faust-tragedy about the Protestant Minister Absalou who had to pay his debts according to the law of God's unrelenting logic. If Dreyer intends to disappear for another ten years he has provided his audiences for a long time. I tried to find out his plans and discovered that Mr. Dreyer in life is as profound as he is in his work. He was not able to give me an interview, because all he wanted to say he had just told to an American journalist, but he was kind enough to give me this explanation by telephone:

"It is known that you wrote the script of *Maria Stuart*. Is it true that you have a contract for this film in the United States?"

"It is not yet definitely arranged, but I hope to come to an agreement and to leave for Hollywood. When you see it in the newspapers, then it will be certain."

"Do you think that Hollywood is the right territory for *Maria Stuart*?"

"Certainly, I do. Otherwise I would not go."

Mr. Dreyer declared to me that he expects that all the artistic and financial freedom, which is the essential condition for his collaboration, will be given to him in the United States. It is known that Mr. Dreyer tried first to produce this film in England, but it seems as if his English negotiations could not be brought to, for Mr. Dreyer, satisfying conclusions.
FILM REVIEWS

By Our Panel of Priests

THE WORLD AND HIS WIFE.

Frank Capra is famous for his series of social essays in film form. Mr. Deeds Goes to Town, Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, You Can't Take it With You all contribute astringent attacks on some aspect of the social life of America about which most of us, in company with Mr. Capra, feel strongly. Now comes The World and His Wife and, at a time when the world and his wife are wondering about the White House and its next occupant, it says much for the integrity of Capra that he is not afraid to make a film which strongly criticises the American political set-up. Maybe they will call him un-American, Communist or Fascist; but it seems to me that the lesson which his film teaches is just plain Christian honesty and truthfulness. We in this country probably know too little to be able to say with any degree of justification whether the situation as Capra presents it is a factual one, but we know enough of our own politicians and their jobbery to feel certain that there is not much exaggeration in the types.

Spencer Tracy plays the part of a millionaire who starts off with an altruistic desire to do good for his country. He thinks he ought to stand for President. In the course of his campaign he is manoeuvred into the cheapest kind of hypocrisy and insincerity by a political gangster played by Adolphe Menjou, Katharine Hepburn is the millionaire's wife, a woman with intense convictions as well as complete loyalty to her husband. She is simple enough to think that he could get to the Capital by telling the truth though she is genuine enough to want him to remain as he is if he cannot. In the end it is her loyalty that induces the candidate to make the speech which, we suppose, denies him the chance of ever ascending the throne. The implications of this film are too delicate for a non-American to feel very comfortable in making comment, but it is clear that the lesson behind the story is international in its import.

The production is of that adroit kind that leaves one unaware of its presence. The direction is, as usual with Capra, completely confident. His actors move around as if they were part of the scene. The dialogue, the timing, the photography are all, without being obvious, convincing. Spencer Tracy adds his own special brand of sincerity to the part. Katharine Hepburn has one of her rare opportunities to make us believe that she is an actress.

This film is, in effect, a religious film. As such it ought to be applauded by all thoughtful persons for it teaches a much-needed lesson in a world of crooked expediency.


The critics disagreed about the merits of Mickey Rooney's stage performance when he made his personal appearance at the London Palladium recently. There can be no doubt that he throws himself into his film work with abounding energy. As to standard of performance, perhaps one had better say that he means well. In Killer McCoy, a sentimental story of a lad who battles his way from a newspaper round to the threshold of the world's lightweight boxing championship, he is literally on the move all the time. He gives us a generous dose of his repertoire of facial expressions from the street-corner gamin to the worldly-wise "wide", none of them in the least convincing. A drunken father and an ailing friend together with the college-bred daughter of a gaming trickster all help to build up the box-office appeal of this prefabricated picture.
The ethics of the story are entirely disgraceful. One is led to suppose that the sporting world is peopled by crooks and thugs and swindlers.

V.


I read the Wilkie Collins novel when I was a youth and remember absolutely nothing of it except that it was exciting. So I sat down to the film with a mind free of all literary prejudices. The film anyway is a good story: mysterious, intriguing and exciting. It is also highly improbable; but then life (they say) is even more so! The sinister quality of the story on the screen is mainly due to the sustained action of Sydney Greenstreet as Count Fosco, a most complete villain of satisfying bulk with an implacable jaw and eyes that are a triumph for the latest subtleties of make-up. I am afraid it must be confessed that the part is over-acted, though not far enough to supplement the comic relief intentionally provided by John Abbott as Frederick Fairlie, the nerve-wrecked dilettante, and his Heep-like attendants. What almost keeps the story in touch with reality is the part of Marian Halcombe freshly and naturally acted by Alexis Smith, and she is extremely well supported by Eleanor Parker in the very difficult double part of Laura Fairlie and Anne Catherick (the Woman in White). There is indeed no weak spot in the important part of the cast. The décor of the film is excellent and not overdone, and the photography is brilliant in the good not the bad sense the word can have in this connection. Altogether The Woman in White is an excellent piece of entertainment for those who can like melodrama when it is thoroughly well presented, as it is here. The complexity of the plot is such that the enjoyment would probably be heightened for those who have some acquaintance with the novel, though it is reported, I see, that the production takes considerable liberties with its prototype. There is no kind of moral whatever to this story, or if there is it is not drawn in the film. H.


Jack Warner is one of the discoveries of the British screen. From the Garrison Theatre days of the early war period to the latest psychological thriller here under review, he has remained consistent and versatile. I am convinced that we have by no means seen the best he can do, good as his previous work has been. In My Brother's Keeper he breaks new ground as a ruthless criminal who escapes, handcuffed to a simple-minded youth who is innocent of anything more than misfortune. The escapades through which this couple pass, the criminal playing his desperate cards coolly and with complete disregard of honour and decency, provide some of the best man-hunt scenes we have had for a long time. The last sequences, showing the criminal walking doggedly on through a land-mined training ground, are thrilling to a degree.

The supporting cast are excellent, especially Beatrice Varley as the woe-begone and faithful wife of the convict, and Brenda Bruce as a self-assured policeman's wife. We have a number of first-class character actors in our studios who prove their worth with every picture they appear in. The danger is that they will be overworked and worn out before they have time to reap the reward of their labours.

One aspect of this film I feel ought not to go unchallenged. The title is taken from a poem which is quoted in the end as if to imply that Society is responsible for the crimes of its criminals. Society is responsible for the conditions in which people live but cannot be blamed for the failure of some to exercise self-control. Sin abounds but grace superbounds. Remove the slums and you will remove the occasion of much crime, but you will not remove the cause. That is placed in the free will of man. V.
THE UNSUSPECTED. Starring:
Claud Rains, Joan Caulfield,
Michael North and Audrey Totter.

Claud Rains has been stereotyped far too long. A series of malevolent, egotistical, smoothly-smooth villains have given no real chance to this fine actor to show us what he can do. He repeats the formula in The Unsuspected, a routine but more than usually exciting thriller about a maniacal radio storyteller whose murder mysteries are based on the crimes he himself commits and who removes, one after another, the persons who stand in the way of his greed and megalomania. A slick, well-directed film with nothing outstanding apart from the suspenseful ending which made even me hold my breath for a moment. The female accessories to the film adorn without enhancing it. Michael North is so goodiy to look upon that you can bet you will see him again. Of course, he cannot act. There is no need for him to.

I REMEMBER MAMA. Starring:
Irene Dunne, Barbara Bel Geddes,
Oscar Homolka, Philip Dorn.

To her daughter Katrin (Barbara Bel Geddes) who has become depressed by too many rejection slips, Mama Hanson (Irene Dunne) passes on the tip which she has secured from a successful novelist, that the best stories are on one's own doorstep. Katrin takes the tip, writes the story of her family, Norwegian settlers in San Francisco, and gets it accepted. What is special about this story? Nothing really. It is the ordinary everyday incidents of a working-class family, woven into an unpretentious pictorial pattern. It might be the story of any family, which is the reason, I think, of its success. There is no plot. It is mainly about people, about Mama Hanson and, Papa Hanson and all the little Hansons. Mama is self-sacrificing and devoted to her family; Papa is kindly, patient and tolerant; there is a dutiful daughter and a self-indulgent daughter; the son is ambitious and is sent to High School on the family scrapings; there is a nasty aunt and peculiar aunt and a rich uncle whose bark is worse than his bite. In this family with its ups and downs, its sicknesses, its little joys, its struggles and its sorrows, many people will see the reflection of their own families, and that is another reason for its popularity. I would say that this film is extraordinary because it is so ordinary. There have been far too many films about thugs and thieves, monomaniacs, sex maniacs, murderers and murderers, and lots of other abnormal people. It is refreshing to see a film about ordinary normal people; for when all is said, it is the ordinary people who keep the wheels of the world turning, isn't it?

I cannot pretend to be as enthusiastic about this film as some other critics, but I do recommend it as a picture which is wholesome and which has the common touch. There are human touches in this film which show an understanding of life, for example, when Mama Hanson is weighed down with grief, she starts scrubbing the floor, even though it does not need scrubbing! This is only a small point to mention, but this is the sort of thing real ordinary mothers do.

This film has its many points, nevertheless it seems to me that only a genius can portray adequately the sacredness of family life. It takes a master to screen any form of love without robbing it of a lot of its radiance. Some have compared I Remember Mama with the Italian film Four Steps in the Clouds. I do not think that you can compare them. Four Steps in the Clouds is a masterpiece. I Remember Mama is a homely piece well directed, but which runs close to the border line of sentimentality. I thought the acting was good, but not outstandingly good. Irene Dunne plays Mama, a difficult part, with sincerity and restraint. Papa Philip Dorn is good. Oscar Homolka's Uncle Chris is a caricature rather than a study of a character. Ellen Corby presents a very laughable Aunt Trina. In Barbara Bel Geddes' portrayal of Katrin I saw nothing to write to Focus about.

E.

The Mark Sabres of the world are not, as we say, ten a penny, but they do exist. There are some men who are so sympathetic, so sensitive, who have such a keen sense of justice that they can see four sides of life's square; they are not inhibited with class distinctions, colour bars and that sort of thing; they are always getting themselves into trouble, of course.

If Winter Comes is the story of Mark Sabre (Walter Pidgeon), an idealist (many people, I know, would call him a fat-head), who meets trouble, not half way, but all the way. Circumstances prevent him from marrying Nona Tybar (Deborah Kerr) so he marries an unimaginative girl called Mabel (Angela Lansbury) and remains faithful to both. Mark likes people, he is always giving a helping hand, he is the sort of fellow who takes up other people's cases and causes. The crash comes when he gives shelter to Effie Bright who has been turned out from her own home because she so has sinned. The gossips get busy and the kind, gentle Mark gets the blame.

The whole set-up is reminiscent of Mrs. Miniver, Dame Whitty and all that. I would place this film in the "If you have tears to shed prepare to shed them now" category.

There is some good photography in this film, it is well directed and the acting is very good indeed. Walter Pidgeon and Deborah Kerr are particularly good. Walter Pidgeon looks like a man and speaks like a man and makes Mark Sabre credible. Deborah Kerr who would look well even in rags and who brings distinction to any part she chooses to play is well up to standard, although she plays stronger parts best. This film covers a variety of characters which are more or less true to life and I should mention that its morality is good.

E.

Walter Pidgeon as Mark Sabre meets trouble all the way. Compli- sting his life are Deborah Kerr, Angela Lansbury and Janet Leigh
Q. thinks that Barry Fitzgerald has done nothing better than Dan Muldoon since his study of the old priest in Going My Way

Children living near 10th Precinct Police Station enjoy the street shower scene for the film which is made in New York City


What a relief for the critic to be able to sit back and enjoy watching a film that does not insult his intelligence or twist his conscience with the temptation to say something soothing of a film that he knows ought never to have been made but which thousands of saps will pay to see.

Here is American film production at its best, using a trick that is borrowed from Britain it is true, but, like the cinema itself, exploited by the Americans to the best possible advantage. The Naked City is a fictional frame for a factual technique. For-saking the studios, the producers line up the City of New York itself. Skyline, streets, noises and people are employed to tell the story of one of the eight million inhabitants that compose its daily life. The city is laid bare to our inspection, through the eyes of a police-detective investigating the murder of a "good-time girl". The New York Homicide Squad are shown in action and the intricate machinery involved in solving a murder case is pictured in detail.

But it is not just a documentary. The character of each of the personae dramatis is built up with unusual skill and perception both by the actors and the director. As Lt. Dan Muldoon, the detective, Barry Fitzgerald has done nothing better since his magnificent study of the old priest in Going My Way. It is a masterpiece of timing and observation. The other players are both excellent and unknown, thus adding to the illusion of actuality. They will certainly be seen again, especially a presentable young man called Don Taylor who bears an astonishing likeness to Ray Milland.

I have not space in which to dilate on the joyous details of photography and editing; of the way in which the New York scene is observed and presented; of the masterly way in which a growing tension is built up and maintained until the very last sequence; of the neat, compact, self-controlled avoidance of all irrelevant side issues. This is a film which students of script-
writing and editing ought to see again and again. Then let them contrast it with the latest whodunit, whether American or British. The connecting link is the solution of a murder, but if they do not see the difference, let them give up reading film literature and take to fan magazines instead.

Looking for something to criticise, I come to the conclusion that if Mark Hellinger (who died as the film was finished) had had the extra integrity needed to exclude all the music, he would have been responsible for the best film from America for who knows how many years. Miklos Rossa's sententious underlining of obvious visuals with synthetic sounds just prevents the film from reaching perfection in its own class. V.


The Road to Heaven, superbly photographed and admirably acted, is a Swedish miracle play conceived and written for the cinema. For all its artificial naïveté it does present seriously a picture of the gradual disintegration of a man with a grievance against human injustice seeking to challenge the Divine Justice, unaware, until the Mother of Christ tells him at the end, that what he needs is the Divine Mercy.

The Miracle-play motif is supplied with Lutheran settings and conceptions which are, at first, a little strange to a film-goer with memories of an older, more consistent because more theological tradition. It is disconcerting to find God stumping about as a benign frock-coated old gentleman with top hat and spectacles as well, however beautifully Anders Henrikson looks and speaks. And it is still more disconcerting to find the Lord God telling the victimised girl that beyond her land of Dalecarlia lies no Hell and that the only punishing fire is that to which the ignorant villagers have already consigned her as a witch. Yet the Devil is at work through most of the film and the sanctions on human conduct are powerfully indicated. I think we must blame not the Lutheran setting for that inconsistency, but the flight from reason in the comfortable modern man who writes and plays for his fellows.

There are many beautiful moments in the film and some memorable ones. To take one instance, when at last the Devil comes in a cart to take Mats Ersson off, he grants Ersson's request for twenty-four hours' respite to allow him to find one person who remembers any good of him. He drives the wretched old man on his useless quest until at last the broken, deflated Ersson begs to be allowed to sit on the box seat with him because of the appalling loneliness: the loneliness of sin as a foretaste of the pain of loss.

The acting is of a high order and it is done with such restraint that occasionally the play becomes almost static. The photography is notable; the use of the silhouette is very lovely, but that, too, makes for the static. It is reverently done and without those throbbing angel voices.

X.
Unaware that she is being watched by the impresario Lermontov, Victoria Page dances *Le Lac des Cygnes* as guest artiste with the Rambert Ballet


I once heard someone say that ballet is the most perfect medium of expressing ideas. I leave the next brains trust to worry out that provocative statement. If I were asked my opinion I would suggest that ballet is *sometimes* the best medium to express *some* ideas. No medium other than ballet could have done justice to Francis Thompson's *Hound of Heaven*. So, too, it required ballet to express adequately and artistically the ideas hidden within the story of *The Red Shoes* which is a Powell-Pressburger rendering of a Hans Andersen story. It is about Vicky Page (Moira Shearer), a beautiful ballerina who danced herself to death. It is the old, ever new tragedy of a maiden caught between the fires of two loves: the love which comes from her heart and a love which comes from her art. As a human being she has surrendered her heart to the talented, good-looking Julian Craster (Marius Goring), who composed the music for *The Red Shoes*; as an artiste who desires perfection in her own particular medium, she is in love with dancing and submits to the demands of her uncompromising dancing-master, Lermontov (Anton Walbrook) who asks from her—for the sake of her art—the most utter abnegation, even the sacrifice of human love.

A simple story, no doubt, but isn't a fairy story supposed to be simple?
FOCUS

However, it is not as naïve as some critics make out. It wraps up several lessons, not the least of them reminds us of the psychological truth that a divided mind cracks up and leads to suicide.

Something Special

This film is something special, first of all because it brings to the multitude who go to the pictures the beauty of the ballet. What Laurence Olivier has done for the drama, the Powell-Pressburger team has done for the ballet; and isn't it time that the "powers that be" in the cinema world gave us something to think about and something beautiful to look at? To understand this ballet film, it is not necessary to be a balletomane. Most people love strong graceful movement, beautiful music, exquisite colouring, fine grouping, lovely photography; I venture to predict that most people will enjoy this film and that many people will want to see it again. The Red Shoes is a special too because it is the first full-length ballet to be written for the screen and because it is ballet in which Massine a master of mime creates another of his great characters, the old shoemaker. Thirdly, it is a special because it introduces the lovely ballerina, Moira Shearer, who is all grace and dignity, whose delicacy and agility gives to her dancing a spiritual quality.

Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger deserve our thanks for making this film in which so many of the arts meet; but why did they make such a gory mess of the sequence in which you see Moira Shearer bleeding to death? This sort of thing should have been suggested rather than exhibited with red paint.

I have spoken of the delightful dancing of Moira Shearer and Massine; but there are other things in this film which will delight you: the movement and lighting of the cameraman, Jack Cardiff; the high standard of acting of the whole cast; the dancing and choreography of Robert Helpmann, the dancing of Ludmina Tcherima, the music of Brian Easdale. The creative team work in this film is grand. With much pleasure I recommend The Red Shoes.

In the usual first night panic, Ljubov (Leonide Massine) mislays the Red Shoes.
FOCUS

Up in the "gods", music student Julian Craster recognises passages of his own music. He leaves in disgust.

Ljubov conducts a class in the rehearsal room at Covent Garden.

Boleslawsky tries to console the prima ballerina for Lermontov's heartlessness.

FILM FACTS

LEONIDIE MASSINE

Until 1932 was premier danseur of Russian ballet in succession to Nijinsky.

Dances the rôle of the shoemaker in Lermontov's new ballet—The Red Shoes.

* * *

MOIRA SHEARER

Born in Scotland, began dancing in Rhodesia. Since 1942 has danced with Sadler's Wells Company. This is her first film.

* * *

ANTON WALBROOK

Son of famous clown, came to England in 1937. British film successes include Victoria the Great, 49th Parallel, and Colonel Blimp.

* * *

ROBERT HELPMANN


* * *

MARIUS GORING

After studying at four European universities, received dramatic training at Old Vic. During war was one of the radio propaganda voices to Germany. Film successes include A Matter of Life and Death and Take My Life.

As we go to press, news reaches us from the World Film Conference in Venice that The Red Shoes has been very well received, and has been tipped to win International Award.
Boronskaja feigns alarm at Ljubov’s sarcastic fury at her late arrival. Behind them Victoria Page (Moira Shearer) awaits her audition. Another scene from The Red Shoes.


Divorce is a subject which is becoming palpably unpopular with the film-makers. They have not the courage to take a definite line but since the powers that be, both clerical and lay, are watching the current matrimonial chaos with concern, their attitude is reflected in the organs of public opinion. Hollywood must find something amusing in a film that shirks the opportunity for a sermon on the essential Protestant freedom of the family.

*Daisy Kenyon* is an example of the official disfavour with which it is regarded, though, to make a story, there is an overlong dalliance with infidelity and an openly suggested collusion, before the unconvincing dénouement in which the married man is sent back to his family with a homily on the duties of the marital state.

Joan Crawford is a fashion artist who needs a double-somersault in a car to make her see that the married lawyer who wants her affections is only a selfish man seeking in her company a release from the responsibilities of his own home circle. Dana Andrews as the lawyer and Henry Fonda as the quixotic soldier who eventually undertakes life with Joan are, with her, competent without ever being convincing or in any degree admirable.

One recipe for a box office success seems to begin with "Take a title with a snotty reputation." So after, No Orchids for Miss Blandish has been made in England to a synthetic American pattern, Hollywood gets its own back with Forever Amber, or Yankees at the Court of King Charles (the alternative title is mine).

But apart from the fact that it is the biography of a courtesan—when Amber says "I am bespoken by another gentleman", she has said about all there is to say—the film is surprisingly unobjectionable in the moral sense. The amount of passionate love-making is well below rather than above the average. There is no attempt to exploit the décolletage of Restoration fashions. The dialogue is well expurgated. If the picture calls for a new kind of certificate, it would be D, for dull or dreary, not for disgusting or dirty. Dreary it certainly is. It illustrates how, when lust is extracted from a book of this sort, nothing remains but dry rot. And so unreal is the whole thing that when a manservant throws his master into the Fire of London, one can’t even feel horrified.

To catch the spirit of the period more is needed than for people to say "Oddsfish!", "Bring out your dead" and "Who'll buy my oranges" (pronounced "ahranges") at appropriate moments. I don’t think George Sanders took his preposterous presentation of Charles II very seriously, or that he would expect us to. Tendentious republicanism and democratic anachronism require that the king should appear as an unpopular flop. There is no hint of the real Charles who was something of a statesman and an energetic worker as well as a lover of pleasure, and whom the whole nation mourned "like children for their father". Grave and frequent as were his infidelities, his weeping wife asked his pardon as he lay dying, and he replied, "It is I who should ask hers". Nor was it human pardon alone which he asked, for in the prolonged hour of his death he knew where and how to find the salvation of his soul.

Forever Amber may draw full houses, but only because some people are forever green.


Do not let the title frighten you away. It is not horrific and the only corpse lying around is the result of an accident. It is an intelligent and worthwhile picture in spite of some sordid details. There are also some minor improbabilities—the bluffing of the Town Marshal was one—and sensible people will not take the fortune-telling by cardus too seriously. They may seem a small quota in a production which treats of life after death, guilt complexes and circuses. Stan Carlisle (Tyrone Power) is a ruthless and self-centred crook. When he becomes the "Great Stanton" of exclusive night-clubs, he is out for bigger money at any price. Here enters lady psychologist (Helen Walker). We gnaw our knuckles and wait for the worst... Hollywood psychiatry out of its moth-balls for an airing...but no, Miss Walker’s arrival gives an original twist to the story. At a critical moment Stan’s wife, Molly (Coleen Gray) refuses to co-operate in his sordid deceptions of the bereaved and the unhappy. This part may be an eye-opener for some credulous devotees of spiritualism. His schemes come crashing down into ruins. He sinks to the level of a drink-sodden "Geek"—"the missing link between animal and man". In the end Molly and Stan are reunited to begin life all over again. No individual member of the cast is good enough to steal the picture, but I was completely satisfied by the acting of the four principal stars. The circus owner sums up the moral of the story by
answering the question, "How could a man sink so low?" "I guess, because he grabbed too high!" It is as old as the Garden of Eden and as true today. There were, however, no children in the Garden of Eden and there should be none at Nightmare Alley. M.

SPARKS...

One evening in February when the snow was thick underfoot, I returned home feeling frozen. Instinctively I bent down to switch on the electric fire; but all it had to give were some blue and white sparks, pretty but hardly warming, and after a futile effort to do better, it remained cold and left me the same.

Possibly it was a cold mortal like myself, who encountering a similar situation, saw good where others saw only evil. The blue sparks, caused by the arcing of the electric current, are so bright that if properly harnessed they form one of the brightest sources of illumination. Thus arc lighting has come to be used as the means of lighting the screen picture in modern cinemas. In the faulty electric fire there was a break in the wiring but not sufficient to cut off the current immediately; the latter tries to get across the gap, like a small boy jumping over a puddle. The full force of the current, perhaps 250 volts, is concentrated in the tiny gap, and generates a heat of 6,500 degrees Fah. which shows itself in the form of the blue-white sparks. Similarly in the cinema projector, there is a housing behind the lens and film, in which two carbons are fitted to two holders; the current is switched on and passed through one of the holders, then the other is brought close to the first holder. When the carbons touch one another, a very bright light is produced which burns steadily until both carbons have been burnt away. This process may take about twenty minutes, during which the picture is shown on the screen. The carbons are renewed and lit up in a similar way. When new carbons are being fitted there is a slight darkening of the screen picture, and if the operators are not experienced, the screen may turn to a rather dim yellow tint until the carbons have been fully lit up.

Even a faulty electric fire gives food for thought, but all the same, it's a good thing to have it repaired.

F. E. Young.

SOME FILMS REVIEWED

NOTE: Category A, indicates adults only; B, adults and adolescents; C, family audiences; D, particularly for children.

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CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY NEWS

As we go to Press we are wondering about the Summer Film Conference. There have been numerous difficulties, foreseen and unforeseen. Last minute changes of speaker owing to weather interference with studio schedule; time lags with printers owing to lecture engagements, etc., etc. We hope that those who attend the Conference will realise that we have taken a great deal of trouble to make this first of our teaching efforts as successful as possible.

In view of complaints that this and that particular kind of film work has not been covered in the Conference, let us say that the object of this conference has been to prepare the ground for future events. We need first of all to have a critical appreciation of the technique of film production, the problems of the producer, the director, the script writer, the actor. We need to know something of the special problems of the maker of factual films; the special place of film in regard to children. We need to appreciate the place of religion with regard to film in order not to be led too easily to acclaim every film with a roman collar a “Catholic film”.

In future programmes of study weekends, conferences and lectures, we propose to attack the business of amateur production in sub-standard, of projection, of script-writing and of the other practical aspects of the film world which interest a large number of our readers.

Some people have said that we have neglected or abandoned 16mm. film. That is not true. But we are primarily an information getting and giving group and while the paper and money shortage makes it impossible to enlarge Focus, we have to give preference to the films that everybody sees and everybody needs information about. Nevertheless, we shall be glad to have letters and articles of interest to the vast army of 16mm. enthusiasts.

In this connection, we have on other occasions asked for those who have projectors and cine-cameras to let us know. We repeat this request. We should like to be able to draw up a map of the country pinpointing those places where a projector is available so that, as enquiries are made about the possibility of film shows in various parts of the country, we may be in a position to organise this side of the C.F.S. work more efficiently.

Another point: we have had no replies to our suggestion that colleges and convents and other places possessing films of their own should let us know about them. It would be useful in many ways if we could draw up a list of movie-films made by or for Catholics. They may not all be of high standard, technically, but we should at least know what has already been attempted in this field, and it would enable us to draw up a schedule for possible future films of this kind.

To those (few) persons who have written in reply to our request for information as to the need of a traveling cinema van, may we say that we are carefully filing their letters so that, in due course, we shall be in a position to arrange an itinerary.

We were fortunate in being able to add the name of Mgr. John Devlin to the list of distinguished lecturers at our Summer Film Conference. Mgr. Devlin is at present on holiday in England and readily agreed to talk to our students about his work in Hollywood. He is Parish Priest of St. Victor’s, Hollywood, and is also the priest delegated by the American Legion of Decency to act as advisor to the film industry on matters concerned with the Catholic Church.

We take this opportunity of adding our tribute to the work done by the Legion. We, in this country, find ourselves faced with circumstances of numbers and temperament which makes a different approach to the problem necessary. We have not always found ourselves seeing things eye to eye, but that is only to say that outside the realm of defined dogma and accepted moral practice, each nation has to solve certain practical problems according to its own national genius.

However, we do most sincerely
applaud the magnificent work achieved by the Legion in diminishing the production of films that are openly improper. All film writers of impartial judgment acknowledge the soundness of the principles on which the Legion works, non-Catholics as well as Catholics. Indeed, the Production Code which governs the output of American Studios, owes much to the influence and guidance of the Legion.

Perhaps it may not be out of place to indicate the functions of the Catholic Film Society once again.

It serves primarily as the Catholic Reviewing Office for this country, but it also regards itself as an umbrella under which may shelter or be formed other organisations and associations and groups having an interest in films from a Catholic point of view.

In this connection we have been proud to be associated with the presentation of Andrew Buchanan's impressive film VISITATION. We are sponsoring another film in which Mr. Buchanan is taking a leading interest, this time, a report on Walsingham. Arthur Leslie, so well known to our veteran members, made a film dealing with Walsingham some years before the war. It had a considerable success. However, the subject has not been exhausted and this time, the Cross Pilgrimage offered obvious opportunities to add something important to our film-lore on this most precious of English pilgrim centres. We have made an act of Faith in the need of such a film and in the interest of Our Lady in the subject for we have embarked on the enterprise confident that our many friends and well-wishers will enable us to face the financial position to which it gives rise.

Mr. Christopher Radley, the Catholic Director of Selwyn Films, has also contributed to the material which will eventually be shaped into our Walsingham Film. Mr. Radley has ambitious ideas about the production of Catholic Feature films. We are sure that his vision will one day be realised, but it takes a long time to make the layman to film problems understand the vastness of such undertakings. There must be many well-to-do as well as the not-so-well-to-do among our Catholic and non-Catholic friends in this country who could help Mr. Radley to get his ideas put into actual existence.

Another function which might operate under the C.F.S. umbrella is the formation of 16mm. groups for practical film work. We have already referred to this subject and we do invite all enthusiasts to let us have their practical suggestions and help.

The association of Catholic cine-technicians is yet another group that could find itself under our aegis. Again we invite practical suggestions and offers of help in forming such a group.

There are other possibilities which must be left for another time, but enough has been said, we hope, to nullify any impression that the C.F.S. is only concerned with sending priests to review entertainment films.

Lectures have recently been given under the auspices of the C.F.S. to the Catholic Guild of Social Workers, at Oxford; to the C.A.G.O. Summer School at Tunbridge Wells, and to the Grail Summer Course for Youth Leaders and Workers at Pinner.

The Honorary Secretary of the C.F.S. and the Editor of FOCUS, go to Venice in August to be present at the General Council Meeting of O.C.I.C. These meetings take place during the annual Film Festivals. The International Jury of Film Critics which judge the films for the International and other awards include members of the Comité Directeur of O.C.I.C. Last year the O.C.I.C. Award was given to VIVERE IN PACE (To Live In Peace), the Italian film which roused such enthusiasm among discerning filmgoers.

Margaret Lockwood's first film since her disagreement with the Rank Organisation over Red Roses For Her Pillow, will be Change Of Heart, a comedy based on the Saturday Evening Post story by Ketti Fリング, "I Know You," about a pair of confidence tricksters on board a transatlantic liner. Starring with her will be Griffith Jones, who gave such an outstanding performance in that horrid film They Made Me A Fugitive.
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Father,

As one keenly interested in your problems but not able to assist more practically, may I make a suggestion. I know that the Society could not have reached its present stage of development but for much prayer and penance and I am wondering if it would not be a good idea now to include a prayer membership. Perhaps a loose association (not calling for any special organisation) of those who can, and those who cannot, afford the ordinary 10/- membership fee but who are aware of the importance of the Film Apostolate, could be arranged.

Then, could we not invoke the heavenly aid of a patron or patroness? Perhaps Saint Mary Magdalene would come to our aid and so bring our young filmgoers to the Master's feet.

May Jesus and Mary bless all your efforts.

Yours sincerely,
Norah G. Hicks.

Dear Sir,

In the light of the recent correspondence headed "Book and Film" it will be interesting to study the viewpoint of the well-known and respected film critic of The Observer on this subject. C. A. Lejeune, writing on July 4th, says in her timely article: "I insist that in most cases a knowledge of the book is of positive disservice to the reviewer of the picture, leading to prejudice, disappointment, confusion, odious comparison, rage, academic madness, and a tendency to wander away from the point... For a professional reviewer the practice of familiarising himself with the book in advance may be actively dangerous. It leads him to consider... a piece of work that is not really under discussion, a film that has not been made and may never have been intended to be made. It beguiles him into all sorts of theorising about what the author has said, when his business is strictly concerned with comment on what the director has shown."

Such forcefulness cannot but wipe away any lingering doubts which may still have persisted after Q.'s reply.

Yours sincerely,
P. Symons.

PENNY A DAY FOR 240 DAYS' FUND

IF one fourth of the Catholic population in England and Scotland contributed a penny a day for 240 days The Catholic Film Society in England would be able to set up a production unit.

It was the pennies of the Catholic population in France which made possible the making of the film Monsieur Vincent.

Kindly send a donation to:
Hon. Secretary,
Rev. J. A. V. Burke, Mayfield College, Mayfield, Sussex

GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGED

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£46 10 6
Film Strips Useful for Work with Juniors

By Our Educational Panel

LIBRARIES:
Sound Services Ltd., 269 Kingston Road, S.W.19.
Dawn Trust, Aylesbury, Bucks.
G.B. Film Library, Aintree Road, Perivale, Middx.
Wallace Heaton Ltd., 127 New Bond Street, W.1.

(L.C.C. Film Library, Stockwell Depot, S.W.9. Free to L.C.C. Teachers.)

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Tennis. 3 Sound Films. Made by Dunlops. Sound Services Ltd. No charge for Hiring.

1. HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR PLAY. 22 mins.
Pat Hughes of Wimbledon fame here plays the rôle of demonstrator and plays it extremely well. He shows a young Club player, making all the usual mistakes of an amateur, just what is wrong with his play. The pupil obligingly falls into the same mistakes often enough to allow the instruction to be well driven home. Slow motion is extensively used and also, "stop-motion" pictures, showing the player "frozen" in mid-stroke.
The film lasts 22 minutes and is a good teaching film because it does not bewildер the youthful player by too much instruction at once. Attention is concentrated on a few fundamental principles from which general proficiency will develop.

2. MAKING THE BALL. 14 mins.
This is a short but most interesting film. It describes in a fascinating way the surprisingly large number of processes in the making of a tennis ball, and the careful way in which the finished article is tested for compression, weight, size, bounce and durability. One gains a new respect for the tennis ball after seeing this film, and its high cost becomes more comprehensible!

3. MAKING THE RACKET. 16 mins.
Most people will be surprised to learn that a tennis racket is made of 25 pieces of wood of widely different character. It is most interesting to watch the complicated processes through which this raw material passes from the time the tree is felled until the last spray of lacquer is given to the finished racquet. (Suitable for children 12+ onwards, for Youth Clubs and for interested adults.)

Cricket.

BATTING.

WICKET-KEEPING. Film Strips. Dawn Trust. Price 10/- each.

Taken from the film "How to Play Cricket", as demonstrated by Edrich, Evans and Sims.

Both strips begin by captions giving the general idea of the game and its rules, in terms which are comprehensible to the beginner without being patronising.

"Batting", which is demonstrated by Edrich, shows the stance, position of hands, bat and feet, and the principal strokes, in a series of excellent photographs with useful hints and comments.

"Wicket-Keeping" by Evans, gives the rules, and advice as to equipment, position of the hands and taking the balls and stumpings, all clear, accurate and useful.

(Suitability: all ages.)

Sailing. Film Strip. Dawn Trust. 10/-.

Practical directions for sailing a small yacht, with clear instructions for weighing anchor, making sail, changing direction and mooring the boat. The photographs are interesting though some are rather flat, and more pictures of the whole boat might have been included. The strip would be very useful to those who want this information, but is too technical to be of general interest, though some of the nautical terms are explained.

(Suitability: all ages, if interested.)

SCIENCE


Teachers of Biology and General Science would welcome a really good film on this topic. The film in question is rather disappointing because it is undeniably dull and moves slowly.
Nevertheless, it conscientiously presents and gets across quite well some aspects of the cycle, e.g., the fact that plants build up organic Nitrogen compounds, that these may later be eaten by animals and that animal wastes restore Nitrogen to the soil.

The part played by Leguminous crops is just touched upon, and one regrets that this is not brought home by the presentation of some familiar plants, like Clover, with a close-up of the root nodules.

The formation of Nitrogen compounds in the atmosphere during a thunderstorm is not made clear. The children are left with the impression that rain is the effective agent!

(Suitable for Secondary Schools, Age: 14-16.)

Amoeba. Sound Film. 1 reel. L.C.C. Film Library 55; G.B. Film Library F561. Hire: 7/6 first day, 2/6 sub. days. Mute version FM561: 4/6 + 1/6.

A very good idea of the ceaseless activity associated with protoplasm, an idea difficult to convey, is given by this film. It is a deceptively simple film, presenting in an easily intelligible way all the essential facts of the structure and activities of Amoeba. The flowing of the protoplasm, the thrusting out and withdrawal of pseudopodia, the pursuit and ingestion of prey, the working of the contractile vacuole—all these processes are clearly shown and explained by a helpful commentary. The microphotography is excellent. Effective use of diagrams depicts the process of binary fission and shows why Amoeba is potentially "immortal". A very good teaching film.

(Suitable for Grammar Schools, 14-18.)

Atmospheric Pressure. Silent Film. 1 reel. L.C.C. Film Library 623.

This film is useful for revision purposes for it covers many aspects of the subject.

The principle of the vacuum cleaner is clearly shown by diagrams and all the "classical" experiments which illustrate Atmospheric Pressure are introduced. Great interest and excitement are aroused by the Magdeburg Hemi-spheres Experiment. This compensates for the rather tedious exposition of the use of the barograph and the effect of altitude on pressure. The relationship between temperature and pressure is more simply shown and the explanation of land and sea breezes is good.

The film would be much improved by the addition of a sound-track.

(Suitable for Secondary Schools: 12-15.)

GEOGRAPHY

The Oasis. Silent Film. 1 reel. 15 mins. L.C.C. Film Library 524. G.B. Film Library EGS.A3. Hire: 3/6 first day, 1/6 sub. days.

This contains good desert scenes showing that the desert is not a sandy plain but has mountainous areas. The dependence of desert life on the springs of water found there is emphasised, and the development of quite large settlements near the water supply is shown. There are scenes showing the occupations of the people, pastoral occupations (the keeping of sheep and goats), the growth of fruit with irrigation, and various crafts (weaving, making of pottery, etc.).

There are pictures showing desert transport with good scenes of the camel caravan.

(Suitability: 13+.)

Brazil. Silent Film. 1 reel. 15 mins. L.C.C. Film Library 532. Wallace Heaton 3278. Hire: 3/6 first day, 1/- sub. days.

This contains good pictures of the Amazon forests showing the dense vegetation, undergrowth, and monkeys, birds and reptiles found in the forest. There are good river scenes showing how the Amazon is used for transport. Settlement is shown varying from the primitive native huts to the modern port of Manaos.

The occupation of rubber collecting is shown in detail: the tapping of rubber trees, the primitive method of smoking the rubber and the transport of the balls of rubber by canoe to the trading post.

The film is interesting and a very good teaching film.

(Suitability: 12 onwards.)

The next number will be devoted to History films and strips.
BOOK REVIEWS

Sociology of Film. By J. P. Mayer (Faber, 1947) 15/-.

Film Sponsor (Current Affairs Ltd., 19 Charing Cross Road, W.C.2.

A Monthly, 1/6.)

Film, we are told, is an art. The assertion is made with such passion by those who hold the view that one may legitimately doubt its truth. A fact that may not be doubted is the interest which the film-goer now provides for the scientist. The cinema has developed a new species for the microscope of the sociologist. Mr. Mayer is the latest of a number of experts whose enquiries are more concerned with the film-goer than with the film. His book is an elaborate investigation into the habits of the millions who flock each week to the cinema. He seeks to discover the effect which this practice has on the minds and thoughts of the community. By means of a number of questions he attempts to codify the reactions of his specimens.

To facilitate his enquiries Mr. Mayer was, at first, given the run of a number of Mr. Rank's cinemas. This co-operation was later withdrawn, for reasons which the author leaves unspecified.

In two introductory chapters Mr. Mayer sets forth some principles. He relates the modern craze for the cinema to a kind of compensation for the lack of religion of the people of today. He contrasts the reactions of Elizabethan audiences with the modern audience's need for seeing things. "The ability (of the Elizabethans) to quote from the plays was widespread. Who would quote even a sentence from a contemporary 'moving picture'? . . . If we are conditioned to be passive, if our emotions and behaviour patterns continue to be shaped unchallenged by ever changing stimuli and excitements without substance, perhaps, then, very soon the human fabric will be such that no new Battle of Britain, no epic of Arnhem can be sustained, or that we grow weary of the arduous and humble struggle of our daily task and leave it to our masters to praise perennial economic freedom and benevolently to give us panem et circenses."

This pessimistic outlook is not without some acceptance among thoughtful persons today, but one feels that Mr. Mayer weakens his arguments by a too ready dependence upon the significance of the letters which he received from a large number of selected audiences. Such estimates are apt to give disproportionate pictures. Nevertheless, if only because of the stimulation which Sociology In Film provides, I would recommend it to be read by all who are concerned with the care of children: priests, teachers and social workers. Parents will probably be too busy looking after their children to spend much time reading.

One of the most useful and informative of the periodicals devoted to sub-standard films is The Film User which comes each month from Current Affairs Ltd., 19 Charing Cross Road, W.C.2. The same group have now brought out a new magazine called Film Sponsor. It is aimed at all "who sponsor films in Government, Industry, Associations and Public Bodies." It is brightly and efficiently edited and contains articles and news about various aspects of film sponsoring. "It comes into being with the sole object of stimulating, here in Britain, the growth of, and interest in the film as a means of persuasion and education". With these views the readers of Focus are obviously in sympathy. I recommend it as a useful addition to the equipment of those who wish to be informed about films as something more than a weekly escape from facts of life.

J. A. V. B.


Andre Ruszkowski, who is Secretary-General for Exterior Affairs of the Office Catholique Internationale du Cinema and Press representative of Office Familial de Documentation Artistique, and O.C.I.C. delegate to UNESCO, has had a very wide experience of films, from the point of view of criticism and production. He is, by profession, a lawyer, and was for many years legal representative of the Polish and French cinema industries. He was film critic for Warsaw and Parisian journals and periodicals, as well as being author of
many studies on film technique and philosophy.

In the work under review, he shows himself to be thoroughly conversant with the principles and philosophy of Art in general and in particular as it refers to film. He has chapters dealing with the film from the point of view of technique compared with film as art film compared with literature and science and music; the definition of cinematographical work; how to appreciate the qualities of a film, and other headings indicating the range of his discussions. He illustrates his points with some excellent and unusual stills from French, American, English and Russian films.

J. A. V. B.

On Hamlet. By Salvador de Madariaga. (Hollis & Carter. 10/6.)

In his Shakespearean study "On Hamlet", Professor Salvador de Madariaga submits his claim for "admission into and a modest share in the permanent debate on the great tragedy and its meaning". His work on a Spanish translation led him to study each shade of meaning, each word of the play and has given him a new insight into the mind of Shakespeare. The whole book, as one would expect from a writer of such eminence, is marked by deep thought and great critical acumen and, whether we accept or reject his hypotheses, we are forced to respect the arguments on which they rest.

The author considers that the principal character of the play, adapted and made respectable to please modern tastes, has become deformed and hardly recognisable. Born, however, in the rough and ungentle Elizabethan era, Hamlet is a creature of his time and by no means the "noble, refined, sweet and generous" hero of popular imagination and even scholarly misconception.

De Madariaga challenges the opinion that without admiration and respect for the hero "Hamlet" ceases to be a tragedy. He claims, on the contrary, that all the character needs is a "psychological spine" to give it life and coherence. He finds the key to unity in Hamlet's character in the fact, overlooked or not sufficiently taken into account by many scholars and critics, that Hamlet is the perfect example of the completely self-centred man. Once this conclusion is accepted and the idea of Hamlet as a gentleman "of peculiar beauty and nobility of nature" summarily rejected, everything in the play falls into place.

This misunderstanding of Hamlet's character has led to a misunderstanding of his relations with Ophelia who becomes equally transfigured and sentimentalised. She is, in the author's view, "no paragon of innocence, love and undeserved tragedy" but "a fast girl such as at Elizabeth's Court was the rule rather than the exception". Whether Professor de Madariaga here reads more into the lines or between the lines than is warranted, let scholars decide.

For ourselves, we found the book well worth reading as it was well worth writing. It throws new light on "Hamlet" and consequently on the versions of "Hamlet" and it is particularly relevant to Laurence Olivier's "adaptation" of the play. Readers of the book will see the film with new eyes. Lovers of the film will want to read the book.

J. F. HOGAN.

FILM FESTIVAL

(Organised by Brentwood Guild of Catholic Teachers)


Afternoon Session
3—4.30 p.m. Illustrated Lecture on "Film Strips" by Miss Mary Field, M.A. (Director of Gaumont-British Instructional and Children's Entertainment Films.)
4.30—5.30 p.m. Tea Available.

Evening Session
5.30—7. p.m. The Mission Film Visitation, introduced by the Producer, Mr. Andrew Buchanan.
7—9 p.m. A full-length Feature Film (title to be announced later).

Admission is by ticket only. Members' Tickets free. Non-Members and friends 1/- Obtainable from:
Hon. Sec. Miss M. Irwin, St. Antony's School, Lancaster Road, E.7
COVER PERSONALITY

MOIRA SHEARER

It is a rare thing for an actress to achieve success in her first film. There are many examples, of course, of names that have been built up as a result of intense publicity, which when the much-heralded film at last appeared, proved to be a dismal disappointment. That is not likely to be the case with Moira Shearer and The Red Shoes. On the contrary, surprised at her success, some of the critics have been searching around for reasons to explain her triumph. They say it is due to brilliant direction, to exceptionally effective support from other members of the cast or even to sheer good luck, whatever that may be. It is, doubtless, true that the brilliant support of players like Anton Walbrook, Marius Goring and Leonide Massine and the outstanding powers of Michael Powell helped to produce the atmosphere conducive to good work so that Moira Shearer had all the help she needed; but it still remains true that, shining out above all the glittering paraphernalia of special lighting effects, trick photography, technicolor processes, magnificent art direction and the splendid support of orchestra and corps de ballet, there can be discerned that rare flower known as native talent. At 21, Moira Shearer has a long experience of ballet, that most rigorous of all theatrical schools. She has, consequently, a strong sense of control, both muscular and mental; she has poise, grace, elegance. Added to this she has both the docility of the wise actress and the ability to interpret the director's requirements faithfully in her own coinage. She is no mere puppet or imitator. When watching her performance at the studios during the making of The Red Shoes, one was immediately impressed with a sense of powers in reserve. She could discuss her work impartially and rehearse it patiently.

The critics have been enraptured by The Red Shoes. It is, by every criterion, an outstanding film. Some of the more philistine of the writing confraternity have expressed the hope that Miss Shearer will give up dancing and take to "serious" film work. They do not realise that she has made a major contribution to a major film precisely because she is a dancer. In no other way could she have moved us as she did in the Red Shoes Ballet. We have seen other actresses dancing in other films. One has painful memories of fantastical kaleidoscopes of colour and cotton-wool hiding the prancings of so-called dancing film stars. One has only to watch Moira Shearer's gracefully controlled and purposeful steps to recognise that here we have a ballerina of the first order.

She is, what every great dancer is, a natural actor. Mime is an essential element of the dancer's training. The necessity to be able to express every emotion by means of movement and gesture ensures that the first-class dancer starts off with the most valuable asset in an actor's kit. Not all dancers are convincing in the limited sphere of the stage, still less in the exaggerated sphere of the screen, but Moira Shearer is one of the few who have a flair for the camera. Her great beauty and lithe figure ensure her a future in films. Her talents will ensure that she will not be there under false pretences. It is to be hoped that, since Red Shoes opens up a new vista of the film art allied to the ballet, she will be allowed to show us more of her exquisite dancing. Above all, it is to be hoped that Hollywood does not manage to bewitch her. In that bedevilled climate her powers would atrophy and her ability be reduced to playing second fiddle to a one-man band.

JOHN VINCENT.
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- Saraband for Dead Lovers ...
- A Foreign Affair ...
- If You Knew Susie ...
- Dream Girl ...
- Night has a Thousand Eyes ...
- All my Sons ...
- Le Silence est D'Or ...
- Kiss of Death ...
- Life with Father ...
- The Birds and the Bees ...

XIVth Olympiad ...
Homecoming ...
Silver River ...
London Belongs to Me ...
Monsieur Vincent ...
Night Song ...
Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill ...
Noose ...
"Vallii" ...
It's Training That Counts ...
Gratefully Acknowledged ...
Catholic Film Society News ...
History Films and Strips ...

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MONSIEUR VINCENT COMES TO TOWN

IT is a healthy sign that an (apparently) irreligious age has accepted the uncompromising film-biography of Saint Vincent of Paul not merely with sympathy, but with enthusiasm. It began by being the talk of Paris, now it is the talk of the world. I was interested to hear recently that General Franco was so impressed by this film that he recommended it to his country as a "must". Why has the world accepted this film so generously? I think the answer derives from the truth that the normal person is—even though he may deny it—fundamentally a religious being; that when he sees Charity in action, which is religion in its true sense ("Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . . and thy neighbour as thyself") he is moved to admiration and co-operation. Saint Vincent is pre-eminently the saint of charity, he was canonised by Pope Clement in 1737 and proclaimed by Pope Leo XIII patron of all charitable institutions.

Monseur Vincent was reviewed after a private showing in London last year by one of our priest-critics in the February issue of Focus. I thought it would be useful and interesting to have a second opinion, this time by a lay film-critic. A distinguished professional critic, although worn-out with work, kindly and courteously accepted my invitation. For professional reasons I cannot tell you the critic's name, but I can tell you that this particular critic goes to the heart of the story and that is what matters most. (See page 230.)

Monseur Vincent is now showing at the Curzon, Mayfair, London. I hope that all Catholics in England will ask their local cinema managers to book it, so that it will be shown throughout the country. I hope, too, that the arrival in this country of this spiritual and psychological "movie" will move many people to give a trifle to our Penny-A-Day Fund, the purpose of which is to collect sufficient money to make a first-class film. Recently I have met a number of people of different types who would like to see a film-biography of Saint Thomas More. I, for one, am quite sure that such a film would be received in this country with open hearts. Give us the tools (money), and we of the Catholic Film Society will do the job. If every Catholic in this country subscribed a penny for 240 days we should have sufficient capital to begin operations. It is still not known generally, that Monseur Vincent was made from the pennies subscribed by the Catholics of France. I suggest that we in England should show our gratitude to the Catholics of France for making such a magnificent film by emulating them. EDITOR.
THE PLACE OF FILM IN THE SCALE OF ARTS

By John B. Knipping, O.F.M., D.A.*

That Film belongs to the realm of Art is beyond dispute. Through its medium it can give artistic expression to an idea. Although the exact meaning of "artistic expression" appears to be one of the most difficult things to define, we can say in general that it implies a special emotion of the human soul by which a fact, an object or a representation is placed far beyond a common statement or a mere record of fact. The artist contemplating reality outside or inside himself is touched by an emotion born of the contact between the "object" and his own state of mind and this emotion he feels urged by an inner necessity to express in a work of art. The difference between mere record and emotional expression can be seen, for instance, by comparing a few newspaper lines about a horse race with a more elaborate literary or poetical description or by comparing a popular travel picture with Walter Ruthmann's "Berlin" (1927). The artistic emotion compelling the artist to express himself in a work of art does not always resemble the emotion arising in the soul of people contemplating the same work. The various interpretations of Chopin's Etudes, e.g., by Cortot and Paderewski and the clash between the so-called romantic and classic versions of Bach's "Matthaeus Passion" are sufficient evidence of this fact. Chester-ton was inclined to feel a sentiment of despair in contemplating the painting called "Hope" by G. F. Watts. But however different or even contradictory these sentiments may be, all are connected with an idea far above the common meaning of the object or the material movement of shapes laid down in the work of art. Van Gogh's pair of worn-out shoes reminds us of the miserable life of a poor tramp and even of our own condition as mortals in the often so painful pilgrimage on the highways of this world. Even a simple still-life is not meant to show only a combination of fruits, flowers, books, vases, etc., but does an "abstract" composition intend only to depict colours, diagrams and waving lines; they do this in order to create an inner tension of the soul from which may originate feelings of joy, sorrow, happiness, expansion, affliction, etc., all connected with ideas that represent a facet of life. Art is always—not in a certain sense, but in the only and most strict sense—a mirror of life, and so, even when it does not use symbols, is a symbolical way of expressing the summits and roots of human existence. As soon as the film is doing this it becomes a work of art and has to be considered and criticised as such.

Movement or Motion

The formal element of every artistic expression is harmony or rhythm, i.e., the fitting together of parts so as to form a connected whole. This always implies movement or motion. In considering, for instance, a building, one's eyes move along the different parts, motionless in themselves. One has often to wander through a cathedral to apprehend the beauty and connection of the whole. It is there without any outward motion yet one has the firm impression of movement. If this impression gives one sentiments of exaltation, joy, etc., which we have mentioned, one may be sure that the work of art is revealing itself. The same thing happens when contemplating a piece of sculpture or a painting. We can say that these works of art possess a static rhythm. Consider a series of trees along a road or a river, or a row of men bringing their offerings on an Egyptian relief or the Parthenon-frieze, a line of windows or columns, and you will have a similar impression. It will soon appear that this rhythm has nothing to do with the monotonous repetition of figures arranged for statistic purposes. In real rhythm there is always an unexpected interruption, a small change in gesture, a slightly-deviating shape, that excludes every idea of monotony. Even the most "geometrical" stylisation is not entirely
mathematical; it is as Ruskin has it, mathematics "organically transgressed". The reason is that rhythm is a natural, biological movement related to the beating of the heart and the pulse and circulation of the blood, to the succeeding biological functions of the human body, to the movement of the sun and the periods of night and day, etc. The most primitive music is rhythmic, not metric, as are also primitive dances.

**Dynamic Rhythm**

And now we come to another kind of rhythmic expression: strict movement, the building-up of an artistic whole by elements succeeding one another. We might call it dynamic rhythm. Works of architecture, sculpture, painting, etc., are products of static rhythm. Motionless in themselves, they show an inner movement of the parts towards the whole, but in such a way that one can contemplate (better perhaps: can see, for all these arts are essentially visual arts) the whole and the parts at the same time. This is impossible with music. Melody can never, not even in imagination, be heard as a whole in one single moment. The constituent or concordant sounds are heard in succession; one follows the melodic movement, i.e., the musical phrase, as it unfolds itself, and this unfolding creates in the soul the artistic apprehension of the whole. (We need not say that every concordant sound can, as in the case of polyphonic music, be a combination of accordant sounds heard at the same time.) Music can only be enjoyed as a movement in time, never as a "factum" shown as a whole. It is the same with poetry. The essence of poetry lies in the movement of articulate sounds that we call "words". (Whether these "words" must always express a notion or an idea, is a question outside our scope.) The arts of the dance and the mime consist in succeeding movements of the body, actions and gestures apt to evoke the apprehension of an artistic or emotional whole, they influence every movement but cannot be seen in by any single glance of the eye. The movemental or dynamic rhythm may be either of an acoustic character (music and poetry) or of a visual character (dance and mime); it may be the combination of both as is the case with the stage (actions, gestures and words) and the opera (actions, gestures, words and music).

**Most Prominent Feature of Film**

Film, being a set of succeeding images brought before the eye of the spectator by means of projections, can only reveal itself in an unfolding movement. It comes close in structure to music and poetry in that it has to reveal its artistic qualities by dynamic rhythm. This is the most prominent feature of Film. We would say that visual dynamic rhythm is its essential mark. Making use of photographically-produced images, taken from reality or from fiction (drawings), it parts company with photography at the point where these images are used. If photography is really an art (and this question is no part of our discussion) its product, the photo, has its own laws of static composition akin to those of a painting. In Film the composition of the photo has to serve a different function; it is only a part of the movement expressed in a whole series of images differing one from the other only in very slight alterations. Every image evokes its successor until the movement is complete and the desired artistic effect achieved. But there is something more. Every movement built up from a succeeding series of images evokes a new movement; a contracting movement may be followed by an expanding movement, a diagonal movement to the left may find its rhythmic counterpart in a succeeding diagonal movement to the right. And so we see cinematographic art in close connection with dance, ballet and mime. No one can really appreciate the aesthetic value of Film if he has not detached the apprehension of the visual movement from its accompanying medium of expression—the sound. The best masters of Film-Art have gone through the school of the silent film.

**Image in Motion**

Having a kindred technique the Film can reveal the beauty of dance and ballet even more expressively, as may be seen in *The Red Shoes*. We must, however, be very careful not to con-
sider the cinema only as a good medium for rendering movements proper to other arts. By doing so we degrade it to a mere record and deprive it of its own character and artistic individuality. As Dance is the human body in artistic motion so Film is the image in motion and not principally the image of a movement. Its mobile composition may give a new meaning or illustration of static things like landscapes, buildings, sculptures and paintings. The best proof was provided in 1939 by the Swiss cineast Heinrich Oertler in his picture "Michelangelo". His camera moves along the shining marble of Michelangelo's statues and not only shows in beautiful close-ups their plastic forms and various profiles but also their inner life. I remember how his camera lingered along the head of the Drunken Silenus, with watery eyes gazing at his cup full of wine which he holds in his right hand. It approaches the face and suddenly bends forward, and by repeating this movement several times from different angles evokes the impression of jolly drunkenness better than an apprehension of the real statue can do. By its always mobile action Film can refine the human vision of things.

"Hamlet"

The principal merits of Olivier's Hamlet are due to the fact that he avoids the recording of Shakespeare's drama with which it has only a superficial connection. Olivier tried to make another version of the dramatic story and he is at his best when he parts company with Shakespeare's setting and gives the film full scope in using its own medium—the mobile image. The difference between Film and Drama is not in the first place that the latter is to be heard and the former to be seen, but that what is to be shown in Film is of a totally different nature from what is to be shown in the Drama, since the best film has found its own artistic expression in its visual, dynamic rhythm of images, with words and sounds only as subsidiary, though very powerful elements.

The following list may provide a more adequate notion of the position of Film in the scale of Arts. Various divisions of Art have been put forward and many of them are quite valuable. Our list is founded on the formal element of artistic expression—harmony or rhythm. Rhythm is expressed by different mediums proper to each individual. These mediums give to every Art its own character and this means that not every Art is fit to express every emotion. The classic saying that not all can be painted that can be said in words holds good for all the different forms of Art. The exaltation expressed by Dance cannot be pronounced in words and many epic feelings cannot be approached by song.

A. STATIC RHYTHM

1. Medium: Space.
   (a) inorganic material (wood, stone, etc.)—Architecture.
   (b) organic material (plants, trees, etc.)—Garden Architecture.

   Inorganic material—Sculpture.

   Colour material (paint, crayon, etc.)—Painting.
   Town Planning, Artificial Landscape Planning is a combination of
   1. (a) and (b) and 2. (Photography, being an industrial art, is allied to 3.)

B. DYNAMIC RHYTHM

   Mime and (stylised) Dance. (Stage, Opera.)

2. Medium: Sound
   (a) words—Poetry. (Stage, Opera.)
   (b) non-articulate words, (Stage) produced by human voice or instrument—Music. (Opera.)

   Using mime, dance, words, sounds technically recorded.

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FILM REVIEWS

By Our Panel of Priests

THE MIRACLE OF THE BELLS.


It is an axiom of theology that miracles are not to be multiplied without necessity. And when the principles of Catholic film making are formulated, I hope it will also be axiomatic that crooners playing the parts of priests should not be multiplied without necessity either. So it was with anything but unmixed pleasure that I heard that what is sauce for Crosby is sauce for Sinatra, and when a close-up of the notice board of St. Michael's church appeared, with Mozart's Ave Verum (that's the other R.C. tune, the one that isn't Gounod's Ave Maria) as background music, I was all set for squirming.

But the fact is that Frank Sinatra is quite convincing as Fr. Paul. He only sings once, and that in a way to which even the most squeamish could not take objection. And the ecclesiastical adviser has been allowed to do a good job of work. I am certainly not going to lodge an outraged protest at the part of Fr. Spinsky, which could be defended as fair comment.

The film is in rather the same class as Going my Way and The Bells of St. Mary's, yet better. On the whole it avoids the pitfalls into which they fell. I prefer not to dwell on points open to criticism, but to concentrate on the overall treatment, which is satisfactory. When for a moment or two the picture seems as if it were going off the rails into the bog of bogus religiosity, there are soon some sound lines which steady it on the right course. It is less superficial than the two films with which one naturally compares it, and so it may be less popular, especially as it is more astringent and satirical at times and begins with a dead body in a coffin.

The story (from Russell Janney's novel) is of the burial of a Catholic girl as arranged by the non-churchgoing Protestant who loves her, with flashbacks to the girl's life. The part of Olga is played by Valli, an Italian actress now seen for the first time by British audiences. The great vocation of Show Business, with its Mission to make people happy, as exemplified by Olga's life—she began in Burlesque, a rather odd novitiate for such an idealist—is treated with excessive reverence, as is the goal of devoted, persevering pilgrims, mighty Hollywood itself. And I rather wonder if Jewish film producers are regularly as steeped in the spirit of the Old Testament as Marcus Harris.

But viewed from both the theological and the cinematographical angles the film has depths not plumbed by the other two pictures. Though the bells ring (and how!) the phenomenon is not connected with them but with the more topical matter of statues which move. Fr. Paul knows his stuff about the difference between miracles in the strict sense and remarkable natural events used by God for His glory and the salvation of souls, and about the Church's reserve in the matter of accepting miracles, and also the difference between ordinary good lives and heroic sanctity. It will surely do no harm to the people who flock to see Mr. Sinatra to hear such things from his lips instead of the more usual sounds and sentiments. And there is a crack specially for Catholics, to compensate us for the famous gaffe in the film about the other bells ("Is Reverend Mother up yet?") "What!" says the Protestant, "Have you had Mass already—before breakfast?"

Rome was not built in a day, nor has the perfect feature film with a strong Catholic interest, but acceptable for general distribution, yet been made. But this picture shows real progress. I went fully prepared to scoff. I came away with the thought "Hats off to Frank and a few others for a creditable piece of work".

Q.

This is the first Technicolor from the Ealing Studios, and is based on the historical novel by Helen Simpson. Set in Hanover in the 1680's it tells the story of the beautiful Sophie Dorothea (Joan Greenwood) who was forced into a loveless marriage with the fat and dissolute Prince George Louis (Peter Bull) who was later to become George I of England. Lonely and humiliated by the profligate life of her husband, she meets the handsome Count Philip Konigsmark (Stewart Granger). They of course fall in love, and plot to elope just as the arrangements have been completed for George to ascend the throne of England. Their affair is discovered, Konigsmark is assassinated, and Sophie is banished to the Castle of Ahlden, bereft of her lover and her crown, but mother of a long line of English monarchs.

This romantic and tragic bit of history has, I understand, made a very interesting novel, but as a film I thought it tedious. Political intrigue can be very dull, even when Françoise Rosay plays the Electress Sophia, mother of Prince George. Adultery is a sad business; and the passion of an ageing woman, the Countess Platen (Flora Robson), for Konigsmark is the more revolting when it is as well done as it is in this film. Nor can I bring myself to enjoy the cry of a man dying from a well-placed sword-thrust. Perhaps I am squeamish.

The predominant red of the Technicolor I found disturbing, the music seemed unnecessarily loud and “canned”, but effective use is made of silence. There are two big scenes—the first where Sophie, on a night of revelry during Hanover Fair, makes her way through a wild crowd of masked merry-makers to Konigsmark's house. Here the photography, the colour, the music and the masks (excellently designed by Hugh Skillan), combine to make one feel almost as uncomfortable as the poor girl must have felt herself. The second, ten minutes before the end, when Konigsmark, suspicious, creeps down the stairs in the dark to meet his assassins. That is real film, tense, logical, rhythmic. But the rest is all flick and dither, with no logical drive to push the story on to its tragic climax.

Stewart Granger will please those who like him. It would be an impertinence to criticise Françoise Rosay and Flora Robson: these are actresses, and in their company Joan Greenwood just hasn't a chance. Anthony Quayle gives an interesting performance as the sinister Durer, the brief appearance of David Horne as Sophie's father was much too brief, and Miles Malleson gives an astonishing sketch as the Lord of Misrule.

I am left with the impression that the directors had so many good things to play with—an intelligent novel in a romantic setting, a distinguished cast, music ad lib, and lots and lots of colour—that they could not make up their minds what to play for, and so failed to do justice to any.


Congresswoman Phoebe Frost (Jean Arthur), a native daughter of Iowa, is the effective component of an incredible Congressional Committee arriving in Berlin to investigate the morale, by which is meant the morals, of the U.S. Army of Occupation. The morale is not so good. Phoebe is the stock character of the spinsterish, efficient, snooping female suddenly confronted with the ridiculous dawning of a great and true love. Whether a woman capable of Congressional honours and responsibilities could be quite so silly we must leave the big-hearted American public to judge.

Phoebe's heart unfolds and opens out to Captain John Pringle (John Lund), also from Iowa, and the plots turns on her association with him in tracking down the unknown U.S. officer who has been protecting the glamorous ex-Nazi, Erica, from what should have been coming to her. This sad, bad girl is
none other than Marlene Dietrich, moderately displaying the usual features and dominating any scene she plays. And her protector is the handsome boy from Iowa: which makes for complications, for Pringle's anxiously assumed love for Congresswoman Phoebe quickly turns into the Real Thing.

The ruins of Berlin are sadly impressive. The caddish behaviour of the U.S. troops is amazing, just as amazing as the uninspired presentation of it.

An embarrassing film.

X.


Here is the perennial Eddie Cantor, emancipated from the so-called gorgeous Goldwyn girls and none the worse for that. If the picture does begin like just another musical, once it has warmed up it has real freshness and vitality. The story of Sam and Susie's legacy from the U.S. Government is of less consequence than the comic extravaganza tacked on to it. The titular tune was worth reviving, and I went out with a song in my heart for at last I have found another man who wears his pyjamas as I do, with the top part outside the trousers—Eddie Cantor.

Q.


Notwithstanding the title which led me to expect something mawkish, here is good entertainment.

The Dream Girl is not dreamed about but is herself the "Dreamer", though not in any portentous psychological sense, for this is a comedy.

The girl, Georgina Allerton (Betty Hutton), dramatises herself in daydreams and the plot turns on the quickfire assault on her dreams by the down-to-honest-earth newspaperman, Clark Redfield (Macdonald Carey). It is a good performance competently played by the principals with some very nice work too by the supporting cast, particularly by Walter Abel and Peggy Wood as the girl's parents. As to Betty Hutton, this reviewer has found her in some of her films the brassy, noisy blonde thoroughly meriting, in one sense, her title of "the blonde bombshell"; now, as a reviewer, it was a remarkable and pleasant change to discover her as the Dark Lady who might easily inspire a sonnet.

The daydream scenes are shown in the melodramatic tempo associated with the silent era of the cinema, giving the right note of unreality—and they are very funny indeed.

There is a drawing room wedding and also a divorce. Socialite drawing room weddings seem always unconsciously funny, anyway; and the divorce is incidental to the story rather than a serious argument for anything.

There are many amusing and some useful lines. The girl hears of her dream hero's divorce from her sister and tells her mother, "Divorce is a serious thing". The worldly-minded mother answers, "Yes, so is marriage".

Again, the "real" hero speaks to the dreamstruck Georgina, "Dreams are easy, life is hard"—words which might profitably be inscribed on the portals of every cinema theatre.

X.


The only two eyes I have were eagerly fixed on the screen as I came fresh from a holiday hoping to enjoy my first feature film for weeks. But when it began I couldn't quite make out what was happening—something about a train and a man picking something up. And frankly, I didn't much care. It was not until much later when some tough cops came on the scene that I really began to enjoy things.
Edward G. Robinson is uncomfortable in the part of a vaudeville thought-reader who periodically gets real prophetic visions to the accompaniment of music which might be instrumental but is more suggestive of our old friends the celestial choristers singing to "m-m-m-m-m". The foretelling idea provides an unusual twist to a story about murder. It is not "who done it" but "who's going to do it" which produces the suspense.

As a thriller the film does not really come off. And, unlike most of its kind, it does not provide an explanation from natural causes of the psychic business. So I must add a theological note. Only God knows the future with certainty. No one else can unless He reveals it to them, which He is unlikely to do to phony thought-readers.

Q.


I like these pictures of family life in small American towns. They are something which Hollywood often does well, and an agreeable form of education for the Englishman. But this one seemed too long for its material though I did not regret its leisurely pace. Edward G. Robinson gives a richly satisfying performance, a good example of his characteristic ability, in marked contrast to the strangulation he endured in Night has a Thousand Eyes.

He is the pivot of the story, the manufacturer who is haunted by the memory of having sold defective aircraft parts to the government, with tragic consequences, yet trying to justify this to himself as the only alternative to ruining his family.

The film intends to point the moral (to the Catholic as sound as it is self-evident) that there are obligations over and above those due to the family. But one of the implications is odd in the extreme. The quack remedy prescribed all the ills of the spirit appears to be—

suicide! If ashamed of your father—commit suicide. If ashamed of yourself—contrition and satisfaction? Oh, dear no. Commit suicide. The nature and evil of suicide have already been discussed in Focus. I will content myself with stressing (at the risk of being considered repetitive) how very inopportune in these days of strain and anxiety, when suicides are frequent enough, are films which present self-murder as a fine way out of difficulties.

Q.


I confess that, though I enjoyed this pleasing re-introduction to the work of René Clair, I cannot honestly say that I know why it received the first prize at last year's Film Festival at Brussels. We have learned to be suspicious of the Oscars ladled out so lavishly by the Hollywood film fraternity. I hope that it does not come to pass that one regards the awards of the European International Festivals with equal cynicism. That is not to say that René Clair's latest film has not merit. It is nostalgic, perhaps, rather than intellectual in its appeal. It takes us back to a time and a world that was pleasant and calm and a little silly, after the manner of a middle-aged man remembering the days of his calf loves. The comedy elements inevitable with films about the early days of film making are not absent from this story of Paris studio life in 1906. Chevalier plays the part of a film director, no longer young, who is more successful with his films than his stars. The Parisian scene, the hundred little touches that make Paris unlike any other city, are here gathered and presented. The affairs of the young men and their ladies; the peculiarities of pioneer film-making; the middle-aged director's gradual acceptance of his rôle as "papa" to his protégées, bring both Clair and Chevalier before us in a mood, more chastened than chaste, though the implications of marital infidelity are of the kind that, perhaps, unfortunately, we have learned to laugh at rather than to cry over.

V.
KISS OF DEATH


The title of this film is a silly, misleading one, intended, one imagines, to catch the sensation-hunting audiences. In fact, the film, though marred by elementary faults of plot construction, stereotyped camera-work, sentimental cliches and some jumbled continuity, is an exciting, gripping one with moments of real tension worked up by good cutting. The final sequences are, on the other hand, among the most palpable and blatant of forced and unnatural "happy endings" that I have seen for a long time. A man, facing a gunman, receives the full discharge in his stomach but survives for the sake of the final curtain, thus destroying what claims the film had to factual merit.

The use of documentary technique is one which is seldom successful in the American cinema. When it is, as in The Naked City, it is superb. To use it as it is used here and in To the Ends of the Earth, only serves to emphasise the fictional element. We are told that the prison authorities co-operated. Maybe they did, but the faults of the film are not theirs.

Brian Donlevy, as an Assistant D.A. who wishes to help a convict sent to prison for a long stretch, seems to have a very inadequate knowledge of the workings of the law, for the defending counsel is able to secure a verdict of not guilty for a moronic and sadistic murderer who is thus left to hunt down Victor Mature and his family in revenge for the "squealing" which has been Mature's price for his "parole".

Again we have the Law shown up in very unfavourable light. In London Belongs to Me, the English legal system is given a poor showing. In My Brother's Keeper, it was implied that Society is to blame for the criminal's plight. In Kiss of Death we are told that the convict was driven to crime because of the failure of Society to give him a job. We are also told that the difference between the double-crossing "framing" resorted to by the police, and the same methods adopted by the crooks, is that the police only act in that way to bad people. This seems to me a regrettable implication of and justification for crookedness in legal quarters.

The acting is, without being excellent, more than usually satisfactory. Especially is this true of Richard Widmark as the moronic sadist. Possibly his hideous laughter is a little

Brian Donlevy wishes to help a convict
over-done. It is intended to make your flesh creep—and it doesn't. Coleen Gray is pretty and seems capable of good acting. She played a somewhat similar part in Nightmare Alley. Victor Mature, I fear, is more concerned with his profile than with his profession; but maybe that is his profession. On the other hand, perhaps the camera-man rather fell for it.

V.

Note.—During the absence for a week of the Universe Film Critic Q. was asked to deputise. His reviews of Life with Father, The Birds and the Bees and XIVth Olympiad are reprinted by kind permission of the Editor of the Universe.


Playgoers will know what to expect in this film—a comedy about the daily life of an American family in the period which we call Victorian, with the self-important, dictatorial, irritable but basically decent and affectionate father, his muddle-headed, very Episcopalian wife and their four sons.

Those who see advertisements for films (and who can help seeing them?) may expect more red hair of an unpleasant shade than they will actually see. In fact the Technicolor is unobtrusive if perhaps a little uncalled for in such an unspectacular film.

The rather obvious parts of father and mother are adequately played by William Powell and Irene Dunne. Elizabeth Taylor is particularly good as love's young dream (1880 model) and Zazu Pitts' re-appearance is refreshing. Edmund Gwenn succeeds in not burlesquing the part of the clergyman.

But it is regrettable that so many of the laughs depend upon a sniggering attitude to the Christian belief in the importance of Baptism as the gateway to eternal happiness.

After the Press show I heard a critic say: "I didn't laugh quite as much as I expected". That goes for me, too.


This picture is not about birds and bees at all. (They are only mentioned in an aside.) It is about Mrs. Morgan, her three daughters and José Iturbi.

As Mrs. Morgan is Jeanette MacDonald, and her daughter Tess is Jane Powell, and José Iturbi is, as usual, José Iturbi, it will be readily understood that, severally or jointly, they are apt to burst into musical activity at the slightest provocation or none.

Mrs. Morgan has divorced her husband, but Tess, who, like her sisters, has "enshrined" him, longs for him to return. (It is just as well he doesn't, because I am sure he would have spanked Tess.)

Life for her is just one long series of unofficial auditions, so Mr. Iturbi is very welcome in the home when Mrs. Morgan brings him back from a cruise. But little do the girls know that in the course of the voyage he has played no less a composition than "You made me love you; I didn't want to do it" and she has put in the words.

After that, of course, they got married in Cuba, but are rather diffident about breaking the news to the girls. The complications which follow are straightened out in due course and the "moral" of the film seems to be: If your husband is no good, divorce him and make your children happy by marrying Mr. Iturbi in glorious Technicolor.

Those who like this kind of thing, together with expensive restaurants, large cabins in luxury liners, smart night clubs and palatial flats will lap it all up with enjoyment. But some of us found nearly two hours of it quite a lot too long.

Q.


It is not in adapting a stage play to the screen, or in providing visual
accompaniments and continuity to a series of musical items that the cinema justifies itself, but in the skilful presentation of movement and reality. 

XIVth Olympiad has made film history. It is the first film of an entire Olympiad to be made in Technicolor.

It runs for over two hours, but whereas a feature film usually requires months of work between the end of shooting and the first showing, the greater part of this has been produced in five weeks.

It is much more than a statistical record-breaker.

It has the quality that will make its appeal not only to athletic fans who could not be present at the Games, and to those who were and want to recapture the atmosphere, but also to those who “don’t know anything about sport”.

After seeing this they will know a little, as well as enjoying the scenic backgrounds of Greece, St. Moritz (for a considerable proportion of the footage is wisely assigned to the winter Olympics), Torbay and Henley.

The soundtrack carries commentaries (mercifully free from that tedious brand of facetiousness associated with newsreels and sporting short films) by men whose names have been made household words by the radio, and suitable music by Guy Warrack.

Excellent editing avoids monotony and tedium and is ingenious in its use of human and humorous touches.

Though the would-be historical reconstruction of the origin of the Games and some sententiousness in preaching the religion of sport could have been dispensed with, these imperfections at the outset were soon forgotten in the enjoyment of a first-rate picture.

Q.


Running time: 112 minutes.

War must be a terrible thing to have changed a lovable rascal like Clark Gable into the puzzled surgeon of this film. Without doubt a lot of trouble was taken with the production which was smooth and pleasing; the acting was competent enough but the story never comes to grips with interest. What is the point of the film? Is it that some sort of reformation of outlook is possible where illicit love is pursued with restraint?—or is it that our pre-war manner of life was just a little inadequate?

The romantic-minded will no doubt find that the film will while away an afternoon for them.


Running time: 109 minutes.

This is a good example of a bad film. I do not mean technically bad, for it has all the glossy perfection and excitement of a shiny postcard about Venice. It has neat direction, efficient camerawork, a glamorous heroine, Wild West at its shaggiest—all this and Errol too. It has passed the Censor, it has no divorce, no suicide, no suggestive lines or dresses, yet it is, I consider, an immoral film.

The publicity line gives us the following gem: “The saga of Mike McComb, hero, gambler, adventurer, man of glorious destiny in the West’s wildest days”. In other words, it glorifies racketeering, sharp-practice in business, gambling and thuggery. It even conives at the form of adultery connected with the name of King David; this David, however, writes no Miserere. True, the pinnacle on which he has placed himself becomes insecure, but the note of reform on which the film ends is false and insincere and the “heroine”, who ought to know, says, as the film fades out: “You have not changed a bit; you are the same old Mike McComb!”

The story tells of an officer cashiered from the American Army during the Civil War who sets up a gambling den in a silver-mining town and eventually gains control of the mines and the miners. He also secures the wife of a friend by sending the friend to death at the hands of marauding Indians. After various vicissitudes, they all survive to live happily ever after.

The cast is competent in a blousy sort of way. Errol, as usual, preserves his moustache unruffled.
Mr. and Mrs. Josser (Wylie Watson and P. Compton) are important because: (1) they have daughter, Doris (Susan Shaw), to buy whose affections Percy starts on the road to “easy” money by performing little operations on cars; (2) Mr. Josser puts up life-savings to hire a lawyer to defend Percy. P. Compton as Mrs. Josser, appears unduly grim, with grimness, however, that seems to have been assumed to check her husband’s generous, almost reckless, fl of human kindness.

The would-be impressive Percy makes all mistakes of an unseasoned criminal. He completely loses his head as he drives his first stolen car past a police hold-up, with the jilted cashier clinging wildly to him and fighting to stop the car. He tries to quieten her. After the initial “MURDER” header a false calm reigns.

Percy’s capture is due to Doris, or rather to Do’s innocent introduction into No. 10 of her new detective boy friend. He shows professional interest in one of Percy’s presents to her—a statuette from a chain of damning clues is forged round the blissful Percy. His doting mother, a devout Catholic, looks over the bannister as he is led away by the police.
There is a judicious mingling of comedy and tragedy in this film and though the funny characters are a little tragic, they are not professional funny men. Mr. Squales has made his posturing into a fine, most a respectable job.

The homely and unassuming Mr. Josser can try to solve problems when it seems to hit him in the face, and then he can act instinctively and with unconscious nobility. Uncle Henry (Stephen Murray) has a comic outlook; Marble Arch is his milieu and a particular mission in—displayed prominently on his bicycle—is to rouse England to a sense of approaching mageddon.

The climax of the film is a procession through London to “the citadel of action”, as Uncle Henry describes the Home Office, for the reprieve of Percy Boon has fine touches of comedy. There is the embarrassing support lent by professional agitators, one of whom carries an “Olympic Torch” before the denizens of Dulcimer Street. Then there is the incongruous bicycle bearing the Petition and a shower of unsympathetic rain which is no respecter of torches of charity.

The little band looks so insignificant against the impenetrable Houses of Parliament, but then the whole film is about little people trying to do something big. Is all their striving worth while? Did they achieve anything? The rain-soaked posters drooping on Westminster Bridge will give you the answer, but not the whole answer, for the tragedy of Percy Boon did nothing to the people of Dulcimer Street—it brought out their nobility.

This film will give you good entertainment. It is a film banquet, but the plain fare is so attractively bed-up, the ingredients of comedy and tragedy so cleverly mixed, that you will get up satisfied.
O VER a year ago we began to hear glowing reports of a French film on the life of St. Vincent de Paul. It was awarded the French Grand Prix for the best film of the year; Pierre Fresnay for his performance as the Saint won the International Prize at Venice for the best performance of the year. Since then most of us have been awaiting Monsieur Vincent with feelings of anxious hope.

For myself I must say that Monsieur Vincent exceeds my most optimistic expectations. It is a film for which all Christian filmgoers, and members of Catholic Film Societies in particular, have been hoping since long before they ever heard of Monsieur Vincent. Monsieur Vincent is in fact the first film, in my experience which lifts the cinema on to the plane of a Christian art, an art worthy to be put at the service of religion as all the great art of the past has been. Most previous well-meaning attempts to put Christianity on the screen have been either so amateurish and inept, or in such excruciating taste, that they must discredit either the Church or the cinema, according to the mind of the beholder. To anybody, I think, Monsieur Vincent must be a noble and a handsome film, though admittedly those who approach it from a Christian outlook are sure to get the most out of it. For perhaps the film's greatest achievement is its complete integration of the highly technical art of the screen, with the faith and devotion in which the film is soaked and the charity of its Saint-hero.

Some of the finest actors and actresses in France (which is as much as to say in the world) contribute tiny cameo sketches of the figures who surrounded the saint, from the first Ladies of Charity to Cardinal Richelieu and the Queen of France. Costumes and sets show as meticulous a feeling for the period and the place as those of, for example, La Kermesse Héroïque. But they are never allowed to be more than the framework for what is less a screen biography, episodically told, than a portrait composed of a glimpse here, a glimpse there, until the subject is revealed before us in the light of his abiding works of charity rather than of his reforming work inside the Church. Certain liberties are taken with details of fact, liberties that the film, in my opinion, fully justifies by its larger effect of truth.

Jean Anouilh, the author of the film, and Maurice Cloche, its director, embark on their motion portrait—if I may coin the term—from a point generally recognised as the turning-point in Vincent de Paul's career: his arrival as parish priest to the profane, unwelcoming parish of Châtillon. This superb opening sequence, from the lyrical beauty of the countryside into which Mr. Vincent descends from a covered wagon, outlines the background to the whole portrait. We see the firm faith which was the foundation for all his good works in his stern survey of the abandoned little church; as he sweeps the barrels off the desecrated altar, there is no empty dramatic gesture, but an expression of his profound sense of the outrage to his God. The appalling contrasts of living in seventeenth century France are boldly sketched in the contrast between the gaiety and dancing inside the rich man's house, while down the road a poor woman has been walled into her hovel to die of plague. We see Mr. Vincent's Gascon humour when he attends the wound of a duellist; his humility in his indifference to the stones thrown by the villagers; his love of the poor in his choice of a home for the orphan; the immediately compelling effect of his personality on the indifferent population, rich or poor; and the beginnings of his great works of charity.

Because here in Châtillon they have assembled the introductory background to the whole picture, Cloche and Anouilh have also brought to Châtillon the two women who were the saint's chief helpers in establishing his charitable foundations: Madame de Gondi, who devoted her money and her zeal to working for the Ladies of Charity, and Louise de Marillac, who became the first superior of the Daughters of Charity (and later Saint Louise).

At the end, when we have seen Mr. Vincent revealed in the ultimate
simplicity of his all-consuming charity, the portrait closes again with a survey—by the Pope's emissary—of the enduring accomplishments in that turbulent age of the plain priest who so miraculously became one of its dominating figures.

Between Châtillon and the quiet close of St. Vincent's life; we see him in his manifold spheres of activity: in an interview with Cardinal Richelieu himself; as chaplain of the Royal Galleys, in an agony of compassion for the convicts at the galley; at St. Lazaire, doing out soup for the unending queues of paupers or gently but firmly turned aside scroungers, or organising the crude hospital where patients queue for corpse-space in the shared beds and it is only too easy to understand Louise de Marillac's first quailing from so much degradation; with his humbler helpers, Marguerite Nazeau the farmgirl, or the young Fr. Portail, always infinitely gentle; in all his trials with the Ladies of Charity—benevolent and generous but so often pretty and silly—always infinitely patient until he turns on them for their pharisaical withdrawal from the founding, with—"When God wants somebody to die for the sins of the world, Madame, He sends His own Son"; and as the Counsellor of a Queen's conscience in a scene which for many may be the mellowest highlight of the whole picture, the talk alone with the Queen of France at the close of both their lives.

Each of the episodes is beautifully written, beautifully acted and directed with unaltering emphasis on the central character. None of the scenes is allowed any significance except in so far as it throws into relief some facet of the saint.

It is difficult to know who deserves most credit for this unique achievement in the cinema: the author, the director, or Pierre Fresnay the actor called upon to realise their conception of St. Vincent de Paul. Fresnay's interpretation of the saint is perhaps the most remarkable performance ever seen on the screen. But the portrait as a whole is the work of director and author as well as actor, and of the rest of a magnificently unselfish cast. (Incidentally the English subtitles, written by George Slocombe, are considerably better than usual.) If as we are told, even films as artistically regrettable as The Bells of St. Mary's cause conversions, Monsieur Vincent should overwhelm the Daughters of Charity with vocations.

At the C.F.S. Film Conference we were told that it is the duty of the critic to let the public know what the film is about. In this case that will be easy. A poor, Blind Pianist refuses a Rich Girl's offer to subsidise his composition. She then pretends to be a poor Blind Girl. The B.P. loves the R.G.-turned-B.G. The B.P. recovers his sight and rejects the R.G. until he discovers that R.G.=B.G. Q.E.D.!

Mixed up with all this is a one-movement piano concerto (you know the kind) played, actually, by Rubenstein. What these great performers will do to be behind a film! Serious musicians should avoid this film. The tone deaf will not notice anything wrong. Others may like to watch Dana Andrews scowling at the piano or Merle Oberon trying to resemble a Bagatelle in A Flat. Ethel Barrymore galumphs. You know what I mean.

By the way, those who like less serious music well presented will enjoy Hoagy Carmichael at the piano.

V.


"Are we really like that?" said a monk of the English Benedictine Congregation after reading MR. PERRIN and MR. TRAILL. Allowing for the differences between a Benedictine school and one like "Banfield's" the answer would still be "No", as far as the Mr. Perrin of the film is concerned. He is overfogeyfed, looking almost as old as his mother, an unpopular variant of Mr. Chips in the later stages. The part would gain so much of pathos, the conflict between him and Mr. Traill so much of real drama if he had been more credible—pompous and rather middle-aged certainly, but not such a prepos-

terous pantaloon. Mr. Traill is real enough. Whereas Marius Goring is much transformed by make-up and costume, David Farrar has only to be himself, complete with manly chest (cf. Black Narcissus) to make us realise that romance will soon stir in the heart of the school nurse (Greta Gynt, devampised).

It was, of course, a good idea for Hugh Walpole to write a school story from an unusual angle, that of the masters rather than the boys. But my shameless illiteracy has already been so exposed in these columns that no one will expect me to enter into a comparison of the novel and the film.

Perhaps the inability of this picture, like a number of others, to stay at the same level can be explained by a memorable and pregnant phrase in the synopsis. It says that the producer "combines a business view of film making with a respect for the art of the cinema". Business and art are such uncomfortable bedfellows.

I liked the clerical member of the common room, a nice, sensible old chap and not one of the silly or nasty clergymen we sometimes meet on the screen. But the highspot for me was the short but magnificent parody of a Governor's speech on Prize Day delivered to perfection by Finlay Currie.

Q.


Richard Llewellyn has manifested in his other books a deeper vision of life than he shows in this innocently thrilling plot of Noose. The vast blackmarket empire provides, of course, a new setting for the eternal battle between law, love and crime, although in the course of the picture you are never fully aware of the change of milieu. Sugiani (Joseph Calleia), a bit too snaky to be a "snake", and showing too much of his black heart and too little of his rulership, uses a lot of
black-market talk, but he could just as well have been a common bank gangster. The technique peculiar to black-marketeers is feebly suggested. It is not brains which detects the clue, but love; and the dangers which "Jumbo" Hoyle (Derek Farr) and Linda Medbury (Carole Landis) have to endure, before the police are able "to polish off" Sugiani's racket empire, are thrilling, but not convincing enough to produce in the subconscious of a normal being the germs of a nightmare.

The plot is as simple and innocent as a duck's eye, and its development runs with a fascinating dynamism. Lives and loves do not count; and the ways by which Sugiani's black activities are cracked by a dozen tough fighters— Jumbo's ex-army pals—are able to keep one breathless for a couple of moments.

Over-emphasising "dynamic movement" becomes a real danger, since film critics have laid so much stress on it. Bar Gorman's (Nigel Patrick) play with the telephone, his repeated sudden banging-down of the receiver, makes more impression on one's nerves than on the aesthetic sense, which only can be delighted by measure and moderation. The result is that the whole action, in itself not so bad, becomes most tiring.

Annie Foss' (Ruth Nixon) drunken babblings are often unreal and never reach a climax. You know that she reveals tremendous secrets, but you don't see nor feel it. She, and delightful Mercia Lane (Carol Van Derman) endeavour to be impressive by a too obvious exhibition of legs, but since their acting does no more than display this material outfit, it lacks every dramatic meaning.

Inspector Randall's (Stanley Holloway) and Linda Medbury's acting is delightful, if not outstanding; the former in showing a patient blood-bound ferocity, the latter in combining comely attractiveness with feminine courage.

D.

Absence abroad in connection with the Venice Film Festival has made it impossible to provide a detailed account of the Film Conference for this issue. We shall publish both a summary for Focus and a reprint of the lectures. In the first place we offer to all the lecturers who gave us of their time and ability so generously, a hearty vote of thanks. There could not have been a more expert group of speakers from our point of view. We only wish that more of our members and friends had had an equally generous impulse to help the cause by being present. Difficulties? Yes. But all good works have difficulties to overcome. Our good work consists in equipping our minds to be able to combat the misuse of film. That demands sacrifice. We hope all those who regard themselves as interested in Catholic Film Action will ask themselves whether they could not do more than at present they are doing. The primary thing is to awaken themselves and others to the importance of appreciating the cultural power of film. Moral lists are urgently necessary, but so are intelligent audiences. Teachers and Youth leaders, in particular, should realise their duty in this matter.

The comparatively small number who attended the Film Conference make it certain that we shall be at a considerable financial loss. Advertising, secretarial reports, hospitality and other things made demands on our slender resources. It will be a pity if our first attempt to realise our duty of elevating public taste in film matters leads to our liquidation! May we count on your help?

Arrangements have been put in hand for the re-publication of Andrew Buchanan's From Script to Screen. It is one of the classics of film exposition. It will be published at about 6/6 or 7/6. We shall be grateful to have as many advance bookings as possible in order to guarantee the edition. Readers in U.S.A., Australia, New Zealand, India, Canada and other English-speaking countries are particularly invited to take notice. Out of print for many years copies may be inspected in all good reference libraries. The new edition will have a Preface by the Secretary of the C.F.S. as well as being fully illustrated.
When Jessie L. Lasky selected a European screen actress to play the much-coveted part of Olga, the feminine lead in The Miracle of the Bells, he concluded one of the most intensive searches ever conducted from Hollywood to find the proper personality to play a much-discussed screen assignment.

Though Valli remains to be seen on the screen by British audiences she has appeared in 34 European productions, and is one of the most popular stars among filmgoers in France, Italy and the Balkans. Her outstanding talent was recognised in 1941 when she was named the best actress of the year at the Venice Festival.

The attention of producers Lasky and MacEwen was focussed on Valli after the producers had seen The Paradine Case, Valli's first film.

Valli was born in Pola, an Italian port on the Istrian peninsula, the daughter of a professor of philosophy, who is currently teaching at the University of Milan.

Her parents took her to Como, a town in the lake region of Northern Italy, in 1928. She was a student at the Como Gymnasium until 1936, when she went to Rome to study dramatic art at the Motion Picture Academy. Following a year of intensive work, Valli was chosen by a producer to act in a one-reel test. It was so successful that she was signed to co-star in a motion picture in June 1937.

The following year she signed a five-year starring contract with "Italcine". It was during her association with this organisation that she made Piccolo Mondo Antico, ("Little Old World") which was given a special première at the Venice Festival in 1941, and which won her the aforementioned award as the year's finest feminine star.

Valli appeared in ten dramatic pictures during the next two years, but suspended her theatrical activities in June 1943 when "Italcine" ran into political difficulties.

After the Armistice and the occupation of Rome by the Nazis, she was asked to make propaganda films for the reinstated Fascist Republican Party in Venice. When, despite repeated threats and demands, she refused to comply, it became necessary to go into hiding with sympathetic friends.

It was during this period that she married Oscar de Mejo, Italian pianist and composer, in March 1941.

In April, the German owned "Continentalcine", of Paris, offered her a contract to work in France; she refused, explaining that she had decided to retire as an actress. The harassed Valli had a narrow escape from the German Secret Service. After the liberation of Rome a document was found in the German S.S. Command in that city listing the actors and actresses wanted by the Germans. Valli's name was high on the list.

Her proudest possession today is a document she received for her patriotic efforts during her country's darkest years.
IT’S TRAINING THAT COUNTS

(Reprinted by permission of the J. A. Rank Organisation)

THE belief that stardom depends on an attractive appearance is now discounted. Dramatic training and a certain element of good luck are two factors that make for stardom.

Of eighty stars under contract to the Rank Organisation all but fourteen have had years of dramatic experience. Of the exceptions, two were broadcasters, three had dramatic school training and five had acted in amateur dramatic societies.

Behind any star’s name lies a long and sometimes weary history of dramatic coaching, repertory experience, stage roles and finally small film parts. Few of today’s stars—Chips Rafferty is an exception—have starred in their first films.

Half of the stars under contract have trained at dramatic schools. The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art comes first in popularity. Former among academy pupils are Margaret Lockwood, Valerie Hobson, Flora Robson, Patricia Roc, Joan Greenwood and Kathleen Harrison; the men include Trevor Howard, Mervyn Johns, Basil Radford, John Mccallum and Maxwell Reed.

Other dramatic training centres, such as the Central School of Speech and Dramatic Art and the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art trained Ann Todd, Sally Gray, Kathleen Ryan, Stewart Granger, Alec Guinness and Jimmy Hanley.

Parental disapproval of a stage career prevented some of today’s stars from full-time attendance at dramatic schools, but a few overcame this difficulty by studying at evening schools while doing a “safe” job during the day. Hazel Court, Dermot Walsh and Bill Owen come into this category, while John Mills worked as a commercial traveller, to pay for his keep while he trained as a dancer.

Modern and classical dancing and musical studies occupied ten of the artists, although some—Valerie Hobson and Joan Greenwood among them—also had a dramatic training. Jean Simmons trained at Mrs. Aida Foster’s School of Dancing, wishing to start her own dancing academy with her sister. But a small part in Give Us The Moon, as Margaret Lockwood’s young sister, changed the course of her career.

Acting Schools at the Embassy and “Q” Theatres, where young actors learn as they work, started Dennis Price and Dirk Bogarde on their careers. Pamela Mathews was a fully trained skating star before taking up screen work.

More than half of today’s stars have worked in repertory companies. Michael Redgrave, John Mills, Trevor Howard, Eric Portman, Alec Guinness, Mervyn Johns, Dennis Price, Joan Greenwood, Kathleen Harrison, Flora Robson, Mai Zetterling and Linden Travers are among those who have behind them the solid stage groundwork that repertory brings.

Several stars were formerly associated with the Old Vic Theatre Company. Strangely all but one—Flora Robson—are men. They include Eric Portman, Michael Redgrave, Stewart Granger, John Mccallum, John Mills, Ralph Michael and Alec Guinness. Twenty-four of the Rank Organisation’s artists have had broadcasting experience. Basil Radford and Naunton Wayne have delighted many listeners with their serials blending cricket and crime. Margaret Lockwood broadcast with Eric Portman in “Love from a Stranger”; more recently she was televised as Eliza Doolittle in “Pygmalion”. Ralph Michael played Professor Higgins. During the war Jane Barrett acted in a serial “The Armstrongs”, which was relayed to the United States. She has been heard in more than 2,500 programmes.

Concert parties, variety and pantomime have helped many of today’s stars. Bonar Colleano has appeared in nearly every form of light entertainment, from the time when, as a child of six weeks he was carried on to the stage by his parents, members of the celebrated Colleano Circus family. Another “Trouper” of the variety world, Sid Fields, first appeared at the age of eight at a Mothers’ Meeting in a Birmingham Church Hall.
Basil Radford and Naunton Wayne began in concert parties. Their double turn began with *The Lady Vanishes*. Mervyn Johns is another star who started in concert parties.

Many stars have played in pantomime. Margaret Lockwood achieved this at the age of thirteen at the Scala Theatre. Ann Todd was one of our best Peter Pans and Jean Kent a lively Prince Charming. Sonia Holm and Jimmy Hanley are among the younger stars who have appeared in pantomime. Mervyn Johns once appeared as the king in "The Sleeping Princess".

The majority of the Rank Organisation's contract artists had the widest possible training and theatre experience. Every young artist without training is sent first to the Company of Youth, founded by the Rank Organisation. The aim of the Company of Youth, "to instil the necessary qualifications into talented youngsters, who are expected to undergo their training with intelligence and with an appreciation of their responsibility as future stars of the screen".

Former pupils have more than proved the value of the training afforded by the Company of Youth, under its principal, Miss Mollie Terraine. Among them are Jean Simmons, Maxwell Reed, Carol Marsh, Andrew Crawford, Hazel Court, John Stone, Jane Barrett, Dennis Vance, Sonia Holm, Peggy Evans and Jane Hylton.

Some have already won renown, others are only beginning. But all seem to be justifying the theory that "It's training that counts".

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**PENNY A DAY FOR 240 DAYS’ FUND**

IF one fourth of the Catholic population in England and Scotland contributed a penny a day for 240 days The Catholic Film Society in England would be able to set up a production unit.

It was the pennies of the Catholic population in France which made possible the making of the film *Monsieur Vincent*.

Kindly send a donation to:

*Hon. Secretary,*

*Rev. J. A. V. Burke, Mayfield College, Mayfield, Sussex*

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**GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGED**

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CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY NEWS

At the General Council Meeting of O.C.I.C. at Venice during the Film Festival, the Catholic Film Society was honoured by the election of its Secretary to the Executive Committee of the International Catholic Cinema Office. This is an appreciation of the importance of the part played by the English-speaking Catholic world in the matter of film. O.C.I.C. exists to provide a centre of inspiration, information and study which will be at the service and for the benefit of Catholic Film Action all over the world. It is certain that we in this country could do a great deal to mould the attitude of other Catholic cinema centres, not because we are more alert or more able, but because we have more opportunities for penetrating the film world. While we offer our gratitude to the Executive of O.C.I.C. for this mark of confidence in us, we take the opportunity of asking the practical support of our fellow countrymen in all matters connected with the great work we are trying to do. Without their aid, the C.F.S. can do nothing. With their loyal backing, we can become a power such as Pope Pius XI envisaged in his immortal Encyclical, capable of exercising a profoundly moral influence both on those who make and those who use films.

We shall give a detailed account of the Venice Film Festival at a later date. It is interesting to point out that, though there were few really outstanding films (Hamlet and Red Shoes are obvious exceptions) there was a greater number than usual which were trying to say something of importance for man to understand. This indicates a greater awareness on the part of film producers of their duty towards the public. The O.C.I.C. Award went to The Fugitive, a film of great moral elevation, showing us the conflict in the soul of a priest between human weakness and supernatural grace, but it was closely contested by a Swiss film called The Search which dealt with the appalling problems created by the war for those who have the care of children. This film will certainly do more to awaken us in this country to a sense of the true horror of modern war than many of the so-called "heroic" war films.

The International Film Review, which came up for discussion during the Venice reunion, will, it is hoped, make its definite appearance at the end of this year. Many people have asked us about it and require copies when it appears. May we take this opportunity of telling them that difficulties of international finance have been the main reason for its tardy appearance. It is certain that such a review could play a great part in presenting the Christian philosophy of film to the world. It is also certain that a spirit of adventure and loyalty among its prospective readers and supporters is also necessary in order that it may succeed. Naturally, the number of persons who are temperamentally fitted to make use of such a review is comparatively small, but we hope that all our readers who have the betterment of the films at heart will support our endeavours to find a large circulation for it in this country. Catholic Film Action is not easy. But it is worthwhile. Part of it consists in overcoming material difficulties for the sake of spiritual benefits. We are battling with many material difficulties. We look to our friends for ammunition.

The Annual General Meeting of the C.F.S. will take place towards the end of October or beginning of November. We ask readers to watch the Catholic Press for dates and details. We repeat: Watch The Catholic Press. It is surprising how notices can escape attention. Many people told us that they did not know of the Catholic Film Conference. We spent £50 advertising it! So, watch the Catholic Press.

YOUR TRIFLE will help to do something tremendous
(See page 236)
LIBRARIES:

"Gateway" Film Library, 84 Powys Lane, Palmers Green, N.13.
Wallace Heaton Ltd., 127 New Bond Street, W.1.
Local Government Officers Assn., 1 York Gate, N.W.1.

FILMS
AN ELIZABETHAN BOY. Silent Film, in colour. 1 reel, 10 mins. "Gateway", Hire 10/-, extra days 2/6.

Shows a weaver's apprentice at his loom, then sent on a journey to Dover—the open fields and common lands he passes on the way, and country towns showing Tudor architecture—his arrival at Dover, and a glimpse of the harbour.

An interesting film, and more successful than many of such short length. Gives a good picture of the travel, dress and home life of those days, and of the business methods of the prosperous Tudor merchant. (The stills of the shipping would be better omitted.) The colouring is delightful.

Suitability: 13 onwards.


This film surveys the history of St. Albans up to the end of the Middle Ages, as seen in some of the town's most interesting buildings and historical remains. The material is well selected on the whole, informative in itself and stimulating to the imagination. The remains of the Roman wall, gateways and mosaics indicate the military and cultural influence of the Roman occupation, the magnificent Abbey gateway and dominating church suggest the protective and authoritative position occupied by the monastery in regard to the medieval townsfolk, while shots of sunny narrow streets and houses propped one against another provide the background to the medieval scene.

But the selection of material is not consistently good. One has to linger too long in the wooded countryside surrounding the town, or viewing slated rooms from the tower of the Abbey church—the interior shots of the church convey little idea of its magnificent nave and massive structure nor of the architectural detail and the paintings on the columns.

The film is particularly useful for revision purposes, providing a survey of the country's history, reflected in one of her historic cities. Films of other cities such as Canterbury, Bath, Edinburgh, etc., are also available.

Suitability: 13 onwards.

THE EARLY CHURCH. Silent film. 1 reel, 12 mins. "Religious Films" No. 19 of series Historical Background of the Bible. Hire from C.T.S. 3/-.

By means of sketch-maps and animated diagrams, the film indicates important preliminary facts for study of this period—the extent of the Roman Empire, missionary journeys of St. Paul and chief strongholds of Christianity in the East. A sense of reality is given by pictures of the Palestinian countryside and remains of early Christian buildings, though surprisingly no mention is made of the Catacombs.

As a survey of early Church history, the film is disappointing. Much of it is devoted to the portrayal of present-day rites and ceremonies of the Coptic, Armenian and Orthodox churches in Jerusalem. The administration of the Sacraments and Holy Week ceremonies serve to show how early Christian devotions and ceremonies are preserved in the liturgy of the 20th century, but the historical has been sacrificed too completely to the liturgical, throughout the film.

Suitability: 14 plus.

FILM STRIPS
PALMERSTON. "Common Ground". CGB 257. For sale E.S.A. 15/-
Hire: Wallace Heaton 2/- plus 6d. a day.

An interesting series of pictures, well chosen and well produced, to illustrate the career of one of the most picturesque of our great statesmen. We are shown Broadlands, his birthplace; Newtown, his pocket borough; glimpses of the young man of fashion, including the Goodwood races; then a series of cartoons, contemporary drawings and portraits illustrating many of the well-
known incidents of his colourful administration.

Suitability: Upper forms of secondary school.

CHATHAM. As for last: CGB 345.

Very full and well planned. The pictures are inevitably less varied and vivid than the last strip, but they are good, especially the portraits, which include "Diamond" Pitt, Walpole, Byng, Frederick II, Pitt's "Young Men", George III, and Chatham himself. There are good maps of India and the campaign in Canada, and contemporary pictures of the great victories of the Seven Years' War, and of some of the events of the War of Independence. The strip ends with a useful summary of the career of the Great Commoner.

Suitability: Upper forms of secondary school.

AGRICULTURE AND THE LAND.


PART I shows a "typical village" before enclosure, with the usual diagrams of the open-field system and a good picture of the geese on the common. There follow the Enclosure Acts, and illustrations of the improvements made possible in agricultural machinery and stock-raising. There are a great many pictures of different types of ploughs, and many of the other pictures are already very familiar from the text books: but there are useful illustrations of corn and cattle markets, and an interesting sidelight on the evolution of Smithfield Market: formerly the meat walked there.

PART II. A fuller account of the village economy before the agricultural revolution. We are shown a "great house"—Chatsworth—by contrast with the extreme of poverty exemplified by a Scottish crofter's cottage; and are given some idea of the proposals for improving housing conditions following the enclosure movement. Then follow interesting pictures of some village crafts and industries—the wheelwright, the blacksmith, the village carpenter—spinning and weaving, hat-making and brewing. Then scenes of merry-making, the visits of the pedlar and packman, Rent day—and poaching. The strip ends with attempted reconstructions of typical family budgets. A very interesting strip.

Suitability: Upper forms and adult classes.

MEDIEVAL ART IN 12th, 13th, and 14th and 15th CENTURIES. By Prof. E. W. Tristram. "Common Ground." Conditions as for last.

These three excellent film strips present a complete survey of medieval artistic achievement and make the children aware of the wealth of artistic treasures existing throughout the country. Each picture reveals the skill of the artist in his particular medium—stone, metals, wood, glass, ivory, etc., and opportunity is given for the close examination of details of bosses, Dooms, needlework, etc. The strips provide valuable illustrations of medieval religious and secular life and show both the development of the arts through the Gothic period and their unity, a single architectural work of art containing perfect examples of allied and minor arts. Inevitably, without colour much of the beauty of stained glass and murals is lost, but this lack does not detract from the value of the film strips as a whole. Each series has detailed and useful lesson-notes.

Suitability: Older children and adults.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT. From Local Government Officers Assn. No charge for borrowing.

A series of good photographs showing in an interesting way the scope of local government activity, statutory and permissive: highways and bridges, housing, water supply, disposal of refuse, inspection of meat and milk, child welfare, education, technical training, hospitals, care of the aged, police, weights and measures, art galleries, parks and libraries.

We next see the organisation of local government: municipal elections, Officers, a Council at work, Committees, Officials: the City Engineer, the M.O.H., and the Town Clerk.

Next come the bye-laws and the rates, the co-ordination of Local and Central Government, the Counties and Boroughs, a Private Act of Parliament. An example of a tenant-landlord dispute is given, and a historical note is added. This strip is very interesting and informative for children.

N.B. Our next article will be a general set of reviews.
Informational Year Book 1948. (The Albyn Press, Edinburgh, 12/6.)

Rather late in the year, this useful guide to the non-theatrical side of the film world is none the less a welcome addition to our reference library. It is as accurate as information books ever can be, that is to say, that it depends on up-to-date collaboration from interested parties and non-interested parties alike. Of particular interest is the international list of organisations abroad. Here there are a number of gaps. Perhaps we must blame ourselves for failing to pass on information about the affiliated groups of O.C.I.C.

The emphasis is on educational and industrial film production. Hence, documentary producers are given a generous share of space and there are informative articles by competent writers on the many aspects of filmmaking that are peculiar to the factual producer.

J. A. V. B.

The Catholic Review. 2 St. Patrick's Sq., Auckland, C.I. February-March-June 1948. 2/6 monthly.

This enterprising New Zealand periodical is of general Catholic interest with articles on religious and secular subjects, art, science and philosophy. Its interest for us is a series of articles on Catholics and the Cinema, written by J. C. Reid, M.A., Lecturer in English at Auckland University. They take a line familiar to readers of Catholic Film News and Focus but accentuate difficulties that are special to New Zealand audiences. The author's point of view may be summed up by quoting as follows. "There have been many good and healthy films made, both of entertainment and instruction value; the documentary film is rapidly growing into an interesting and promising type; the best French films are usually mature in conception and distinguished artistically; there have been many American films (The Informer, The Oxbow Incident, The Long Voyage Home, Citizen Kane, for example) which do not insult the intelligence and debase the taste of the audience; recent British films are in general more thoughtful and more adult than those of fifteen to twenty years ago. Yet, as matters stand today, there are many factors which are retarding the development of healthy motion-pictures which are unobjectionable to Catholics."

J. A. V. B.

SOME FILMS REVIEWED

NOTE. Inclusion in this list does not connote positive recommendation. Films that are positively harmful are not included here. Readers are reminded to refer to the full reviews when assessing a film.

Category A, indicates adults only; B, adults and adolescents; C, family audiences; D, particularly for children.

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Road to Heaven, The (A) (203)
Sitting Pretty (C) (176)
So Evil My Love (A) (149)
Swordsman, The (C) (155)
Uneasy Terms (B) (149)
Unfinished Dance (C) (174)
Unsuspected, The (A) (200)
Woman in White, The (B) (199)

WE RECOMMEND

Four Steps in the Clouds (C) (150)
Hamlet (B) (130)
Oliver Twist (C) (180)
World and His Wife, The (B) (198)
Naked City, The (B) (202)
Red Shoes, The (A) (204)
Visitation (134)
IT is, perhaps, unfair to write of one of the Boulting twins without the other, but as I happen to know John better than Roy, it is natural that I should concentrate my remarks in his direction. In fact, these two are a unique combination in the world of film. They are alternatively producer and director. They are interchangeable. Whereas in Brighton Rock, John was the director and Roy the producer, in The Guinea Pig John produces and Roy directs. Actually, owing to the indisposition of Roy, the beginning of this film was also directed by John. So strong is the resemblance between the two that many of their friends did not realise the change of plan! Perhaps it may be a useful thing for the future of film that twins be trained to direct their attention to the cinema, for it is certain that the identity of sympathy that exists between these two talented men is an example of that unity of purpose and outlook that is essential for a film with any claims to artistic eminence.

Each of the major films with which the Boultings have been connected has had something special to say to the cinema-going public. Pastor Hall in 1940, set the tone of many subsequent films dealing with the persecution of religious groups and individuals. Perhaps The Fugitive, which has just received the O.C.L.C. Award at Venice, may be said to be the spiritual descendant of Pastor Hall. Both deal with the persecution of individuals, though the persecutors belong to different camps. They both teach the lesson of the bestiality of man when he forgets that other men are human, and his brethren. Thunder Rock may similarly be said to have some kind of progenital connection with A Matter of Life or Death; both are concerned with the edge of beyond and both take the questions of war and economics very seriously. Fame is The Spur, again, has a similarity of theme with The World And His Wife, which is Capra’s latest attack on the immorality behind the American political scene. There may not be more than a passing resemblance in these films, but it is at least of interest to note that the Boultings were saving controversial things on the screen long before it was the fashion to do so.

To return to John Boulting himself, I hope he will not be offended if I say that he has a mind which is, in the best sense of the word, Catholic. He has that integrity of outlook on matters of art which is characteristic of the followers of the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, another mind distinguished by its fearless integrity. Perhaps that is why, in this age which loves to label people, Catholics, who are something more than mechanical-Mass-goers, are often charged with tendencies to this or that mode of political thought or action when, in fact, they are above any ideological connection and must, perchance, remain so. The clear view, the incorruptible purpose, often finds itself touching other ways of thought at points and in ways likely to lead the shallow mind to see a positive alliance where none actually exists.

It is characteristic of John Boulting that he should, at our first meeting, at once announce himself as out of sympathy with Catholic ways of thought, especially in matters of art and freedom. It is more characteristic still that I should be able to tell him, after an afternoon of pointed discussion about the limitations of particular art forms, about the part played by the Church in the tradition of artistic principles as applied to poetry, painting and literature in general, that, whether he knew it or not, he was a disciple of Maritain, that most Catholic and profound defender of true artistic freedom.

He displayed the same fearless outlook as a guest at the C.P.S. Film Conference Brains Trust. It is a pity, therefore, that he sometimes does less than justice to his instinct for artistic truth when making films. The weak ending of Brighton Rock is a case in point. So too, in Fame is The Spur, the logical development of the character of the politician was marred by the attempt to caricature a well-known public figure.

These imperfections, however, need not discourage us. At 35 years, John Boulting is a film personality. With a first-class record behind him, it is safe to prophesy that even better work will come from him in the future.

JOHN VINCENT.
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VISITATION

"It is interesting to note that there is now a 16mm. Sound Film copy of 'Visitation' which can be hired to Convent Schools, Colleges, etc., on application to The Secretary, Medical Missionaries of Mary, Park Studios, Putney Park Lane, London, S.W.16.

"'Visitation' can be seen at the following cinemas in November: 7th, Classic, Tooting at 2 p.m.; 14th, Odeon, Wimbledon at 2-15 p.m.; 21st, Odeon, Ealing at 2 p.m.; 28th, Odeon, Balham at 2-15 p.m."

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Vol. I

FOCUS

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Sir,
I would like to express my appreciation of Focus. I find it extremely useful for record purposes. I would, however, like to see among the "credits" at the head of your reviews the names of script-writer, director of photography (or cameraman) in each case.

Yours, etc.,
JAMES J. GEOCHEGAN.

Sir,
Your review Focus just happened into my line of vision and I perused—some of it, gradually getting a feeling of sickness at the so blatantly "Catholic" tone of the Film Critics, airing their views in the "infallible" and "incontestable" Catholic tradition.

Poor young Micky Rooney—who has given so much cheer and happiness in his film career!! Well, he won't care, but it's a pity if others are put off seeing him and miss a lot of jollity.

I hope Hollywood answers you—for Hollywood is not used to boosting actors just because they "mean well"!!

Yours truly,
E. J. RYLEY.
(An old Catholic.)

Sir,
There are a number of things I want to write to you about—the first being to offer my help in arranging film shows in this part of the world. Incidentally, I know of at least two Catholic secondary schools here which possess 16 mm. sound projectors and very fine halls.

The second matter comes into the category of criticism. In September's issue you published a report on the visit of Father Devlin of the Legion of Decency, and you gave us a little anecdote to illustrate his and the Legion's work. As an English Catholic I am quite disgusted at the smug and prudish attitude it shows—any mention of illegitimacy is regarded apparently as "improper" and the story, in which, according to your synopsis of it, there is nothing at all dangerous, must be changed. This attitude is apparently endorsed by you (meaning the Society), although the Italian film Four Steps in the Clouds, which deals with an illegitimate child, receives the category C—family audiences. I hardly think you are very consistent, particularly as I can remember in an old issue of Catholic Film News your protests when the United States demanded the excision of the word "bastard" from Henry V.

Yours faithfully,
J. B. RORKE.

Sir,
I would like to take this opportunity of thanking you for the excellent work you are doing in bringing out Focus and of giving you my utmost support in the work. In selecting films for the College, I greatly rely on the reviews in your publication. I am more than pleased with Focus; the only thing that I would urge you to do, from a selfish point of view I admit, is to give as many reviews as space will allow. There are so many reissues going about now that one feels in a way lost without the reviews of FOCUS to turn to for guidance.

REV. C. D. FORBES, O.S.B.
THE ART OF THE FILM

By Dr. John B. Knipping, O.F.M., D.A.

We underestimate the average cinemagoer. He visits the picture house impelled by numerous motives. That his choice falls on this kind of entertainment rather than on a pub, a chess-board or a novel indicates that none of these near-at-hand pleasures offer such an attractive form of escape from the dull round of daily duty. Entertainment has a double aim: it regenerates body and soul, as sports do, and lightens for some hours the weary burden due to the continuous routine of doing things in "the sweat of our brow". Although the gates of Paradise will remain closed as long as he is condemned to toil on this earth, man likes to spend considerable time in looking over its walls. He will probably find the angel with the flaming sword there to prevent his coming too near and the devil presenting himself with promises to put his distress to flight by treacherous enchantments. The devil knows better than we, how much we are inclined to enjoy the beauty of earthly things, which God and our gifted fellow-men bestow on us with such profusion. It is the special duty of these same gifted persons to warn mankind against the misuse of these presents of the Creator. They must always be the ornaments of Paradise's antechamber, whether they are offered in most realistic or most fantastic shapes. That the average filmgoer, trying to escape life's daily dullness, is on the lookout for what we generally call beauty and enjoys it wholeheartedly when presented, is proved by the preference for such a film as The Red Shoes. The ballet around which the script-writer has woven his plot, possesses a high spiritual quality and belongs to those symbolically translated emotions of the heart, which are labelled, by art critics and historians of art, with the name "Expressionism". The combination of conscious and subconscious life shown here, is not easy to grasp; the exquisite but often daring colouring, would in a painting perhaps call for a good deal of tolerance. And that this "difficult" ballet prevails over the dramatic acting in the minds of all who were asked why they found the picture so lovely, is a sign how open the people are for real beauty, even when presented to them in shapes which are beyond their common appreciation. What they would scarcely accept in a painting or sculpture, they enjoy eagerly in the film, and that, according to Pudovkin (Film Technique—1933, p. 173) "is the supreme medium in which can be expressed today and tomorrow". This last statement exaggerates the power of the film but it urges alike all who have to deal with it, be it the director, producer, script-writer, actor, critic, cinema-manager and even, if not especially, the cinemagoer, to consider where the artistic value of the film lies and why it has to be considered as a real art.

Lindgren's book is one of the clearest introductions to this film appreciation that I have ever come across. The author does not avoid the film-slang but wherever he uses it, he offers an explanation in the most simple terminology. The very useful Glossary at the end of the book makes it accessible even for the far-off outsider. It is a fundamental treatise. To value a sculpture, a painting or a building, a person does not need to be a sculptor, a painter or an architect; nevertheless, he has to know the manner in which these works of art grow under their hands. Persuaded that the same is true of the film, the author divides his book into a more technical part (chapters 1 and 2) and an artistic part (chapters 3 and 10).

First, he gives a summarising insight into the co-operation of all who are involved in the making of the film. The second chapter offers a short history of the evolution of the film-maker's tools, from the primitive toy-like Zoetrope (1843) to the fully developed modern sound-camera and sound-projector. The aesthetic part begins with the "Anatomy
of Fiction-Film” (ch. 3). Lindgren shows a considerable amount of knowledge of literature in explaining the typical feature of fiction as distinguished from simple story-telling. It is the plot—the motives why one action follows another—that gives fiction its charm, and as aesthetic charm has its deepest roots in life itself (Henry Moore), so he points out that all pictures have at least an implicit spiritual and moral purpose; that “a complete appraisal of any film must take account at some point of its underlying purpose, and must attempt to assess its value” (p. 43). Let us, however, take things as they are in real life, and I would suggest to the author to keep in mind that in every art there is a strong element of mere “play”, just an exhalation of life, just a healthy way to get a breath of air, without any of those heavy “problems”, with which, for example, the German aesthetic philosophy so often pestered every sound expression of sheer vitality. There exist fairy tales with a moral purpose, but lots of them have only the pleasure of bringing the listener back to the Well of Enchantment which once “gave joy to his youth”. Two of the most important chapters are those which treat of the “editing”, i.e., the assembling of a complete film from its various component shots and sound tracks (chs. 4 and 5). This is the foundation of film art, the essence of the creative process. Clever “editing” gives to the film its varying tempo, the smooth or sudden connection of one action with another, the artistic baptism of film. As a very enlightening example of this same device in other arts, the author presents the superb quarrel scene of Cassius and Brutus in Shakespeare’s “Julius Caesar” (p. 59).

The “Use of Sound” affords to the cinematographic art a gain in realism. This means at the same time new limitations in composition, but it is an unmistakable sign of good art if these limitations co-operate to produce a more perfect whole. The artless hundred-percent talkies missed their aesthetic aim not through an excess of realism, but, on the contrary, through an excess of artificiality (p. 103). The introduction of sound has, in a sense, shifted the “burden of creative effort” from the hooting and cutting stage towards the scripting stage, and demands now a more careful and less haphazard planning. In the next chapter (ch. 7) the “Art of the Cameraman” is considered, i.e., the different ways in which a shot can be taken and their effects on the shape and action of the picture. The chapter on “Film Music” (ch. 8) begins with the statement that even the silent film, according to its being a “dynamic movement”, calls for musical underlining, more even than for musical accompaniment. That is why the former improvised accompaniment proved itself insufficient, and soon directions were given for pieces more or less akin to the film’s mood. With the sound track came the unison of visual and aural enjoyment and it became clear that not only music, but often realistic or fantastic sound (with a symbolic meaning) fostered that unison. In “Film Acting” (ch. 9) M. Lindgren points out the differences existing between the stage actor, who relies principally on the spoken word and the film actor, who acts with the whole of himself, his movements being far more than a mere accompaniment to his voice.

The last chapter establishes “Film as an Art”. The objections of those who deny its artistic value, are examined carefully. They err in emphasising its mechanical nature. The point, however, is that neither the quantity nor the quality of tools does affect the artistic value of any work of art. A brush, a hammer and all the complicated machinery needed for building a skyscraper, a tower or a bridge, have essentially no other function than the film-maker’s tools; they are all instruments. And rare are the masterpieces which are pure works of the imagination. It is known how many images and expressionson Coleridge borrowed from his readings of travel books; it is commonly accepted that Shakespeare got several of his plots from 15th century Italian novelists and that he even uses a good deal of their words and sentences. M. Lindgren gives some of these so-called proofs of “lack of originality”. To these we could add others from the realm of plastic art. There is in Michelangelo’s wall-paintings and drawings a human figure, reclining on her back; hundreds and hundreds of time we notice exactly the same figure when we contemplate the
works of art of the following two centuries, not only in Italy, but also in the art of England, France, and the Low Lands. Everyone is convinced of the high artistry displayed in the superb collection of 14th-century tapestries, known as the “Angers Apocalypse”. The designer of this set of 72 pieces, the Brugian Master Jan Hennequin, has used a model, most probably the miniatures of the Cambrai Apocalypse (now in Paris, National Library). But even the Cambrai illuminator is not independent: the same figures, the same attitudes and often the same composition appear in a whole series of illuminated Apocalypses of the so-called Anglo-Norman series (13th century). And several of these have their prototype in 9th-century Winchester and Spanish Apocalypses. The point is not what the artist has borrowed from others, but the way he uses these borrowings independently in the final shaping operation of his work. “What we have to look to are the operations of the mind which precede conscious creation” (p. 177), “for it is precisely in this business of ordering and arranging elements taken from life that creation in any art consists” (p. 181).

This short summary of M. Lindgren’s most valuable book may offer an opportunity to make a few remarks, which might contribute to the clearness of the whole treatise without being mere hair-splitting criticisms.

In establishing the film among the arts the author has followed the so-called “phenomenological” method: he has considered the object in its various aspects and then pronounced the conclusion. This conclusion should be a definition: a general statement by which film is presented as an art different from the other arts and by which every aspect gets its sufficient reason. He has not given such a definition, which should not be so very difficult after carefully reading his book. It would have appeared then, that film is essentially a visual dynamic rhythm presented by means of projection on a screen. By this statement film would be distinguished from every non-visual art (poetry, music), from every visual non-dynamic art (sculpture, painting, architecture) and from every art in which the visual dynamic rhythm is not shown by projection on a screen (dance, mime, stage, etc.). Moreover it would include that only rhythm gives to the component of shots and sound tracks the value of an art and that sound is even more an accessory element than colour. It would also have become more clear that the controversy “actor-non-actor” is not of such importance as to affect the essence of the film, since the visual movement principally matters. One would easily understand why there are earnest film producers who hate stars and especially celebrated acting stars, as they see in them a hindrance for the rhythmic movement of film itself, in spite even of Bernard Miles’ performances trying to prove that “it is possible for a sensitive actor to achieve the whole range of understatement so effective and so attractive in non-actors,” as they do not believe that any actor-in the “furore” of his acting could possibly be “sensitive” in what they expect would be sensitive to do, that is to exist only and to prove by not much more than their sheer existence an object apt to the producer’s “filmic” purposes. We regret missing a special treatise on the Cartoon Film, as it follows its own wind in the regions of film technique and film aesthetic. I agree with M. Lindgren in deploring Disney’s treatment of Beethoven’s Pastoral Symphony in Fantasia, but that would never bring me to deplore the use of classical music entirely, as every art has the right to express the same emotions by its own means. Did not Debussy furnish an exquisite example in his musical interpretation of a painting called “Le fête aux cheveux de lin”? Psycho-physiological experiments and every day experience show that we often see sounds in different colours and hear colours in different tonalities. I would perhaps have other visual associations in hearing Stravinsky’s “Sacre du Printemps” than the prehistorical ones Disney had in composing the second part of Fantasia, but I do not see why his view does not give as good an inter-


pretation (and most probably a better one), as long as we agree in the general form of that music, being the expression of the birth or the re-birth of a world. Whether this world is a material or a spiritual one does not matter very much in this respect, I think, because art has only material requirements at hand to symbolise spiritual facts or truths.

One does not always see first the parts and afterwards the whole, not even of every room. It depends on a lot of circumstances. If the room is a mess of all kind of objects, if a multitude of chairs and chests and paintings on the wall strike the eye, if the lighting is bad or feeble, we cannot possibly have a glimpse of the whole except after long investigation. But if all is put down in order and sufficient light is streaming in, we are quite able to get first an adequate representation of the whole, before we see its different parts and contents. Modern psychology teaches that we mostly have a direct view of the whole “form” and afterwards only of its constituent parts, and we can test this statement when we are in the open air seeing first the general shape of a mountain, a tree or a group of shrubs, and afterwards only branches, leaves, flowers, rocks, holes, etc. Therefore is the “theatrical” view of the whole not always in such a high degree artificial as M. Lindgren seems to put forward (p. 54), and a good film will first give the relatively whole shape of an object: a landscape, a city, a building, if such is required by the circumstances. Overdoing the practice of close-ups can do much harm to the smooth rhythm of a film.

Eisenstein’s enthusiasm for the monologue film may have vanished in later days, but about the same time that Arnot Robertson and Turner made their short _Low Water_, in France the master of the monologue film, Sacha Guitry, wrought his two unrivalled masterpieces _Le Roman d’un Tricheur_ (1937) and _Remontons aux Champs Elysées_ (1938). And since that time the monologue has played a considerable part in many outstanding productions. It is a pity M. Lindgren has omitted to mention Guitry’s name at all. Considered apart from the whole of a sequence or a film, a separate shot may be a “soulless photograph” (p. 177), but this does not imply that there does not exist such a thing as the art of the photograph and we are not inclined to suppose that such an art critic as M. Lindgren misunderstands the valuable artistic results of good photographic craftsmanship and taste.

In the “Select Bibliography” we miss the Index Series of the British Film Institute, and Raymond Spottiswoode’s very competent “Grammar of the Film” (Faber 1935). And why did he not extend his selection to the very clever French Film Literature, as M. Lindgren’s book is directed to a larger number of readers than those of the British Commonwealth and the United States? We may draw his attention to the most recommendable books of Carl Vincent (Histoire de l’Art Cinémato-graphique, Brussels, 1939; indispensable for everyone who wishes to know more details of the history of the film), Léon Moussinac (Le Cinema Soviétique, Paris, Nouvelle Revue Française, 1928), Nicole Vedrès (Images du Cinéma Français, Paris, Editions du Chêne, 1945), and Georges Sadoul (L’Invention du Cinema 1832-1897, Denoël, Paris, 1946). A very useful summary, fully and cleverly illustrated appeared in Switzerland this year in the German language. We miss also a list of leading periodicals; the difficulty of separating green from ripe always in this intricate matter has perhaps held back the author from making any selection.

The outward achievement of “The Art of the Film” continues the good tradition of Messrs. Allen and Unwin; most of the photographs are very well blocked and combined; special mention must be made of the set on Plate 2 (facing p. 3): a comparison of Alexeieff’s impressionistic Goya-like interpretation of Moussorgsky’s _Night on the Bare Mountain_ (1927), with the expressionistic one in Walt Disney’s _Fantasia._

* An Introduction to Film Appreciation, by Ernest Lindgren, xiv and 242 pp. 81 ill. (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1948. Price 15/6, linen.)
MR. VINCENT AND FR. PAUL

By a coincidence Monsieur Vincent and The Miracle of the Bells were first shown in London during the same week. And it became the fashion to contrast them as examples of films concerned with the Catholic religion, one really good and the other really bad.

Now Monsieur Vincent is, of course, an outstandingly good picture, first-rate cinema as well as a valuable essay in film hagiography. But it is not likely to be acceptable for general distribution because the dialogue is in French. (And to my mind the film would lose incalculably by dubbing an English version.) It is, however, acceptable to the intelligentsia. Such people can fit it into their preconceptions without much difficulty because the supernatural element in the life of St. Vincent de Paul has been soft-pedalled to the verge of inaudibility. This, though I regard it as a distortion of history by omission, may well be justified artistically and it may be good propaganda in some directions by virtue of its deliberate selectiveness. The rationalist, though perhaps a little jolted by the thoroughly Catholic lesson in charity and humility which the film is at pains to teach, could, I think, square the picture with his own ideas and come away feeling that although Vincent, living when and where he did was, of course, a Roman Catholic, such a good humanist would here and now probably be an agnostic or at least a Protestant.

But The Miracle of the Bells—admittedly not anywhere in the same street considered as a work of art but catering for a wider public—boldly rides roughshod over the pet notions not only of would-be intellectuals but of the man in the street, the English street. Here we have contemporary people who go to church on weekdays, even before breakfast, who speak of God as if He not only existed but mattered and was anything but remote, to whom the Communion of Saints not only conveys an intelligible meaning but is a living reality, who believe not only that miracles happened in the Bible but that they can happen now, though the Church is very cautious and critical in accepting them. Of course all this kind of thing shocks and disgusts our friends who think that religion (if any) should be kept for Sundays and not allowed to impinge on ordinary life and conduct, and whose reverence is so profound that it restrains them from ever entering any place of worship or addressing God in prayer. I gather from what I read that it ought to shock me. But I don't quite know why. There is also a man who behaves in a very vulgar, commercial way. As he was brought up as a Protestant but has not been to any church since he was a child, this may annoy the many cinemagoers who belong to the same category, but it neither surprises nor distresses me. Ought it to?

Then there is Fr. Paul. He is not just a good sort and an efficient welfare worker like Fr. O'Malley. He is not a bullying, prurient prude like the priest in The Brothers. He is not a lay figure who addresses everybody as "My son" like the priest in Lisbon Story. One feels that the man is a real priest, whose life and work take their colour from Catholic theology and piety without losing any of its humanity.

The Universe Film Critic handled this picture kindly, while aware (as I am) of its limitations. And a Catholic journalist whom I met at the press show agreed that, given the material, the picture was not bad. But even if I had not this modicum of support, I should still feel bound as an honest critic not to allow myself to be stampeded by the chorus of condemnation, Catholic as well as non-Catholic, which has greeted it.

Going My Way and The Bells of St. Mary's served some purpose in publicising the fact that priests and nuns are not monstrosities but decent, ordinary human beings with a sense of humour. The Miracle of the Bells seems to me to propound the admirable thesis that Catholicism is not meant to be merely kindness garnished with ceremonial, but is a precisely defined
ENGLISH CARTOONS

Animated cartoons, hitherto an exclusively American production, are now being made in this country by a staff of two hundred under the direction of David Hand. They are divided into two distinct series, Animaland, with some animal as the central figure in each, and Musical Paintbox, each concerned with some district in Britain.

Two of each series, The House Cat, The Lion, The Thames and Wales, have been shown to the press.

The animal pictures are a great disappointment. Expressly intended to be British in character and humour they are so completely dominated by the American tradition as hardly to have been worth making. They are rather more reminiscent of M.-G.-M. cartoons—though not quite up to the standard of the best of them—than of Walt Disney’s. The animals are tastelessly and banally endowed with an arch, semi-human sexiness.

In contrast the topographical cartoons reveal taste, artistry, originality and a dash of satire, which contrasts pleasantly with the obvious witteism of the other pictures. The Thames is particularly effective; reminiscent at the beginning of one of Disney’s more lyrical moods, the film moves along a refreshingly new course, via Oxford, Henley, Bray, Rton, Runnymede, Hammersmith and Southend. Musical Paintbox cartoons are well worth seeing and open up a hopeful prospect for future efforts in this medium.

The Lion (Distributors: G.F.D. Certificate: U. Category: B. Running time: 8 minutes) was the first of these to be shown publicly and has already been generally released.

PENNY A DAY FOR 240 DAYS’ FUND

IF one fourth of the Catholic population in England and Scotland contributed a penny a day for 240 days the Catholic Film Society in England would be able to set up a production unit.

It was the pennies of the Catholic population in France which made possible the making of the film Monsieur Vincent.

Kindly send a donation to:

Hon. Secretary,
Rev. J. A. V. Burke, Mayfield College, Mayfield, Sussex

GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGED

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FILM REVIEWS
By Our Panel of Priests


This is a film about which one is tempted to write too much. It provides a starting point for essays on the problems of stage adaptation, the art of direction, of acting, of script-writing, of political and religious and economic ways of thought and life. It is a film which it is worthwhile taking a lot of trouble to see. It will appeal to those millions of middle-aged and careful people who have to be coaxed into a cinema. They will not have wasted their time.

To try to summarise several of the points of departure mentioned above: The Winslow Boy is an example of how well a play can be adapted for the screen when there is available a screen-writer of the brilliance of Terence Rattigan and a director of the subtlety and poetic imagination of Anthony Asquith. It has been said that the film should have been approached from the direction of the newspaper story rather than via the stage. I do not think it matters. The situations implicit in a domestic drama of this nature involve many theatrical décors. The exits and entrances are timed with an eye and an ear on their suspense value. The camera can underline but should not overlay a purely stage tradition. For example, the dramatic value of the cross-examination of Ronnie Winslow by the eminent Sir Robert Morton prior to his decision to take up the case, rests in the fact that at a certain moment, the suspense will be released and the K.C. take his departure without the camera following him out of the room or indulging in too much movement within it. On the other hand, the camera is able to tell us much of the character of the boy and his family merely by listing a series of shots of a school tuck-box and its diminishing contents. This the stage could not do. Yet the two techniques are welded in this film in such a way that one accepts the thing as a proper unity.

The skill with which Anthony Asquith has produced his effects is masterly and satisfying. The cross-examination scene referred to above; the sharp cross-cutting of scenes in church and house; the groupings of characters when the family drink to the daughter's engagement, or when the wife is asked to read the letter which will begin the shattering of the family ease and fortune, are examples of Asquith's insight into the potentialities of the camera conceived of as an instrument for reporting emotion rather than building it up.

Robert Donat as Sir Robert Morton, K.C., and Margaret Leighton as Catherine Winslow

The acting, all of it of the grand order of the English stage at its best, is, nevertheless, always evidently under the control of the director. He knows what he wants; they know how to give it him. The result is a fusion of talent in both directions. One is conscious that here is an approximation to the cinema as art. Robert Donat gives a studied, beautifully proportioned por-
undertones which only the camera can capture and focus. Cedric Hardwicke as Arthur Winslow is also at his best; a picture of paternal gentleness and decency ready to sacrifice himself and his family for the sake of justice and right.

There are too many good performances to do justice to all. Kathleen Harrison as the maid, Marie Lohr as the mother, Margaret Leighton as the daughter, Francis L. Sullivan's excellent Attorney General, and Neil North as Ronnie Winslow all contribute positively to the building up of a satisfactory film.

The story could only happen in England. When the film was shown at the Venice Film Festival, it left the Italians somewhat unmoved. "After all," they said, "what does it matter whether the boy stole five shillings or not?" In justice be it said that it was not only Italians who failed to see the point of the fight which Arthur Winslow made. Many persons in England, influential and nobodies alike, resented the time and money taken up in Parliament and elsewhere because a father was determined that his son should not be condemned without a trial. One is reminded of St. Thomas More and his family and friends. They too used the argument that since everybody else of importance had accepted the situation, why be stubborn and make things difficult? Thomas More, like Arthur Winslow in the play (or Mr. Archer Shee in real life), recognised that a very important principle was at stake and was prepared to give his life and his possessions to see that right should prevail.

Though the play is so serious it is not without many little touches of humour and satirical observation. The Evening News lady reporter, the Gaiety Theatre comedian guying Mr. Asquith's illustrious father, the suffragettes, the niceties of legal procedure and precedent all present opportunities for fun which have been taken both by the camera and the script-writer.

Here is a film which it gives me great pleasure positively to recommend.
"Recreation, in its manifold varieties, has become a necessity for people who work under the fatiguing conditions of modern industry, but it must be worthy of the rational nature of man and therefore must be morally healthy. It must be elevated to the rank of a positive factor for good and must seek to arouse noble sentiments." (Pope Pius XI.)


The thread running through this film is like the Equator—purely imaginary. Things happen for no apparent reason. One moment you are listening to Lauritz Melchior, operatic star, singing Agnus Dei in the Metropolitan Opera House; in a flash there is Esther Williams gliding through the water in an aquacapers show; Xavier Cugat runs through a rhumba; Jimmie Durante manages to fit in his songs, and all the time the technicolor photographers are switching from snowbound backgrounds to sunny beaches. These technicolor boys certainly go to town in this picture.

Musical show stories are notoriously slender, but this particular one is befogging. Still Esther Williams does cut a graceful figure in her water ballet; Jimmie Durante, her faithful henchman, puts over his own particular brand of song with his usual gusto: "I'm the Guy Who Found the Lost Chord" is a gem; Johnnie Johnston croons I suppose, no worse than most others.

The story? Dick Johnson (Johnnie Johnston) is newly returned from the war. His father, the opera singer Lauritz Melchior, wants him to resume his operatic career and marry the faithful Frances. Dick instead croons for Xavier Cugat's band and falls in love with Nora (Esther Williams) whom he had previously met during the war when she was entertaining wounded soldiers. Schnozzole disapproves of the attachment. Dick has to make the long journey to snowy Mackinac Island to pass a suitor's test before Nora's Grandma (Dame May Whitty). The love-making is progressing smoothly when Dick's father publishes a notice of his son's engagement to Frances in the local Gazette. Nora, heartbroken and piqued, runs away; Dick is piqued; Schnozzole is piqued. But do they all get together again? Use your imagination.

This film is pleasing to the eye if not to the intelligence. The technicolor is rich and the water ballet graceful.


The horror awakened by the newspaper accounts of cruelty and neglect practised on evacuated and orphaned children has already, probably, subsided and is, maybe, forgotten. This film will rekindle the memories, and, it is to be hoped, stimulate the public conscience so that such things as are here depicted may not continue to disgrace our public life.

The play, from which the film is closely fashioned, was written in a white heat of indignation by Joan Temple, thinly disguised in the play as the teacher whose crusading spirit at length moves the complacent authorities to belated action. One is reminded of Evelyn Waugh's satirical "Hang Out More Flags", but whereas that novel was an amusing exposure of conscious racketeering and revolting slum misfits, this film is a searing indictment of public apathy and neglect in face of obvious economic evils. Among the many kindly types pictured we may, perhaps, recognise ourselves. The kindly clergyman, too wrapped up in his garden to believe that anything really sordid exists in his parish; the childless, middle-aged couple who "cannot be bothered with children"; the billeting officer, too harassed by children needing homes to be too
scrupulous as to where he leaves them; the tradespeople who "mind their own business", the ambitious town councillors, the busy neighbours.

On no account should children be allowed to see this film. On no account should parents miss it. How well-meaning parents may become accessories to the fact of their children's neglect and degradation is here told in bold and life-sized outline. A girl, whose mother is dead, her father a sailor, is boarded-out with a hard-drinking, immoral woman who uses the children who are sent to her as a means to her own faded ambitions. The end is horrid. Rather late in the day, the children are released from the spiritual and physical perils to which they were exposed.

The film, as such, is uneven. The settings and photography are excellent. The acting, at times, too large for the screen. Freda Jackson and Hermione Baddeley, as the two drinking cronies are good but their performances too near caricature to be quite convincing. The children, however, are outstandingly good with specially successful performances from Ann Stephens and Joan Dowling. All the children are photogenic and the director and cameraman have seized the opportunity to provide some beautiful and moving pictures.

Here is film used as propaganda with the definite object of influencing public opinion. It is a good use. There are moments of light relief which will help you to bear the sharpness of the lesson.

V.


This film was not intended, I think, to be more than a potboiler and to keep George Raft in circulation. If this was its purpose, then it succeeds. It is the story of an American flyer, George Raft, who has been court-martialled because narcotics have been found smuggled on his plane. Innocent but hurt, George Raft meets his whisky bills by assisting in Black Market activities in Shanghai. Shanghai, of course, is a place where all sorts of impossible things can happen, including a beautiful but wicked lady who is the mysterious "boss" of a Black Market gang. It all ends nicely for George Raft and a young Red Cross worker, who, incidentally looks quite equal to the task of ringing up the doctor in case of sickness. The film is easier to follow than most of its type because you know who the villains are and the slick conversation is comprehensible to English ears. There is mild excitement and a certain amount of unintentional humour.

T.


I admire Greer Garson very much but it takes a lot of admiration to get one past a title like Desire Me. (I missed the Press Show and had to pay to get in.) It took a lot of loyalty to the readers of Focus to keep me seated once past the title. It is hard to believe in a wife, however devoted and charitable, who will accept a man to live in her house because he says he knew her husband, reported dead, in a prison camp. Still more difficult to believe in a woman, whom five years as the wife of a Breton fisherman has left with unruffled hair and highly varnished finger-tips. Perhaps Miss Garson did not believe in the character herself sufficiently to induce her to sacrifice her waves and varnish. Perhaps the producers do not believe in the film-going public sufficiently to let her make the sacrifice!

There are moments in the film which are moving and even beautiful. The annual procession of the fisherfolk to the local shrine, carried out with more than average conviction; the devotion of the wife to the memory of her "dead" husband; and a quite grim fight in the fog when the dead man returns to find that his friend has tried to steal his wife.

V.
Felipe, son of a foreign ambassador, hands a telegram to the butler Mrs. Baines, treating Felipe roughly.
The Police and Rose treating Felipe kindly.

This is a good film and a pleasure to watch. It is based on a short story by Graham Greene which I have not read which is all to the good, as the adaptation has wit, pathos and interest, and can stand by itself.

It concerns the bewilderment of a little boy who, attempting to shield his butler friend from being arrested on account of the death of his wife, so much con-
EN IDOL

fuses the issue by his well-intentioned lies that the man is nearly arrested for murder, and he himself is disbelieved when at last he is able to tell the truth.

It has all the suspense of a good thriller. Though we know that no murder has been done, things look so black for the unfortunate butler as his pile upon lie that a miscarriage of justice seems inevitable and indeed almost justified. The setting, of a foreign embassy in London, gives plenty of space for movement, and since the hero is a butler, the human interest of ordinary folk is not lacking. It has love interest, and hate, and of course requires the London Police, fearful, solid and friendly. And above all it has been given a twist quite out of the ordinary by the ubiquitous presence of the child. It is his story, but seen at once through his eyes and our own. With such material, and an excellent cast, Carol Reed has produced an outstanding film. For above all this film is a triumph of direction. We can think muster the actors in this country, and there must be plenty of good stories, but so often the raw material is spoilt by unintelligent or pedestrian direction. I have seen too many films waffling on drearily from sequence to sequence, stressing the obvious, side-tracked by spectacle, and never really getting going until the impact of flesh upon flesh in some scene of violence gives it an elementary rhythm which even stupidity cannot avoid. There is none of that here. We plunge into the story without a lot of preliminary fiddling, and are carried from climax to climax with sustained interest right on to the end. More important still, moments of tension are properly relieved by moments of repose. It is unfair to an audience to expect it to maintain a concentrated interest for an hour and a half; the strain is too great. What we used to call a good curtain on the stage applies equally to the films. Only the curtain cannot drop, the audience cannot totter to the bar and come back strengthened and refreshed for more. The film must go on, and yet somehow contrive to relax the audience sufficiently to pay due attention to the build-up of the next climax. The way in which Carol Reed has achieved this is a model which others would do well to digest. After thirty minutes the ground has been prepared and the story is well on its way. Our emotions have been touched by the spectacle of two lovers trying to tell each other that the future holds no happiness for them, and that they will have to part in the embarrassing presence of a little boy who must on no account be allowed to guess what is going on. Our emotions have further been harrowed by the sight of this same little boy being tricked into divulging to the jealous wife the secret of this meeting. This is the moment for a good curtain and a certain measure of repose. And we get it—we see a lion pulling a face: the little boy has been taken to the Zoo; so have we, and we can sit back and enjoy ourselves with renewed instead of with flagging interest. Just about another thirty minutes later, when the jealous wife has fallen to her death, and the child has run terrified into the London streets, again an interlude. The scene is in a police station. A prostitute is being charged, and leans impudently against the desk. The boy is brought in and questioned, but is too frightened to speak. The police are at their wits' end. Suddenly the child flings himself against the woman. The police, relieved, tell her to carry on.

and a pleasure to watch
Mrs. Baines (Sonia Dresdel) crashes to her death from a narrow ledge from which she has been spying on her husband.

Baines gives Felipe, who hero-worships him, a sleeping tablet.
And she speaks to the child in the only way she knows. There is pathos here and humour, but above all there is a beautifully-timed moment of relaxation, and we are ready now, to pay full attention until the end. This is good. But it is not all. To have as the centre of your piece a child of eight, and to make him not only tolerable but convincing, that is direction indeed. Little Bobby Henrey is no doubt an intelligent and pliable child, with a delicious French accent, and a most marvellous whistle which doesn't come off, but it is in the use of him, in the way the camera looks at him, in the way the others act and move in relation to him, beautiful but a sensitive actress as well. There is no bad acting in this film. Is it perhaps the presence of the child that has put everyone on his toes? Sonia Dresdel, as the scolding, jealous, possessive Mrs. Baines has an unsympathetic part, and makes the most of it. She too is one who acts with all of her body. And Denis O'Dea gives a finely graded performance of the Detective Inspector who opens with impersonal sympathy and kindliness, changes to stern authority, and ends in exasperation, while Hay Petrie is suddenly erupted into a tense and rather embarrassing scene to give a perfect little sketch of a clock-winder.

If I must mention the music, it is to quarrel with it. Not as such, because I had no time to listen to it—I was much too interested in the film—but on account of its presence there at all. If it is in order to heighten the emotion of an emotional scene, then with acting such as this it is an insult. I can only imagine it has crept in because music has become a convention, like the "hurry" and light music of the old melodramas. In that case the sooner it creeps out again, the better.

Here then is a good film. A film which you should see, because it has so much that a film should have, and that
so very few do have. By the award of the First International Prize at Venice this year, it has been judged by experts to be better than anything else there shown. But good as it is, and with all that it has, I would not call it a great film. True, I came away with the comfortable feeling of having been relaxed, and grateful for real entertainment. Yet something was lacking. At the end for instance, of Vivere in Pace I felt that I had been given something precious—a reminder that human beings do strive after ideals, and have their hearts in the right place. But here there is a subtle mixture of the innocent and the sophisticated. The story is seen simultaneously through adult and infant eyes. Consequently, while on the one hand it is a gay, sensitive and touching fable on the "Wolf! Wolf!" theme, on the other hand it brings in that old favourite of the devil, "if you don't love your wife, you will of course find consolation with someone else". So if you go to see this film, and there are many reasons why you should, do bear that in mind, and don't be bamboozled into thinking that because the presentation is so very good, the content is equally to be admired.

W.


When a successful play is filmed, a priest who is also a film critic is in rather a dilemma. His pleasure at having the opportunity to see it has to be tempered by the remembrance that the real genius of the cinema is not primarily to make stage plays accessible to those who would not otherwise see them.

Sir Patrick Hastings' play about Justice—a subject with which as a K.C. he must be well acquainted—seems to belong more to Shaftesbury Avenue than to Wardour Street. The faultless gloss of the photography, the equally faultless dramatic school accents which assail eye and ear as the picture begins raise little enthusiasm in the habituated filmgoer. But the court scene—the action is one for libel—has "got something", and Raymond Lovell as counsel for the defendant and Frank Cellier as the judge do a good piece of teamwork with Eric Portman as counsel for the plaintiff. (Since the film was issued Mr. Cellier's death has been announced. The many picturegoers who remember him as the bridegroom's father in Quiet Wedding will greatly regret this loss to the screen.) But it must not be imagined that the play is predominantly legal; Sir Patrick, besides being a lawyer, has all the dramatist's eye for emotions and situations.

"He's got a nice face," says someone in the film about Michael Denison. "Like all the rest," is the reply. What did I tell you? (See Focus', Vol. I, No. 4, p. 76).

I very much liked Thora Hird's brief study of a charwoman—observant, realistic, unconventional.

This is one of the films I might take my mother to see on a dull afternoon.

Q.


It is good to notice, first of all, that the Fairbanks Company appears as associated distributor of this picture. One might wonder, how it is possible, that such a silly story, with a plot as a worn out broomstick, happened to be translated into moving pictures. That history escapes from these experiences with many scratches, we will forget for the moment. But that this lovely though rather pedestrian fiction is so anaemically told, would make even a saint swear.

King Charles II (Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.) being in exile in Holland, meets a nice Dutch farm girl, Katie (Paule Crozet) and succeeds to get a day-labourer's job at her farm. But Crom-
trait of the K.C. Though, in manner, it derives from the stage, it has those well and his Roundheads will never rest until he is done with. One of them; Colonel Ingram (Henry Daniell), with a face like a carved potato, tracks down the king, and there is a dead battle, in a Dutch windmill (why not?). Charles emerges the victor. And the end is a tearful farewell, because after all Charles belongs to his English people and poor Katie to her Dutch cows and tulips.

The acting is good enough. Since the really marvellous fencing scene in Robin Hood, every hero in every film has to crack jokes, while aiming for the vulnerable spot in his adversary’s chest. So does Charles II. It is most unlikely in 17th century Holland to meet so many people knowing so perfect English. And in the very few occasions the Dutch pedlars and peddlars and even gracious Katie are speaking their own tongue, they maltreat it in a most painful manner. Neither in the 17th, nor in any other century are the Dutch canals, day after day, season after season, wrapped in a thick fog such as would make a self-respecting London factory chimney earnestly jealous.

The night shots are superb. As to the Dutch costume, it is historical in so far it could be copied from Jan Vermeer’s or Pieter de Hooch’s paintings, in other cases it seems the product of Dwight Franklin’s own fantasy and lack of knowledge. Do none of these Americans know that they can find an exhaustive guide in 17th century clothing in Professor Frithjov van Thienen’s book?

D.


This story of war-time resistance and post-war endurance on the home front, though a little lacking in topicality, is good entertainment value. It is what is called a “woman’s film”, which means that the weaker sex is shown to be the stronger. Women will enjoy it because its authoress, Esther McCracken, has the gift, which she shares with Noel Coward, of saying ordinary things in a way that makes them seem important. Another gift, which she shares with Chesterton, is that she is able to laugh at people without hurting them.

Though the film is undistinguished and the structure weak, the acting of Ursula Jeans and Cecil Parker give it a human touch that compensates for many technical blemishes. Thora Hird deserves mention because she adds something new to that museum piece, the comic char.


This film opened with some beautiful shots of Sussex scenery and the first few acted sequences, both on location and in the studio sets made one hope that the film might prove to be some-
thing better than average. Alas, one's hopes were soon shattered. Apart from a finely-observed piece of acting by Cyril Cusack as a lay preacher and a beautiful little vignette by Fay Compton (who could not go wrong if she tried) and an excellent piece of period reconstruction of bygone Derby days on Epsom Downs, the film is dull and disappointing. Kathleen Ryan adds nothing to her reputation as an actress. Dirk Bogarde is good-looking without any evidence to show that he is anything else.

Kathleen Ryan began her screen career in *Odd Man Out* in which, under the direction of Carol Reed, she gave an impressive performance of restrained and unsmiling devotion. In *Captain Boycott* she continued to look morose and mournful. In *Esther Waters* she has a few moments during which, with her screen baby, she comes to radiant and smiling life, but for the rest she is automatic and moribund. I suspect it is because she needs a strong and vital hand to direct her, which, in this film, she palpably has not. When watching the film in production, it was instructive to notice how she became animated and alive as soon as the director said "Cut!" During the takes, she drooped and died.

George Moore's story suffers, inevitably, by translation to the screen. His mastery of the English language carried his novel along to success. Divorced from the vivifying principle of dynamic writing, it stands revealed as the poor, sordid tale of seduction and late-Victorian narrow-mindedness, in which none of the characters ever come to life to convince one either of their sinfulness or their sorrow. As I have said, Cyril Cusack alone makes us believe in his pathetic little lay-preacher. One has met such; good-hearted, narrow and single-minded. So has Cusack. But then he is an actor with a distinguished Abbey Theatre career behind him and he, like Fay Compton, knows how to approach his parts.

This is a film that is worth seeing for the camera-work and art direction, but which will not appeal to the groundlings.

There will be as many different opinions on this film as there are ways of looking at it. As a priest I found it about as distressing as a detailed general confession, without the consolation that the penitent had come to his senses.

The story takes place during the 1914 War. A young woman is engaged to a soldier at the front. She meets a boy of 17, and their mutual attraction becomes an enslaving passion. The influence of her mother, coupled to her own refusal to face the situation, lead her nevertheless to marry her fiancé, while her desire and the irresponsible passion of the boy cause the liaison to continue. The boy becomes the father of her child, and she dies in giving birth to it.

In a film such as this two questions arise. The first, whether those who made it are so muddle-headed, irresponsible or a-moral that they lead those who see it into sympathising with what is sinful. I do not think that accusation can be made in this instance. The facts are stated clearly enough, and should lead a Catholic at least to draw the obvious conclusion that the wages of sin is death. The only excuses made for the young couple are that the girl is influenced, though not wholly influenced, by her mother, and that the youth is freed, by the circumstances of...
war, from a discipline under which the situation would not normally have had a chance to arise at all. Yet the film itself makes the biggest excuse of all, merely by showing us a beautiful young woman and an astonishingly talented young actor in the chief parts. It is difficult to see these two together and not to feel that "fate" has dealt hardly with them, which is exactly what one ought not to feel, and which I think one can give the director the credit of not wanting one to feel.

That leads to the second question—

should such a film be made at all? I think not; because such a film is bound to be misunderstood—by those who have no solid foundation of moral teaching to fall back on—by those who go merely to look at and enjoy the spectacle, and by those who, having enjoyed it, proceed to condemn it as a salve to their conscience.

I cannot recommend this film. But I feel bound to add that I do not condemn it for what it is, but for what, alas, we are, and that is a rather different thing.

W.

EDUCATIONAL REVIEW

LIBRARIES:
Gunmont-British Instructional, Aintree Road, Perivale, Middx.
Central Film Library, Imperial Institute, S. Kensington, S.W.7.
Army Kinema Corporation, 36 Dover Street, W.1.
Petroleum Film Bureau, 46 St. James’ Street, S.W.1.
(For L.C.C. Teachers only: L.C.C. Film Library, Stockwell Depot, S.W.)

DOMESTIC SCIENCE FILM STRIPS
Army Kinema Corporation. Prices from 8/- to 18/-, some on hire 1/- a day.

COOKERY. A.E. 135, 136, 137. Three strips designed to introduce the subject, presumably to large classes of beginners, in cases where there is not enough equipment or material available for a practical approach. They are, however, intended to lead on to practical work, not to replace it. The basic processes of cookery are shown by means of diagrams and drawings that are clear though sometimes rather crude. Strips 2 and 3 each improve on the preceding one.

Strip 1 shows baking (why is the oven door open?), roasting, grilling, boiling; with notes on the food suitable for each, some of which are rather too general to be useful.

Strip 2 shows stewing (very good), braising, and two methods of steaming.

Strip 3, which is very good, shows frying by different methods, and the care and use of fats.

(Suitability: 14 upwards.)

DRESSMAKING. A.E. 141. The strip begins with useful advice regarding the choice of a style to suit the figure—the pattern, fabric, colour, design, etc. Directions are then given for using and adapting the pattern, and for cutting out and fitting. The strip would be very useful in large classes in order to save time and prevent mistakes. There are good notes to accompany it.

(Suitability: 14 upwards.)

PLANNING A KITCHEN. A.E. 24. The strip consists of diagrams and drawings intended to assist in designing a small kitchen for a single-handed housewife. This strip is very good: the directions are practical, efficient and economical, and the diagrams are very good, though some photos might have been substituted for the drawings which are rather unattractive. There are excellent notes, stimulating and thought-provoking.

(Suitable for young adults.)

HOUSEHOLD BUDGETING. A.E. This is a lively strip, the purpose of which is to help young people who are setting up house to plan the family budget, as an aid to the happiness of the home. It demonstrates by means of cartoons the proportion of income to be spent on essentials, needs and luxuries, with reference to an income of £6 a week, while indicating that this proportion will differ according to the size of the income under consideration. The strip can therefore be used generally though the figures may not apply, provided the underlying principles are grasped beforehand.

(Suitable for young adults.)

JOINTS OF MEAT. A.E. 15. Would be useful in cases where it is difficult to see the actual carcases or joints, but a visit to the butcher’s shop would be preferable. The strip shows the joints of beef, mutton, pork and veal, and gives an idea of their relative value,
cost and popularity. There are useful notes which should be supplemented by some idea of current prices. A few pictures, preferably coloured, of joints cooked and ready for the table on dishes would have helped to make the strip more interesting.

(Suitability: 14 upwards.)

**BIOLOGICAL FILMS**


This is a useful film for integrating botanical knowledge and giving a connected view of the plant's life cycle and activities.

The growth of the maize is watched from the germination of the grain to the harvest. The earliest stages of growth, the absorption of mineral salts in solution from the soil, flowering, pollination and fertilisation, and finally fruit development are all described and very well depicted.

The film could be usefully employed either as an introduction to Plant biology or perhaps more profitably, for revision in a School Certificate Class.

(Suitable for Senior School, 12-15.)


The discovery of Penicillin has awakened general interest in the moulds. This is an excellent study of the life history of Mucor, the Pin Mould. Rapid growth of the mycelium, speeded-up by the camera, is seen on porridge. Then the erect sporangiophores appear, bearing the characteristic sporangia, and the ripe spores are scattered.

Microscopic details are clearly visible; heterothallicism and the process of conjugation are most lucidly explained by the use of animated diagrams.

(Suitable for Grammar School, 14-18.)

**GENERAL SCIENCE FILMS**

**Illustrations of Convection, Conduction, Radiation.** L.C.C. Film Library, Silent; each 1 reel. Nos. 224, 225, 226.

This series of three films deals with the different modes of heat transference.

**Convection.** Undoubtedly this is the best of the three. The working of the hot-water system of a house is ingeniously explained by the use of glass models in which one can see the circulation of water, while the corresponding part of the actual system is frequently placed on the screen as a reminder of what the real thing looks like.

Convection currents in air are first demonstrated by simple experiments and then the application of this is made to facts of everyday life, e.g., the ventilation of a room and of a coal mine, land and sea breezes, etc.

**Conduction.** The principle of this is explained diagrammatically and the process is demonstrated by an experiment comparing the relative conductivities of metal rods of different kinds, as measured by the rate of melting of ice.

Attention is called to good and bad conductors in common use. But there is nothing in this film which could not be better taught by experiment in the laboratories and its chief value therefore lies in revision purposes. It gathers together and presents in the space of a few moments, matter both theoretical and practical which would form the subject matter of several lessons.

**Radiation.** This third film of the series is definitely less useful than the other two. Nevertheless it could profitably be used either for revision or as a simple introduction to the subject. The use of glass in a greenhouse and its connection with radiation is clearly treated.

(The Series is suitable for Senior Schools, 12-15.)

**Transfer of Power.** 2 reels; Sound. L.C.C. Film Library No. 169, or Petroleum Films Bureau.

In the first reel the application of the principle of the lever in the development of simple machinery is shown clearly and well. The gaining of speed at the expense of turning power by arrangement of gear-wheels, could be made clearer by showing heavy bodies being moved slowly, and lighter ones more rapidly, by such an arrangement.

In the second reel is seen the development of the toothed wheel; it is good, but for use in a general science course, the detail of the epicycloid and involute seems too advanced.

(Suitable for Grammar and Technical Schools, 14-16.)

The December article will be devoted to Geographical Films and Strips.
THE CATHOLIC FILM CONFERENCE

The Conference had as its theme, the primary one, from our point of view, namely FILM APPRECIATION. In his opening remarks, Fr. Burke pointed out that the first object of the Catholic Film Society is "to encourage the development of Catholic criticism of films with the object of influencing, as far as possible, the type of films publicly exhibited". In other words, we hope to do something to raise the standard of films. This can be done mainly by ensuring that as many as possible of those who attend cinemas become vocal and critical. To be vocal is easy; to be critical requires study. That is what we aim to do. For it is certain that the more we know of the technique of film the more we shall tend to demand good film, just as the more we know of the technique of music, the more we demand good music.

Andrew Buchanan outlined the first essentials of film appreciation. He spoke of the work of the producer, of the art director, of the lighting experts needed to ensure that a film is seen to best advantage, of the work of the cameraman, of the editor of the film. He insisted that he was speaking of things as they are in the film industry, not as they ought to be. For Mr. Buchanan made it clear that there exist in the industry many persons whose presence is not necessary for good film-making, whose interest is mainly one of money-making, not of vocation to film as an art. It is a fallacy to suppose that a film must be expensive before it can be good. A good film needs a competent cameraman and a director with poetic imagination. These may be working for a large company with limitless funds or they may be making the film for the love of the thing. It is likely that the vast entourage of the modern studio with its endless limitations of time and space and temperament would cramp a real artist, whereas the freedom essential to good work in any department of art might be more easily found outside the large studios.

Christopher Radley spoke from the point of view of a documentary producer, but what he said applied, mutatis mutandis, to the making of entertainment films also. The producer of these, he said, is often not a film technician at all. He may be, indeed must be, a business man. The factual film producer, on the other hand, must be a technician. He has to face many problems concerned with the multifarious operations connected with the making of films, which, in factual films, would require the presence of a camera in, for example, a real coal mine or a real factory, not part of one fabricated in a studio, round which camera and lights can be spaced to best advantage.

Perhaps the highlight of the Conference, from many points of view was the presence of Mgr. John Devlin, who spoke from his experience and knowledge of Hollywood conditions. He enlightened many minds as to the basic function of the Legion of Decency, which, he said, concerned itself with one aim, the moral classification of films. It did not consider films as works of art, nor did it say whether films, even Catholic films, were well or ill-produced. It set itself one task to which it adhered unerringly. It pointed out those elements in films which it considered to be a danger to sound morality and classified them accordingly. It may be that other organisations might take up in America the work of artistic appreciation of films such as is being done in England by Focus, but that, Mgr. Devlin declared, is not the work of the Legion.

He gave some amusing accounts of his encounters with film people in Hollywood. When the subject of Going My Way was first broached, it was suggested by Mgr. Devlin, when he heard that Bing Crosby was to be the star, that perhaps it might be entitled Road to Rome! He asserted that, contrary to popular belief, neither he nor any other Catholic priest had at any time suggested a subject for a film. If films like Bells of St. Mary's were made, it was because the producers realised the great interest that existed among cinema-goers in such subjects.

Mary Field, an expert in the matter of films for children, spoke of the difficulties that lay in the way of those
who tried to provide films that would be useful and appreciated by children. Only the Rank Organisation in England and the U.S.S.R. were seriously facing the problems of films for children. The problems were mainly those of knowing what children really like. It is not enough to think of interesting children, films must be what they like. This needs a lot of research and there are many failures before the right formula is found. Films for children did not attempt moral instruction so much as moral education. It is the business of parents and the Church to give moral instruction, but films could, and the Rank films did, give moral education. All the characters in such films are morally sound and do morally right things. They achieve triumph over temptation, they overcome difficulties, but they do not preach.

With regard to the films that children see at the local cinemas, Miss Field said that it is clear that they do not understand adult films. It is not suitable that children should be subjected to adult films. They have naturally good taste which is gradually undermined by the films they are allowed to see. She spoke of the place of comedy in children’s films. They do not like excessive excitement. They like a sense of humour. Their attention must not be held too long. There is much to be learnt from the way in which children attend to films. It is quite clear which are the dangerous and which the suitable elements in films.

Behaviour depends on upbringing. This is as true in the cinema as elsewhere. It is not fair, therefore, to judge all Cinema Clubs by the conduct of one or two. One or two rough children can spoil the work of months. Miss Mary Field did not approve of the system of putting children into films unless they intended to make a career of it.

Andre Ruszkowski, recently returned from an extensive tour of Latin American countries, made on behalf of O.C.I.C., gave much interesting information about the beginnings and objects of the International Cinema Office. In its origins, there was no thought that Papal encouragement in the form of an Encyclical would ever be given. The first movements in Catholic Film Action were national and uncoordinated. It was Canon Broche of Belgium who first thought of film action on the international plane. In the days of silent film, the problems were less acute but with the coming of sound, economic problems also arose which made the situation more complex and dangerous. Hence a Central Information bureau which could bring union to all the national efforts to influence film while leaving each nation free to work on its own ground became more necessary.

The moral quality of films remained, as always, the first consideration with the groups of Catholics working for films but the Encyclical of Pius XI, while underlining this prime necessity, also pointed out the need for a constructive critical approach to films as a new language speaking in modern terms. It is this critical approach which it is the work of O.C.I.C. mainly to encourage. Also urgent in their programme is the encouragement of the national centres as well as to encourage the establishment of new national centres. Prior to the war there was not much work in this direction. Instruction of people to undertake this work took most of their energies. The political situation also hindered progress. After the war, however, O.C.I.C. started afresh and the Brussels Catholic Film Congress of 1947 consecrated the new tendency towards international union of Catholic effort. There will be differences of national approach to the problem but the criteria should be the same.

Dr. Ruszkowski also spoke of the International Film Review, which he has done so much to encourage.

The lecture which John Grierson gave on the place of Factual Film is far too important and integral a work to submit easily to precis. We hope to publish the lecture separately later on. He quoted the words of Pope Pius XI at the commencement of his discourse and, gratifyingly, announced that he had found the Catholic people of Quebec most alive to the proper function of factual film when he was at work in Canada.

Fr. Declan Flynn, O.F.M., in his talk on Religion and The Screen underlined the fact, so often overlooked by adverse critics of the cinema, that film in itself is an indifferent thing and can
be used well or ill. The screen can minister to religion as well as can any other artistic medium well used. There was nothing incongruous in using the cinema, which is the modern story-telling device, in the service of religion. It is not irreverent to suppose that Our Lord, were He on earth today, would make use of the cinema as He made use of the story-telling apparatus of His own day. The cinema must be poetical. The poet is the most important person after the priest. The poet uses words to picture reality. The cinema needs to work as the poet works. Francis Thompson had a pregnant passage on the function of poetry which Fr. Declan applied most felicitously to the film. Used well it could be a power for good; used ill it served to undermine man's allegiance to his Maker.

The Conference had the benefit of several excellent chairman, including Fr. Hilary Carpenter, O.P., the Father Provincial of the Dominicans, who is Vice-Chairman of the Catholic Film Society, and Fr. Paulinus Lavery, O.F.M., Provincial of the Friars Minor. Another chairman was Bernard McNabb, a scriptwriter whose latest work, in collaboration with Lyn Lockwood, is It's Not Cricket which has just been completed at the Gainsborough Studio at Islington with Basil Radford and Naunton Wayne in two typical comedy parts.

The Brains Trust, with which the Conference ended, had as guest speakers, Miss Kathleen Rowland, film critic of the Universe, John Boultling, the film producer and director, and Robert Fleming, the actor, who has just finished working in the Boultling Brothers' new film The Guinea Pig.

THE FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

His Eminence Cardinal Griffin, our President, has kindly consented to take the chair at the first annual general meeting of the Catholic Film Society which will be held on Monday, November 29th, at 5-30 p.m. The place of meeting will be announced later. Please watch the Catholic Press for details. We are negotiating (that is the right word) to obtain the presence of speakers distinguished in the world of film who will tell us of the problems and pleasure they experience in their glamorous profession.

SOME FILMS REVIEWED

NOTE. Inclusion in this list does not connote positive recommendation. Films that are positively harmful are not included here. Readers are reminded to refer to the full reviews when assessing a film.

Category A, indicates adults only; B, adults and adolescents; C, family audiences; D, particularly for children.

REVIEWED IN "FOCUS" (Vol. I, Nos. 7, 8, 9, 10)

All My Sons  (B) (224)
Birds and the Bees, The  (B) (226)
Brother's Keeper, My  (A) (199)
Cheyenne  (B) (176)
Daisy Kenyon  (A) (207)
Dream Girl  (C) (223)
Foreign Affair  (A) (222)
Forever Amber  (A) (208)
Fort Apache  (C) (177)
Green Dolphin Street  (A) (175)
Homecoming  (A) (227)
I Love Trouble  (B) (176)
I Remember Mama  (C) (200)
If Winter Comes  (A) (201)
If You Knew Susie  (C) (233)
Iron Curtain  (B) (178)
Killer McCoy  (B) (193)
Kiss of Death  (A) (225)
Le Silence Est D'Or  (A) (224)
Life With Father  (B) (226)
London Belongs to Me  (B) (228)
Miracle of the Bells, The  (B) (232)
Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill  (B) (232)
My Sister and I  (B) (175)
Night Has a Thousand Eyes  (B) (223)
Nightmare Alley  (A) (208)
Night Song  (B) (232)
Noose  (B) (232)
Oliver Twist  (C) (180)
Road to Heaven, The  (A) (203)
Saraband For Dead Lovers  (A) (222)
Silver River  (B) (227)
Sitting Pretty  (C) (176)
Unfinished Dance  (C) (174)
Unsuspected, The  (A) (200)
Woman in White, The  (B) (199)
XIVth Olympiad  (C) (226)

WE RECOMMEND

Four Steps in the Clouds  (C) (150)
Hamlet  (B) (130)
Oliver Twist  (C) (180)
World and His Wife, The  (B) (198)
Naked City, The  (B) (202)
Red Shoes, The  (A) (204)
Visitation  (134)
COVER PERSONALITY

BOBBY HENREY

LITTLE Bobby Henrey, who plays the part of Felipe in Carol Reed's production, The Fallen Idol, was born on June 26th, 1939, on his mother's farm at Villers-sur-Mer, Calvados, about 15 miles from Caen.

To be born in that locality at that time in the world's history may not have seemed the best of auguries: to be born, in addition, during a raging thunderstorm, might have given the superstitious food for thought. Certainly most things could be expected to happen to such a child, and in fact quite a lot of them did.

The family remained at the little Normandy farm throughout the "phoney" war and until the Fall of Paris when they fled before the advancing Germans. At St. Malo they managed to get aboard the last ship to leave France.

The ship was harassed by German planes all across the Channel, but the family eventually arrived safely at the Savoy. Here they met C.B. Cochran, who found them a flat in Carrington House, overlooking Shepherd Market, where "Cocky" and his wife were themselves living, and here Bobby was destined to spend the whole war.

He was 14 months' old when the Battle of Britain started.

From then on, like so many other children, he grew up amid scenes of terror and destruction: and he was wheeled out in his pram each morning across the debris left by the previous night's raid. Tragedy nearly overtook the family during this period. One day, while he had been left in his pram outside the Mayfair Bakery in Curzon Street, a daylight raider dropped a bomb nearby which killed twenty people. Twenty seconds after his mother had removed him, the whole plate glass front collapsed.

During the intensive February-March raids of 1944, Bobby was taken by his mother to spend a week in the Wye Valley. He had hardly got there before he was nearly killed by a van outside their inn, so he was brought straight back to London.

Because there were hardly any other children in the heart of London at this time, Bobby became quite a character during the raids. His whole story is told in his mother's book, "A Village in Piccadilly".

When the war was over, he went back to Normandy with his mother in May 1946. They found the farm undamaged. While Caen itself was in ruins, the fighting had, in some miraculous fashion, swirled past the little village of Villers-sur-Mer.

Nevertheless, the farmhouse itself had been the scene of a terrible tragedy. Denounced by his own son for being in possession of a shotgun, the farmer had been sent to a prison camp where he died. The son, as the price of his treachery, was given a motor-cycle by the Germans, but the grandfather who had inspired this unnatural crime ended by paying the price of his shame. When, after the Germans had gone, the French police came to fetch him, he committed suicide.

In June 1947, Mrs. Robert Henrey received a letter from Mr. W. J. O'Bryen, Production Executive of London Films Ltd., asking to see Bobby. He had seen the child's photograph in "A Village in Piccadilly" and wished to test him for the part of Felipe in Carol Reed's film.

In August, Bobby was brought from Normandy for lunch at 146 Piccadilly, and flew back the same evening. The contract was signed in September, and a special aeroplane was sent to bring him to London on the 17th of that month. That same afternoon he started work in Belgrave Square on the first location shots of The Fallen Idol.

(By courtesy of London Films)
Scriptural Productions

An independent organisation devoted to the development and production of films for religious purposes

Under the Direction of

Andrew Buchanan

Recently Completed:—Visitation
The Coming of the Light
That They Might Have Life

In Production:—Walsingham Pilgrimage
The Making of England
The Bible House
The Bible in England

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VISITATION

"It is interesting to note that there is now a 16mm. Sound Film copy of 'Visitation' which can be hired to Convent Schools, Colleges, etc., on application to The Secretary, Medical Missionaries of Mary, Park Studios, Putney Park Lane, London, S.W.16.

"'Visitation' can be seen at the following cinemas in November: 7th, Classic, Tooting at 2 p.m.; 14th, Odeon, Wimbledon at 2-15 p.m.; 21st, Odeon, Ealing at 2 p.m.; 28th, Odeon, Balham at 2-15 p.m."

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A Happy Christmas

It is my first pleasure to wish all readers of Focus a very happy Christmas.

At this time of the year when all created beings in heaven and on earth are contemplating "The Light of the World", there comes the urge to do something to harmonise the light and sound of the cinema with the light and sound which accompanied the birth of Christ when "there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army praising God and saying: 'Glory be to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of goodwill'.'"

At the moment of writing, Focus is in good health; it has cut its teeth and it has cut something of a dash, for all sorts of people from all sorts of places have given it a benediction; but it is suffering from growing pains, it is anxious to stand on its own two legs and like Gulliver Shiels in Michael Balcon's latest film Going Ashore, it is waiting for someone to leave it a legacy. According to the old Christian custom Focus will hang up its stocking at Christmas and hope for the best.

At the last committee meeting of the Catholic Film Society, Mr. Arthur Leslie who was in The Chair, suggested that I should draw your attention in these notes to the Annual General Meeting of the Catholic Film Society. You will find details on page 267. I hope that as many as possible of our friends will grace this meeting.

I am glad that Fr. Burke took up the cudgels on behalf of the film Monsieur Vincent. It seems to me that the people who are writing against this film fail to recognise the law that there are certain innermost sentiments of the human heart which you cannot portray without robbing them of their radiance. The relation which exists between a saint and God is so innermost, it is so delicate a matter, that it cannot be screened or put on the stage without making it appear unreal and insincere. You cannot put holiness of life on "the pictures", without making it appear nauseating. But, the art of the film has the unique power of suggesting these spiritual qualities. In Monsieur Vincent, Maurice Cloche, the director, has exploited this power to a very remarkable degree. Everything in this film suggests that Vincent's Christianity was the cause of his humanity. It is an artist's job to reveal, not to preach. I maintain that Monsieur Vincent reveals the goodness, truth and beauty of Christianity in a most moving manner.

Editor.
ORSON WELLES TALKS THEOLOGY

EDITOR'S NOTE.—At the Venice International Film Festival which is held every year although it is called biennial, the best films of all nations compete on equal terms for prizes. Adjudication is made by a jury of nine critics and men of letters. Father Morlion, O.P., the distinguished scholar, is a member of the jury. Everyone at the Festival seemed to know him. His opinions were much respected. Orson Welles who knows all about the Dominican Order was not a bit surprised to hear that a son of St. Thomas taught Dialectics of Modern Art in Rome, that he wrote film criticisms and was a member of the jury at the ninth International Film Festival at Venice. One starless night during the Festival Orson Welles invited Father Morlion to his table on the terrace of the Excelsior-Lido hotel, which overlooks the lovely Adriatic Sea, to talk about his philosophy.

A few days later Fr. Morlion handed me a typescript and said: Perhaps you would like to publish my interview with Orson Welles. I take this opportunity to thank Fr. Morlion for kindly passing on to Focus this unique interview.

Father Morlion: Mr. Welles, your films are full of philosophy, and even theology, because you always leave the little plot and play of man and woman, of big and small passions to stir up deeper forces which cannot be caught up in psychology and must be called theological in the sense shown most dramatically by Dostoevsky.

Orson Welles: You are right, I despise the plots which are vulgar and used to bare thinness by constant repetition. We are in a century when human life has lost its superficial bourgeois optimism through the destructive work of the two great philosophers who have changed the world: Marx and Freud.

Father Morlion: Your work, Mr. Welles, carries no ideas of those two men who created systems of thought for practical purposes, as an instrument to change society (Marx) or social and sexual traditions (Freud), but who did not grasp the real forces existing in human beings. Have you not read theologians and mystics, Mr. Welles?

Orson Welles: Yes I am always reading mystics: Theresa, St. Catherine of Siena, Ruysbroeck...

Father Morlion: And moderns?

Orson Welles: Not so many—oh, yes, I do admire Sertillanges.

Father Morlion: And eastern mystics?

Orson Welles: Yes, I have been educated in China, my first language was Chinese. I admire Laotse, the great inspirer who hears the silence... "for God does not make noise in His own creation". But I am a searcher not a mystic. My father was an agnostic, my mother a Catholic who had lost her faith. I have only made two works which are my own creation, Citizen Kane and now Macbeth which is my best work. The Stranger, Lady of Shanghai were plots imposed on me, and in Journey into Fear, Cagliostro, I was only an actor who accepted a job.

Father Morlion: In The Stranger there is a tendency of evil deeper than murder, and in Lady of Shanghai there is a definite theology regarding the personal hell created by men and women who shirk their responsibilities and do not believe in the chances of escape from evil, which are given them... is there not?

Orson Welles: Yes, I wrote a personal dialogue into the plot which was given me. I am glad you have seen the effort. I have tried to show in the central figure of a sailor (Lady of Shanghai) how man can refuse to debase and to sell himself, and live free as a kind of higher anarchist who is above the laws of a debased, corrupt class of society, and finds peace in the poetic freedom to sing, look at the stars and believe in pure and unpractical things. I continue searching and I do not know what I will find. My endeavour in art is to make of motion-picture-art something more than drama or comedy, something which can reach the proportions of tragedy. Tragedy has been defined for ever by the Greeks. It is the failure of man in his struggle against the fates, the gods, Shakespeare is great in the tradition of the Greeks. My Macbeth, which I think is the first tragedy in motion pictures, is an interpretation of this most profound experience: a man goes to pieces because he has shirked his responsibility in life, because he knew what he must do to fulfil his fate, and falling to...
live up to his morals, fell down to the utmost depth where man is torn asunder by forces of evil he has called up and cannot control.

**Father Morlion**: But did you realise that even Macbeth, in all his tragic sins, has up to the very last breath the possibility given by God (in whose grace Shakespeare believed) to raise himself above himself?

**Orson Welles**: Yes, I changed the end of Shakespeare's drama to leave this mystery open: Macbeth has been beaten by fate but he honestly endeavoured to raise himself. He does not go down, or at least, we do not know.

**Father Morlion**: Are you preparing some other work in which you will go on searching.

**Orson Welles**: Yes, The Emperor, made on the basis of a novel by Pirandell. I am trying to show a man who goes to the logical extreme of shirking his human responsibilities: he pretend to be mad. I am showing a woman who lives in the existentialist world so deeply rooted now in Europe, no God, no good, no evil, no problems and no sense in life; and yet this woman is good in a way. The core of the film is the letter of that false madman, written before his suicide, to the woman he loves, and yet whom he cannot take into his life which is empty of human courage and responsibility.

**Father Morlion**: Again, you dive into the deepest failures of man who cannot be fully man, if he does not reach heights above the force of man. No answer of man can give optimism at this depth.

**Orson Welles**: I cannot force myself to cheap solutions of man's tragic problem. I see that the world is bad. I see immeasurable forces of evil.

**Father Morlion**: No man could accept cheap solutions of life's deepest problems; according to St. Thomas, one of the greatest sins is conversion for lower, cheaper motives. We agree on two basic truths of art and life.

First, that the issue of man's destiny consists in his struggle against the forces of evil which are more than human (in theology we speak of "original sin", of "the wound of human" nature and of the existence and forces of the devil).

Second, that the man who relies on his own forces alone fails in the struggle against evil...

But... there is another basic truth which no philosopher and no preacher can give to man, namely that the man who does his best in the unequal struggle, gets the help of God's grace, which alone is stronger than evil.

**Orson Welles**: I understand your viewpoint but like the Greeks I adhere to the two first truths which are the essence of tragedy.

**Father Morlion**: The essence of tragedy, the essence of all great art has been defined in the psalm "De profundis clamavi ad te Domine". From the depth I cry, I do not talk or make theories but I cry, with all my heart, my mind and my soul, even if I do not know well to whom. God is not dead, God is not indifferent, He answers.

P. A. Morlion, O.P.
FILM REVIEWS

By Our Panel of Priests

SECRET BEYOND THE DOOR.

A queer bloke is Mark Lamphere (Michael Redgrave). He is a young architect with a hobby for collecting rooms in which murders have been perpetrated; he has also an unholy desire to murder maidens with a scarf which he handles in the grand manner of a musical conductor raising his baton to begin an opera. While in Mexico, Mark falls in love with Celia Barrett (Joan Bennett), a social butterfly whom he marries after about five minutes love-making, despite the fact that Celia suspects that he is a "phony". Poor silly Celia soon finds out that she has married her man for worse rather than for better; almost as soon as they have left the church Mark's murder-compulsion complex gets going and he tries to throttle her; but Celia is the sort of girl who sticks to her murderers, she does not call in the police, instead (brave lass) she determines to enter the labyrinthine ways of Mark's dark subconscious and lay the bogey low. It is surprising what a clever psycho-analyst is this flighty miss, but you never know what a lass can do until you put her on the screen. Eventually (lilacs put her hot on the scent) Celia penetrates the thick complicated layers of Mark's ego and discovers that as a child his mother locked him in a room, that he was very angry about it and wanted to kill her but that he suppressed the desire and that this suppressed desire produced the funny kick-back of wanting to murder all women; she points this out to hubby who laughs it off and takes his little wifey for a holiday which (believe me) she deserves.

I do not wish to give the impression that I am belittling psycho-analysis which practised by the right people at the right time for the right purpose can be of great service to suffering minds; but I do want to say that this dilettante film psycho-stuff does the cause no good. There is not a normal character in this film. Caroline Lamphere, Mark's sister, played by Anne Revere, is a power maniac; jealousy has upset the balance of Barbara O'Neil's mind and the boy David, Mark's son by his first wife, hangs around with a grudge again the world because he believes that his father killed his mother. Fritz Lang, the director, does his best to make all this incredible stuff credible but without success.


As a keen student of advertisements I note the latest trend. Edwige Feuillere, we are told, is pronounced Edweege Fur-yer. I am glad to know this, as left to myself I shouldn't have pronounced it quite like that. And I hope the idea will be extended. Can't we have an authoritative decision as to whether it is Bet or Betty Davis, Lanna, Layna or Lahna Turner, Bonar Colleeno or Collyaho, etc?

Not too much was to be expected from the story of the woman hating peer who tests the sincerity of the man hating (?) film star by pretending to be his own agent. Each tries to teach the other a lesson and eventually, of course, they fall in love. There are points in the film when it reveals intelligence and subtlety, but between these the thread sags again and again into the time honoured traditions of farce which still raise dutiful laughs. Above all the film is strangely lacking in the sense of crescendo and climax which is essential to successful farce. I felt a certain sympathy with the Irishman in the film who makes several exits remarking, "I'm away to the pub".
The attempt to turn Stewart Granger (pronounced Stew-ut Grain-jer) into a comedian by arranging for him to take a series of well staged dives not only into water but also on terra more or less firma has not elicited universal commendation. After the press show, at which Mr. Granger was present, I thought he looked a little depressed, but that may have been due to sympathetic imagination on my part.

The significance of this picture lies less in itself than in its indication of policy. "Sophisticated romantic comedies" like this are now to brighten our lives, we learn. Whether Mme. Feuillere is really a "modern Sarah Bernhardt" I wouldn't know, but her talent, is a welcome change from that of some of the planets who revolve so rigidly round the extensive firmament of the Rank Organisation, and she is ably supported by Jeanne de Casalis (pronounced differently by different people).

Q. (pronounced Cue.)


This is yet another film based on the usual interminable American novel about life in Louisiana in the early 19th century. The illegitimate child of the House of Harrow (Ireland) reappears on the Mississippi as Stephen Fox (Rex Harrison), the gambling, near-crook hero whose ambition is to be the founder of the House of Harrow (America). He makes good; that is to say, he makes money and after several rebuffs succeeds in marrying the proud, romantic heroine (Maureen O'Hara). The rest follows the usual pattern: the misunderstanding, the estrangement, the ultimate reconciliation over the grave of the child. All this, set in the usual background of cotton plantations, slaves and a bit of sham voodoo, is very moderate entertainment indeed.

The plot is disjointed to the point of incomprehensibility, the dialogue trite and commonplace, against which handi-}

caps the acting never succeeds in rescuing us from the sea of boredom.

The only standards are material ones, and adultery is as usual taken very much for granted.


This film is all talk. John Payne mooches around Joan Caulfield wondering whether he can square his love for her with fleeing her of a large sum of money. When at long last the police take him away he decides they were "not meant to be for each other" after all. Shelley Winters as a tough dame produces a lot of wise cracking backchat, a host of minor characters just talk, while near the end Dan Duryea's talk becomes so threatening that John Payne's forehead suddenly bursts into great big drops of glycerine. And even that doesn't turn it into an exciting film.


It would be nice to think that the change of complexion which the ladies suffer in this film was due to embarrassment at a particularly banal story. Alas, it is only one of the weaknesses of Technicoloring. The process is kinder to the logs and lumbermen in the "great-out-of-doors" than it is to the players in the studio sets.

Clashes between syndicates and "small men" in the Mississippi wooded regions in the 1870's involving saloon-bar fights and log-PILE battles, what time two "ladies' scheme to possess one man makes up this singularly boring film.

V.
SUMMER HOLIDAY. Starring: Mickey Rooney, Gloria de Haven, Walter Huston, Butch Jenkins.
Director: Rouben Mamoulian.
Certificate: A. Category: A.

A reader was annoyed because I credited Mickey Rooney with good intentions for his part in Killer McCoy. I must deny him even that sop in Summer Holiday. It contains one of the most revolting scenes I have witnessed for a long time on the screen. Rooney, who is undersized, is coupled with a Junoesque and very glamorous blonde, in an episode in which, having made him drunk, she is trying to teach him to seduce her. The fact that the whole thing is technicolored and is being guyed by Rooney while the blonde sings, only serves to accentuate the objectionable character of the scene.

This story of American college boy and girl friendships follows the usual pattern; something to which we are still unaccustomed in this country. The colour does something to Rooney and his clothes that makes him look rather less than usually human.

V.

Certificate: A. Category: C.
Running time: 105 minutes.

This is the second Italian film opera to be shown in London. Like its predecessor, Barber of Seville, it serves to show how incompatible are the presentation of the static and stylised traditions of the opera and the modern, mobile, medium of film.

Musically it is delightful. Singers and orchestra are excellent. The very excellence of the singing, however, serves to emphasise the complete artificiality of the thing. The Barber of Seville, being a comedy, did not suffer quite so much. It could tolerate the grotesque absurdities produced by magnifying the operatic aria to cinema proportions more easily than Rigoletto, which, being high tragedy, dare not afford to have its situations reduced to fatuity; which, in fact, is what happens.

Grimaces, posturings, protracted death scenes, all set to music, plunge the opera into bathos.

I am certain that, even as it is, a more imaginative use could have been made of the camera. In fact, it is practically static throughout the film.

Here is evidence that a new form of film opera has yet to be devised. I am convinced that some of our experienced film composers, Britten, Alwyn, Walton or Franckel, could produce something that could be a true unity of film and music.

Tito Gobbi as Rigoletto and Mario Filippeschi as the Duke sing beautifully. The Gilda of Marcella Govoni combines the rare graces of a youthful figure and voice sufficiently to make the part visually acceptable as well as aurally pleasing.

V.

MY WILD IRISH ROSE.

An alluring title indeed, but don't be misled. True there are some of the most famed Irish melodies—plenty of them—an Irish brogue or two (when remembered!), but for all else just an American American show. A story? Not worth a mention. Technicolor? Glorious—too glorious! Dancing, singing? Efficient, rapid, right on the nail and plenty of it. But if you can be patient with all these defects and effects, you will be rewarded, because Dennis Morgan can sing—and does.

G.

Director: Norman Z. McLeod.

The exceptional popularity of this film, based on a story by James Thurber, is not undeserved.

Walter is the mild employee in a magazine publishing house who frequently escapes from his own insignificance by daydreams in which he plays a variety of heroic parts.
Some have resented the melodramatic element in the part of the picture which deals with his real life. Certainly there would have been an artistic propriety in a contrast between the epics of imagination and a drab and uneventful reality. But personally I do not feel inclined to cavil at what makes for the satisfactory maintenance of a good level of live but not too pretentious entertainment.

On the whole this is a good film of a popular sort, with some satire on American publishing. Those who consider that the Goldwyn Girls in scanty underwear come under the heading of No. 312 in the Catechism can shut their eyes for the time being. They will not need to do so for long as the scene is as brief as the underwear.

Q.

BEYOND GLORY.

They probably gave a dollar "raise" to the man who thought of this title. But what could it mean? Not that it matters; it had to have a name.

A cadet at West Point is dismissed on a point of honour by a kind of prefect cadet. The father of the dismissed youth, a man of influence, contests the decision and counterclaims that the prefect, Rocky Gilman, i.e. Alan Ladd, is unworthy of the Service. The Court scene is punctured with flash-backs. Rocky, we learn, has previously served with the U. S. Army in North Africa and the question is whether on a certain occasion he had disobeyed orders and thus led to the death of his commanding officer. But good old Rocky is all right, he's a stout fellow. Glory for Rocky, the beyond for t'other.

None of the characters live, mostly I think because the incidents are not dwelt upon long enough to rise above pasteboard level. The drama, if one can call it such, is played in an atmosphere of solemnity, without a gleam of humour. The film invites comparison with The Winslow Boy by its similarity of theme but in mitigation let it be said that any such similarity was probably purely unintentional.

A minor point—why do some Hollywood actresses when taking about three paces swing their arms as if on a five mile walk?


This is light entertainment with plenty of laughs and one or two hints of uproarious comedy. The theme, though not subtle, is at least promising: What great influence has a little child had upon your life? The answer, sought by a roving reporter and given in three flash-backs, is something of a curate's egg. Burgess Meredith as the reporter gives a pleasant performance, but Paulette Goddard seemed to have her mind elsewhere—she does not act with her eyes. You will surely like Dorothy Ford playing the trumpet undeterred by a lemon-sucking James Stewart. Dorothy Lamour at grips with a typewriter is worth seeing, and the much slapstick with which the film is liberally sprinkled produces frequent gusts of laughter. The quality of the lighting is astonishing: you can almost smell the coffee in the very dull introduction, and sometimes individuals stand out with a stereoscopic effect. But the direction is not good. The film is too loosely knit together, too restless, to achieve a mounting climax of comedy, while the burlesque is often too self-conscious to satisfy.

I have not before seen the "aside" to the audience used in a film. It seemed to me to be here used to good effect. "Come here" says Burgess Meredith and he grows big on the screen and has a confidential little chat with the patrons.

So much for that. But there remains one point which needs stressing. Towards the end of the film the hero is "beaten up", and throughout the length of the final sequence we are treated to the disgusting spectacle of his bruised and swollen face. Surely after the sickening display of physical violence of the past ten years, this is no matter for fun. Such stuff is degrading.

T.

W.
A New Film on the Mass

Mr. Alan Turner is an industrialist with a special gift for artistic production, whether it be of braids or musical comedies or films. For many years now he has been making films in Kodachrome to serve as advertisements for his textile output. He has also a devotion to the Social teaching put forth in the Papal Encyclicals. As a result, he has experimented over a number of years with putting into practice in his factories, the teachings of “Rerum Novarum”. In order to demonstrate his ideas more fully he made a film called Family Affair in which he showed the working of the system. So successful was he in what he set out to do that the Belgian Government asked to have copies of the film sent over to them in order to show what could be done in this respect. The Foreign Office too, asked for 30 copies to be sent to America for non-theatrical distribution.

Mr. Turner is the severest critic of his own films. He says that he did not intend to make a film which would be sent round the world. He was merely trying to use the film as a method of showing the “Rerum Novarum” in practice in one factory.

Now he has turned his hand to more ambitious subjects. In an effort to show the spiritual background of the social work which he is trying to perfect in his factories, he has made a film in which the Mass is shown as having a vital influence on the everyday life and work of all kinds of people. He has tried to show in The Sacrifice We Offer, that work, however diverse, can be linked to the Sacrifice of Calvary in such a way as to be the daily inspiration and support of the worker. We are shown the incense of the thurible mingling with the smoke from the factory chimney. We see wheatfields against a background formed by the Host at Mass. We see the Chalice being offered against a background of grapevines. There are pictures of women scrubbing floors, waiting in queues, clocking in at factories, of men working at their desks, stoking the great fires; all sustained by the thought of the Blessed Sacrament which is pictured in the corner of the screen. There is even a painter at work on a canvas and a ballet dancer doing her exercises, showing that there is no kind of lawful occupation which cannot be related to the Mass as to the source of strength and comfort necessary for the doing of good work.

The script has been written by Fr. H. McEvoy, S.J., who also appears as the Celebrant of the Mass in the film. He goes carefully through the whole act of the Supreme Sacrifice, from the putting on of the vestments to the final blessing. Interspersed at various points are explanations as to the significance of relics, of the Gospel, of the Altar stone and so on. The Bishops of Nottingham and of Northampton graciously assisted at some of the scenes connected with the consecration of a church which are incorporated in the film.

Having seen the all but finished product, I can vouch for its excellent quality. It is by far the best thing that Mr. Turner has made so far. When it is seen by the general public I am sure that they will begin to wonder what the difference between the amateur and the professional really amounts to. Alan Turner is devoted to his medium and learns from one film to another what to avoid in the next. That is the way in which the great professional producers proceed. I am sure that, in time, Alan Turner will equal the best work that comes from the studios. He has the enthusiasm and the integrity and the patience to attain that object.

The Catholic Film Society is to have the privilege of presenting The Sacrifice We Offer as soon as it is ready. It will be a great pleasure for us and we are sure that the film will have a great future. It is produced in 16mm. Kodachrome and is four reels in length. The commentary will be spoken by Alan Turner himself. The film has the distinction of an Imprimatur from the Bishop of Nottingham, the first, as far as I am aware, ever given to a film.

John A. V. Burke.

When I travel in a sleeping car everybody seems, to turn in very early—it was before ten o'clock, I think, that the gentleman who shared a second class sleeper with me remarked "Nous sommes en famille" as he removed his trousers for the night—the adjoining restaurant car is apt to be thick with Anglican bishops, and in the Simplon-Orient Express it may be quite a business to get a bottle of mineral water last thing at night. But in Sleeping Car to Trieste, bedtime appears to be between 1-30 and 3-30 a.m., the waiters stay on duty serving unlimited Scotch whisky until all hours, while the men passengers play cards before belatedly attempting to join the ladies to whom they are not married.

Now this train stuff has been done before and done much better. And the theft, murder and international complication business doesn't cut much ice either. The merit of the film lies in its comedy, or rather several unrelated comedies. David Tomlinson gets most of the laugh as a stupid, tactless Englishman. Bonar Colleano is the G.I. (don't we remember him?) who thinks a bottle of liquor is the best introduction to a girl. There is some original good fun in the kitchen. And Finlay Currie and Hugh Burden are a pompous author and his bullied secretary. With a strong cast and some good bits of script the film certainly has its moments, but they only make one wishful for more of them. How good it might have been.

The English make fun of themselves...
with a candour that is more than usually penetrating. But the picture lacks all moral backbone. Hence I have put it into Category A. It is only for such adolescents as already know—and discount—the values of what is called the world.

Q.


1870 was an eventful year. There was the Franco-Prussian War, the Vatican Council and the annexation of Rome to the Kingdom of Italy. And it is now my duty to inform you that it was in that year too that Rosie Moore, alias Deanna Durbin, a fine big girl, as her proud father truly said, first set super-admiring eyes on the city of New York. The place was very different in those days, we are told. But the very day that Timothy Moore and his daughter (tra-la-la-la, tra-la-la-la) disembarked, the Americans were voting for Republicans and Democrats. (The fact that the Republicans are not oligarchs and the Democrats not monarchists always makes American politics so difficult, don’t you think?) And on the very day seventy-eight years later when I saw this film they were still voting for Republicans or Democrats. All the same there have been changes. I feel confident that the surprising election of Mr. Truman owes nothing to the methods in vogue in 1870. For Mr. Moore was hired to impersonate the absent, the sick, the dying and the dead at the rate of two dollars a vote plus beer, and on the strength of this political activity rapidly rose to the position of Superintendent of Central Park. (If you like ruthless jokes about Irish faces, there was an ape there whom he called Clancy—because it reminded him of a friend back in the old country.) With a touching combination of humility and ambition he joined the reading class at the local boys’ school so as to be able to peruse his copy of the American Constitution, issued gratis by the Immigration Authorities.

Meanwhile Rosie has not been letting the grass of Central Park grow under her feet. Besides singing several numbers with music “all by Sigmund Romberg”, including Pace, pace, mio Dio (mistranslated by Smith minor as “My God! Do keep quiet”), she has been receiving the attentions of John Matthews (Dick Haymes). Though his face is not everybody’s cup of tea, he is at least a decent and eligible bachelor, whereas another admirer, “Boss” Tweed (Vincent Price) is not only a married man but a corrupt politician of the worst type who fraudulently diverts the birds in the city zoo to his own dinner table. (Shame.) When invited to supper with him Rosie is prudent enough to bring her old father. After this I felt that such a chaperon-minded young lady would never come to any serious harm, and the worst threat to her virtue which actually materialised was the surrender of her shoe to be used as a wineglass. (Why, I wonder, should it be considered the last word in abandoned gaiety to drink one’s champagne flavoured with leather and feet?) However, even this impropriety is averted in the nick of time by the exposure of the Boss’s graft in “The New York Times”. The Rosie “turned to John’s arms for true romance” and I turned into the café for a cup of tea.

One man went to sleep for a few minutes during this film, woke up, found a ballot in progress and wondered if he had slept through the whole picture and part of another.

Q.
MARGARET LEIGHTON

who gave a fine study of Catherine Winslow in "The Winslow Boy", now gives a fine study of Flora McDonald in "Bonnie Prince Charlie"
FOCUS

GREATEST DOCUMENTARY SINCE THE WAR

PAISA. Producer and Director: Roberto Rossellini. Distributors: Film Traders United. Category: A.

Paisa means the ordinary people. In this film we see in an extraordinarily moving manner what happens, spiritually, physically and morally to the ordinary people who have to suffer the ravages and rapes of war. In six episodes which take place during the Allied advance in Italy Roberto Rossellini with the penetrating power of the true poet, reveals against the background of man's innate decency, the waste, the wickedness and the utter madness of war; and any man who makes us realise that war is the world's worst mental disease is doing a service to the world. John Grierson refers to this film as the greatest documentary to have come out of Europe since the war. "It was made in 1945-46, often literally following in the footsteps of the Allied advancing armies with all the difficulties consequent on such a proceeding: military permits to be obtained, shortage of raw stock, disappearance and re-emergence of the actors who were for the most part not professionals but members of the American forces. Indeed, for certain sequences where he wanted shots of the Germans fighting or withdrawing Mr. Rossellini and his camera crew actually preceded the Allied armies once narrowly missing capture by the Nazis."

The circumstances under which this film was made cause it to suffer certain roughnesses and the amateurishness of

An American Commando Force lands in a little Sicilian port. Carmela volunteers to guide the patrol along the coast
FOCUS

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the actors is obvious, nevertheless it possesses that extra something which makes it live in the mind long after it has been seen and that, I think, is saying a lot for it. True, there is much bitterness in this film, but there is much that is beautiful and life itself is like that ... a mixture of the bitter and the beautiful, or to put it in more exact terms a mixture of good and evil, and there is always conflict between good and evil. Paisa deserves praise for its thought, its direction, its superb lighting and grand photography, for its lack of sentimentality, its flashes of humour and its humanity. Against the savagery of war we are made to see the nobility of the average man who will make all sorts of sacrifices to preserve not only his own freedom but the freedom of his fellows.

SICILY

What I remember most vividly about the Sicily episode is the conversation between the Italian girl, Carmela, and Joe from Jersey, in the ruined castle by the Adriatic. Never before have I seen anyone look so spiritually and psychologically dead as Carmela who has lost her father in the war. There is a sullen, almost animal look about her. She has little English and Joe has less Italian. By signs and photographs Joe tells her about his family way back home, by going through the actions of milking a cow he conveys to her that way back home he is a milkman; this is very amusing, a smile creeps over Carmela's expressionless face as she begins to understand, then she comes alive and laughs and they become friends and then they are both killed!

NAPLES

In the Naples episode we see the appalling destruction brought about by aerial war: children now homeless and parentless run around and live on their wits; a gang of children auction a drunken negro soldier and a small boy steals his boots as he sits on the rubble and dramatises himself as a hero in all his glory going back to U.S.A. This is very well done. It is pathetic, yet funny. When the soldier sobered up he is very angry; but when he realises that the child has no home or parents and sees the miserable conditions in which he is forced to live he leaves him his boots and walks sadly away.

ROME

The Roman episode shows what war can do to a young, radiant, innocent girl. Francesca, a prostitute, meets an American soldier who rejects her evil seductions; he tells her that he cherishes the memory of a girl who had grace, charm and dignity and who befriended him when first he came to Rome. Suddenly, Francesca realises that he is the man she once loved and respected; she tries to regain what she has lost ... it is too late. The idea here is to bring out the fundamental goodness of human nature. All the same more restraint should have been shown in this sequence. It is no good saying that art has no boundaries, because it has; it has the boundaries of decency.

FLORENCE

In the Florence episode we see the heroism of an American nurse, Harriet, who risks her life to get to Lupo, the partisan leader, who is in danger and whom she loves; and of Massimo who although wounded risked his life to get across to his family.

THE MONASTERY

The Monastery episode is mostly bally-hoo. To begin with Franciscans are not monks, they do not cut themselves adrift from the world, they live very much in the world, and help to do the world's work. So when the Protestant chaplain said to the Catholic padre, Bill Martin, a big likeable fellow, “How can these men judge us when they are cut off from the world?” he made it clear that he did not know his Church history. In this episode we see three army chaplains seeking hospitality at a Franciscan friary; they are made welcome and invited to take pot luck (there's not much in the pot, just a bit of broccoli). Everything, however, turns out all right for the padres unload their army rations and what with the things brought around by some of the parishioners, Brother Cook is able to work up quite a banquet. Everything is working according to plan until ... the friars discover that one of the chaplains is a Jew and the other a Protestant and then (this bit of inaccuracy made me laugh out loud) they dash around like a lot of lunatics who have seen the “divil himself” and they bless themselves and do no end of
The Chaplains are taken into the refectory where something very funny happens

funny-peculiar things. The padres (I felt so sorry for them) are taken into the refectory for a meal which they are told is always taken in silence. (Don't you believe it! The Franciscans do read during meals, but not always, not on Sundays or feast days; most certainly not when there are guests.) Brother Cook brings up a steaming dish and Fr. Guardian wishes the chaplains "bon appétit", meanwhile the friars sit around with folded hands looking like nothing on earth or in heaven; the silence gets on Padre Bill Martin's nerves and he asks Fr. Guardian why the brethren are not enjoying the good things of the table and with an awful smugness Fr. Guardian tells them that they are fasting for the conversion of the heretics among them and Padre Bill gets up and makes a speech and tells these friars what a fine lot of fellows they are and that he has gained from them something he had lost: faith, humility, simplicity and what not . . .

I suppose it is hardly necessary for me to say that it is not humility to wear one's religion on one's sleeve and that stupidity is not simplicity, that the simple man is the wise man who leaves all the judging that is to be done, to God, and that faith does not narrow a man's mind but widens it.

The Po Valley episode is about as stark a thing you could see on the screen; to see the partisans tied hand and foot and then placed on the edge of a gunboat and thrown into the river is not a pleasant spectacle, but again, against this brutality you see revealed some of the majesty of man . . . his courage, his love of freedom.

Paisà is, of course, not a film for children or for the immature or for the sensational but I recommend it to those who believe that films should express ideas. Rossellini has something to say and he knows how to say it.
In the Po Valley (Dale Edmonds), an American O.S.S. man tries to distract the attention of the Germans in the watch-tower while the partisan Cigolani rescues a comrade.

C.A.G.O.

Christian Christmas Cards

The Catholic Action Girls' Organisation has an excellent selection of Christmas cards at reasonable prices ranging from 1½d. to 9d., 4/- the set, obtainable by post only from C.A.G.O., 22 Bramham Gardens, London, S.W.5.

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THE CATHOLIC YOUTH DIARY

price 2/10d., post free, which contains a Film Competition arranged by Focus, is also produced by C.A.G.O.

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Some of you may remember another Gainsborough film Easy Money, in which several completely different stories were linked only by their connection with the football pools. Here the only link between four short stories is their author, W. Somerset Maugham. He appears in person to speak a prologue and an epilogue. His personality as thus projected may not be universally congenial. But he certainly knows how to write short stories. And R. C. Sherriff, who made the screenplay, knows how to write a play. And the strong cast knows how to act.

It was therefore with genuine regret that I felt what might have proved a good idea has resulted in something of a flop. Perhaps the short story does not take too kindly to the screen. Perhaps the pattern of life traced by Mr. Maugham can entertain the relaxed intellect through the printed word better than through the visual image. I hadn't the heart to regret that some of his more bitter ingredients have been enclosed in the sweetened cachet of human feeling, presumably owing to the exigencies of the box office. For a philosophy of life which sees no higher than humanity tends to be so inhuman.

The stories are The Facts of Life, The Alien Corn, The Kite and The Colonel's Lady, each with a different director.

(1) Basil Radford is in a characteristic part but there is something flat about it. Naunton Wayne is little more than an extra. Mai Zetterling impersonates a stereotyped kind of glamour.

(2) It was not, in my opinion, a very happy idea to cast Françoise Rosay for the rather wooden part of the Continental pianist and combine it with quite a recital by an invisible Eileen Joyce.

(3) The wildly improbable story of the clerk addicted to kite flying is more successful than that of the tennis player who went to Monte Carlo or the young man who deserted the atmosphere of
"Country Life" for that of "The Musical Times". There is an unalter-
ingeness in Hermione Baddeley's playing of a suburban mother. I have been
made welcome by many families like the Sunburys but their homes seemed
rather less spacious.

(4) Cecil Parker plays the rather
derived part of Col. Peregrine in
the way we expect and enjoy. The
blandly unconscious hypocrisy of the
"double standard" of morality is neatly
satirised. Nora Swinburne as the wife,
surprisingly launched into the world of
publication by a book of passionate
poems, is exquisitely right.

The film contains so little that makes
any positive contribution to a sound
outlook on life, so much that does not,
that it is only suitable for those whose
minds are adequately formed.

Q.

THE WISTFUL WIDOW. Starring:
Bud Abbott, Lou Costello,
Marjorie Main. Producer: Robert
Arthur. Director: Charles T.
Barton. Distributors: General
Films. Certificate: U. Category:
B. Running time: 78 minutes.

It takes all sorts of people to make a
world and it takes all sorts of comedians
to make the world laugh. Someone I
know quite well told me that her husband
(and he is no fool) gets great fun from
the fooling of Bud Abbott and Lou
Costello. I have to confess that, save
for a chuckle or two in the minor key
these Wistful Widow comedians left me
cold sober.

You may remember that some months
ago I dismissed a certain film rather
brevily and that I was taken to task by
one of our readers who said (quite
rightly) that a critic should say:
(a) What the film is about. (b) The
standard of production. (c) Very much
what the reviewer thought of it and
why. I reply:

(a) What is a fellow to say when he
cannot make out what the thing is
about (and I couldn't make head or tail
of this film)?

(b) The standard of production of
Wistful Widow is below par, very much
below the intelligence of Pa and Ma
and all those who have no desire
to throw their money away.

(c) I expect funny pictures to be
funny and to my way of laughing this
picture is plain silly.

R.

BONNIE PRINCE CHARLIE: Star-
ring: David Niven, Margaret
Leighton, Judy Campbell, John
Laurie, Finlay Currie. Director:
Antony Kimmins. Distributors:
London Films. Certificate: A.
Category: B. Running time:
136 minutes.

At no time during this film could I
accept David Niven as Bonnie Prince
Charles; he would not come alive, which
is a pity, for apart from this pitiful
piece of mis-casting I thought this an
enjoyable film. There is a good story,
the photography of the highlands makes it at times restful, it has its
measure of excitement and suspense;
the colouring is good and there is some
very vigorous acting, particularly by
those holding small parts. It is long
but not laborious and I thought the
dialogue was above average.

The Boulting Brothers have led us to expect a controversial subject whenever they present us with a new film. In their latest offering we are told that the story is inspired by the suggestion of the Fleming report that boys of ability and promise from elementary schools be sent to well-known Public Schools as an experiment. This provides the basis of the plot but I fear that in its development, the Boultings have not told us anything we did not know from our early schoolboy-story reading and have asked us to believe much that we know is untrue with regard to the reactions of boys and masters under such circumstances as are in the film described.

This is not to say that the film lacks entertainment. On the contrary, it is very diverting, but we cannot be expected to take it seriously. A boy sufficiently intelligent to win a place in a first-class Public School would have enough innate control and sense of propriety to avoid the gaucheries which the film-boy commits. A man of such outstanding ability in moulding the traditions of his house and getting the best out of his subordinates as Hartley, the Housemaster, would scarcely allow his prejudices to reach such excessive proportions as the film leads us to suppose. The parents of such a boy as Jack Read could hardly be so smug and Uriah Heepish as Bernard Miles and Joan Hickson. Nor, allowing the prejudices of the Housemaster, is it likely that a patronising conversation between the Housemaster and the parent would lead the former to walk through the School Chapel and in one evening unsay and unthink all the words and thoughts of a lifetime.

"Oh, you're Read, are you?" Housemaster Lloyd Hartley (Cecil Trouncer) greets new boy (Richard Attenborough)
FOCUS

The film has considerable merits, the first being the easy and natural way in which the film has been made, without any suggestion of a transition through the "legitimate" stage. The art direction, too, is excellent. The School and its environs, the atmosphere, are credible. The first shots at the London Terminus as the boys are being seen off by their parents is satisfying and sets the tone of the film. The casting is unusually apt. Two performances are outstanding. Cecil Trouncer as the Housemaster and Robert Flemying as the Tutor. They both act with great confidence and assurance and make us believe in their slightly schoolboyish ethics and conventions. Richard Attenborough throws himself thoroughly into the part of the boy, but, though his size and, often, his features are acceptable, there peeps through the character a maturity which betrays the actor. A film that will satisfy all kinds of reasonable filmgoers.

V.

A FIRST-CLASS FILM


If one wished for an example of a film to use for a talk on film appreciation one could not ask for a better than An Act of Murder. It has all those touches which make one almost instinctively, recognise the work of really first-class film makers. A camera angle here, a line of dialogue there, a situation, an encounter, those nuances of acting and direction which only the truly skilled can incorporate into their films.

In addition, it has a theme which, however it has been glossed and smoothed for the sake of the censors, still retains sufficient controversial content to make a visit to the cinema both entertaining and recreative. "Mercy Killing" is a subject which is certain to capture the sympathetic attention of even the most loyal of Christians. Its obvious appeal to one’s kindlier instincts, therefore, make it a particularly dangerous topic for film treatment. In the present case, though the orthodox views are presented by the doctor and the judge, one is left with the suspicion that, logically, the audience ought to cast its vote in favour of killing the incurable. In other words, the scales are unfairly weighted by means of emotional appeals in favour of euthanasia, even though moral propriety has secured for the film a conclusion which is in accordance with moral teaching.

Calvin Cooke is a judge whose excessive devotion to the most rigorous interpretation of the law leaves no
FOCUS

AN ACT OF MURDER

Forced to stop on their way home, through engine trouble, Cathy's (Florence Eldridge) headache becomes worse and frightens Calvin (Fredric March) room for the clemency based on extenuating circumstances when sentencing a criminal. On the other hand, he is a devoted husband and father whose behaviour at home is singularly at variance with his intolerant attitude in court. When he learns that his wife is soon to die from a very painful and incurable disease of the brain, he takes her away for a holiday but is distracted by the suffering of his wife and drives their car off the road with the intention of killing them both. He survives and his strong sense of law makes him give himself up for murder. He is eventually acquitted by a quite convincing though, perhaps, unexpected denouement, and he resolves, henceforth, to allow human motives to have a due share in his judgments of crime.

Thus stated, the story seems simple enough. But there are undertones which render it, in fact, rather complex. The producers have not faced the issue fairly. The basic question is not, as is suggested in this film, a clash between the legal rigorist and those with a sense of mercy, but between the acceptance of God's decrees and the persuasions of sentimentality. One who abides by the law of God is not less sympathetic than those who wish to "put an end to needless suffering". He sees more clearly the relative places which suffering and love have in the divine scheme of things.

Film is a medium which is peculiarly potent in suggesting pros and cons in a controversy of this kind. We see a wounded dog being "put out of its misery"; a doctor who, cynically says that our grandparents got on quite well without scientific refinements, also says that science would be hamstring if one admitted defeat by killing the incurable.

There is too much involved in this film to allow a proper assessment of its merits. The acting of its principals is flawless. It is a film which should be seen by all those who think that the cinema cannot give intelligent entertainment.

V.
CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY

NOTES

The affairs of the Catholic Film Society are working up to a condition that can only be called momentous. We have come to the end of the first year of a new phase of our existence. Focus began to appear just a year ago. It took the place of, indeed absorbed, the old “Catholic Film News”. It has gained in prestige considerably and is read in all kinds of interesting places. Film studios hear about it with a tolerant amusement and remain to read it with genuine respect. One of the most prominent of our Press Film critics has declared that the reviews in Focus are the most honest and worthwhile now appearing in the country.

But there is more to the C.F.S. than the editing of Focus, important as that is. The amount of correspondence, lecture writing, studio visiting, and other work that rises incidentally from the fact that we express concrete opinions about films is quite amazing.

When I said “momentous” above, I meant that we have reached a state where we must go ahead and expand our administrative capacity or decline into a state of being moribund through a surfeit of activity.

It is clear that an office and a paid staff capable of dealing with the growing work of the Society is imperative. Our sole source of income at the moment is Focus and the subscriptions of those enthusiastic persons who have joined the C.F.S. These now number 170. Not many, after a year of effort, but then, we have not had time or opportunity enough to make a drive for membership. It is to the members that we look for that moral support which is needed if a group like ours is to continue to do the work of constructive influence which is our primary object. There are, of course, the 1400 private subscribers to Focus. To these, too, we are grateful. But we should really be able to depend on a much larger backing of practical interest in the important work of the Film Apostolate. One reason that we are rather small at the moment is that we have not been able to afford any sustained advertising campaign.

When we settled the subscription for membership of the Society at 10s. a year, we thought that Focus could have been produced for 3d. When we discovered that it could not pay at that price we did not raise the subscription rate for membership; we hoped that donations would make up our requirements. In spite of the generous gifts of some friends, this has, so far, proved a vain hope.

What have members received in addition to Focus? Frankly, we have been unable to produce, as yet, the many publications that are demanding to be printed. However, we shall have several booklets ready within a comparatively short time. The question then arises, are we to include these publications in the membership subscription as it at present stands? A little elementary arithmetic will reveal that it cannot economically be done.

The fact that our publication list, so far, has been small, is not an indication that our influence has been correspondingly small. It is always surprising and gratifying to us to receive letters from people in various parts of the world who have received our remarks on film matters with benefit to themselves. Our influence in the direction of studios, too, has been gratifying. It is realised that we are not primarily concerned with forbidding things to be done or to be shown but that we are anxious and able to help in a constructive way to raise the standard of films.
JOURNEY TO VENICE—I

By John A. V. Burke

THE Editor and I set out one muggy August day en route to Venice for the Film Festival. The primary object of our journey was to be present at the General Council Meeting of the International Cinema Office. About this, I will write at length next time. For the moment I wish to say something about what we saw in Paris.

We visited the Centrale Catholique du Cinema et de la Radio, which is our opposite number in France. In the picture which accompanies this article you will see one of the results of that visit. We were taken to the studios at Billancourt where we saw the last scenes of the film Dr. Laennec being shot. I renewed acquaintance with Maurice Cloche, the gifted director of Monsieur Vincent and Claude Renoir, the camera man whose beautiful photography contributes considerably to the artistic success of Monsieur Vincent. I had last seen them when they were working on the great film with which their names are connected. That was at Buttes Chaumont, in the north of Paris, a small studio where many of the greatest French films have been made under conditions which must make our Pinewood and Denham-conscious technicians faint with claustrophobia.

Maurice Cloche was at work on Dr. Laennec when we arrived. He paid us the compliment of saying that our reviews, which he reads, apparently with pleasure, were really positive contributions to the raising of film standards. Since that is our primary object and coming from so distinguished a maker of films, we felt excusably elated.

It was interesting to watch the French director at work. His method is a quiet one in which one detects the hand of the master-teacher. He has already done most of the hard work outside the studio. He knows what he wants and the players know how to give it him. A rehearsal or two and then—Action. The takes are surprisingly few compared with the numerous repetitions demanded by some well-known British and American directors.

Dr. Laennec bids fair to be another Monsieur Vincent. It has not the same intense religious appeal, but, since it touches very closely one of the two relationships which people find most necessary and most consoling in this life, it is certain to have the initial advantage of the human touch. Priests and doctors share, in a remarkable manner, an intimacy and confidence which is given to no other kind of man. The spiritual and physical needs of the human race are so inextricably mingled that it is no surprise to know that priest and doctor were once one and the same; that, indeed, in the mission fields today, the priest is often the doctor of bodies as well as the doctor of souls.

Dr. Laennec was a physician who devoted his life to the fight against tuberculosis. He discovered the method of stethoscopic auscultation. He eventually died a victim to the disease which he did so much to overcome.

We saw the rushes of Dr. Laennec and, even in their crude condition they were impressive. Pierre Blanchard plays the part of the Doctor and it is a remarkable fact that he bears a striking natural resemblance to the doctor himself.

Dr. Laennec is having its premiere in Paris as these words are being written. We are sure to see the film in England. It is certainly a film which will be, like Monsieur Vincent, worth taking a lot of trouble to see. Like Monsieur Vincent also, the film was financed, at least in part, by a national subscription raised throughout France.

There is one other subject which I will suggest for the consideration of Maurice Cloche. It will complete a trilogy. It is a film life of Hammel, the great French industrialist, who was the pioneer of Catholic Social Action. He was the greatest admirer of Leo XIII, the Pope whose letters on social justice anticipated those of Karl Marx and are very much more in accord with the requirements of human
nature. It would be a glorious thing to have a priest, a doctor and an industrial leader, all Catholics and all outstanding examples of supernatural charity, given their due shrines in film.

An interesting sidelight of our visit to Billancourt was to find in the studio a Jesuit priest busy learning the technique of film production at first hand. Père Flippo, S.J., has been accredited to the studios with the object, both of acting as liaison and also of equipping himself thoroughly from the practical point of view. That is, doubtless, what Pope Pius XI meant when he spoke in his Film Encyclical about using the most up-to-date methods in making use of film for God. It would be a great and useful thing to have a body of clergy as competent in the use of this modern new “language” as some priests are in the methods of writing, printing, painting, music and other arts. Then we could be assured of an output of films which were really religious and of use to the Church.

(To be continued)
GEOGRAPHICAL FILMS

From Our Educational Panel

Libraries:
Wallace Heaton, Ltd., 127 New Bond Street, W.1
Boulton-Hawker Films, Hadleigh, Suffolk.
(For London Teachers: L.C.C. Film Library, Stockwell Depot, S.W.9)

In our geography lessons we talk of many places and things which the children will never see and sometimes find it difficult to visualise. For this reason geography teachers have always made considerable use of pictures. The difficulty of holding up pictures in front of the class, or of passing them round, has led to the opinion that the best method is to have pictures which can be projected on to a screen enabling the whole class to see at once. Hence the popularity of the film and the film strip.

The choice between these depends on what we want to show. Some things such as relief features, vegetation or buildings are best shown by still pictures which can be carefully studied. For these the film strip is most useful.

We have, however, to describe many things in which there is some sort of movement, e.g., the use of the shaduf for irrigation in Egypt, the passage of a ship through locks or machinery at work on farms. To illustrate these the moving film is obviously best. Silent films are perhaps better than sound films as the latter tend to dictate the form which the lesson will take.

Some films deal with one definite theme and provide material for a complete lesson, e.g., Life in the Sahara. Others contain too much detail and are best used for revision when the class already knows something about the subject, e.g., Land of the Niles. Unfortunately many films contain too much—which leads to unnecessary sidetrackings. Practical difficulties:

1. Finding a film which fits the syllabus and for the right age.

2. Obtaining the film. Films are expensive and must usually be hired. It is always uncertain whether they will arrive or whether the "alternative choice" will come instead.

3. Having the film in time to be familiar with its subject matter before the lesson.

4. Making the children realise that the film is an aid to learning and not just a recreation. They must work with the film and not merely look at it.

If these difficulties are overcome the film is a useful aid to a geography lesson. But if they are used too often and without purpose children may become as tired of looking as they now sometimes appear to be of listening.

Films

Transportation on the Great Lakes. Silent. 1 reel, 15 mins. L.C.C. Film Library or Wallace Heaton. Hire: 3/6, extra days 1/-.

This begins with a good map of the Great Lakes. It then deals with their geological formation by means of maps showing the extent of the ice cap which covered Northern Canada. By animated diagrams it shows the melting of the ice and the filling up of the lakes. It next shows the opening up of traffic on the lakes after the spring thaw. Different types of ships are shown, particularly the "whale-backs" carrying wheat. It shows the wheat being poured from the terminal elevator into the ships and the passage of one ship through a lock and finally the approach to Montreal.

The film is good, although in parts it is difficult to follow the sequence of events.


Life in the Sahara. Silent. 1 reel, 15 mins. L.C.C. Film Library; Wallace Heaton.

This deals chiefly with nomadic camp life in the desert. It begins with a map of Africa showing the extent of the Sahara Desert. It next shows a desert encampment with the nomadic herdsmen and their flocks of sheep and goats, both kept for their milk. The nomads set off to visit the oasis village and there are some good pictures of a baby camel. Oasis life is shown next—the flat-roofed houses, an Arab climbing a date palm, and the collection of brushwood from the desert for fuel. Arab dress is shown clearly. There is a good picture of a mosque and the
people being called to prayer. It finishes with the assembling of the caravan and the return to the encampment.

This is a very good teaching film.
Suitability: 13 plus.

THE LAND OF THE NILES. Silent. 2 reels, 17 mins. L.C.C. Film Library.

This deals with the Nile in its upper reaches from Khartoum to Rejaf. A map shows the position of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and makes it quite clear which part of the river is described in the film. The position of Khartoum is shown at the meeting place of the White and Blue Niles. Its narrow streets are shown next, with donkeys being used for transport, and street markets with goods displayed on the ground. The building of the dam at Sennar is shown and the use of the water for growing cotton. Next follows the building of the railway and the contrast between the old method of camel transport and rail transport is emphasised.

The scene next moves to the Savannah near Rejaf. Crocodiles are seen in the river and the natives fishing in their small boats. A herd of elephants is shown wandering through the grass-land. The film is fairly good but the engineering details of building the dam and the railway seem unnecessary in a film of this sort. Also some of the elephant scenes are monotonous and not too clear.

Suitability: 13 plus.

IRRIGATION AND AGRICULTURE IN EGYPT. Silent. 1 reel, 17 mins. L.C.C. Film Library; Boulton-Hawker Films.

This starts by emphasising the importance of the Nile to Egypt. It shows first the various methods by which water is obtained for irrigation, from the Aswan dam, and the delta barrage to the more primitive methods of the shaduf, the water wheel and the canals carrying the water to the more distant fields.

The chief crops are shown next. First the winter crops: sugar, wheat, barley, lentils, barseem. Next the summer crops: millet, maize, rice (in the delta), melons, dates, cotton (chief crop and export). Each crop is shown growing, being harvested, and finally put to use. There are some excellent close-ups of such things as millet bread, maize seeds, and the cotton bolls bursting open.

Finally the river used for watering the crops is shown as a means of transporting them. Here there are some good river scenes, with the feluccas on the Nile and the palm trees along its banks.

This is an excellent film for teaching. It keeps to the point and there is no irrelevant detail.

Suitability: 13 plus.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MICKEY ROONEY,

Sir,

I wonder whether E. J. Ryley is an Old Catholic, i.e., a member of the sect which refused to accept Papal Infallibility at the Vatican Council, or an old Catholic, that is to say, one whose length of years gives her (or him) the right to rebuke the excesses and misdemeanors of comparative youth? The scathing references to “Catholic”, “infallible”, “incontestable” film critics leads me to suppose your correspondent is a member of the sect. I fail to see what this has to do with remarks on Mickey Rooney. It is surely the business of a reviewer to say what he thinks of the film and of the actor without fear or favour. It is pleasant to know that Mickey has given so much “cheer and happiness”. My point is that he is in danger of not continuing to do so. His recent films have been deplorably low and vulgar. His latest, Summer Holiday, reaches a new low
level in depravity and coarseness. Sorry, but that is what I think and it has nothing to do with the Pope.

V.

BELLS OF ST. MARY'S

Sir,

I think J. B. Rorke is making a mountain out of a molehill. I repeated the story told in Brussels last year about Mgr. Devlin's efforts to avoid unnecessary complications in the relationships of the characters in Bells of St. Mary's without any other intention than that of amusing. It is absurd to read into it an attitude of smugness or prudery. Readers should be sufficiently familiar with our views by now to know that we are not likely to be overwhelmed by the fact of illegitimacy. It depends on how it is presented. There is a great difference between boggling at the word "bastard" in Henry V and making capital out of fornication for the sake of a situation in a so-called "religious" film. It is an illustration of the way the minds of some producers work. Anything for a sensational, sentimental touch to tickle the Box Office up a little.

Yours, etc.

J. A. V. Burke.

34, Henry Street,
East Geelong,
Victoria,
Australia.

Dear Sir,

My congratulations to you on the success of the "new" Film News—Focus. I find it most interesting and a suitable guide to current films. The June issue, which contained the article on Hamlet, arrived just a few weeks before our screening here of Hamlet—it is on this week. The film critic of our local paper gave the film a very good write-up, but even that, I am afraid, has, so far, failed to draw the general public. Of course, the upstairs of the theatre is packing them but the few in the stalls feel very lonely—and look it. May the success of your publication continue, and may its good work extend still further in the future.

With best wishes and many blessings,

Yours sincerely,

MARDI LOCKIE.

Sir,

Please, please tell an ordinary reader what you mean by "a documentary". A friend suggests it is a film, the theme of which is based on, or more likely filched from, some otherwise respectable document, book or writing. I don't know. I want you to tell me. You might even run to a "glossary" or vocabulary of such film-language meanings. The word "documentary" sounds impressive enough in your reviews and no doubt in the film world, but I have a suspicion that the meaning obvious to us is not the meaning always in the world in which we live and move and have our film. So, a glossary please . . . in record running-time.

Yours in focus,

T. J. PURCELL.

(I shall oblige in next issue.—Editor.)

Sir,

I note in your September edition of the film review (which, apart from that peculiar institution entitled "A Panel of Priests") indulging in such brilliant and perspicacious criticism as this: "Michael North is so goodly (sic) to look upon that you can bet you will see him again. Of course he cannot act. There is no need for him to."—seems to be improving slowly) that you adumbrate the possibility of showing certain excellent films that never reach England, through a film club. This involves, however, according to your remarks "an organisation of distributing and exhibiting executives" on a big scale.

What this means I don't know. But I have come across film clubs which have nothing outstanding in the way of wealth or film world connections, etc., etc., who get some pretty interesting films. What are distributing and exhibiting executives?

If the untechnical and unintelligent layman can do anything about it, I am sure that I and ten thousand other Catholics could be found who would be delighted to work for an opportunity to see some good Mexican and other productions.

I have the honour to be,

Your obedient servant,

JOHN M. W. SLATER.
Some Scenes from “Bonnie Prince Charlie”

NOTE. Inclusion in this list does not connote positive recommendation. Films that are positively harmful are not included here. Readers are reminded to refer to the full reviews when assessing a film.

Category A, indicates adults only; B, adults and adolescents; C, family audiences; D, particularly for children.

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INTERNATIONAL FILM REVIEW
A New Cinema Quarterly, edited by the International Catholic Cinema Office
FIRST ISSUE READY JANUARY 1949

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Felix Morlon, O.P.

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COVER  PERSONALITY

FREDRIC  MARCH

WHEN one sees a film like The Best Years of Our Lives or Tomorrow the World or An Act of Murder, in each of which Fredric March played the leading male part, one realises how poor is the general standard of acting on the screen. The ease and perfection with which he builds up the characters he is playing is apt to deceive the unwary. But compare them with the performance of any one of a hundred other actors in similar roles and it will be seen how much superior is March. He also demonstrates that a skilled actor in the hands of a good director gives a far better performance than an untrained star in the hands of a first-class director. It is sometimes said and is to some extent true that a director prefers his stars to be without acting ability if only they are obedient to his demands. But then one sees an actor like March playing a part like the judge in An Act of Murder and then it is clear that there is a great difference between the technically perfect film and the film that is also alive and vibrating with personality.

March has that degree of skill that is one of the tests of the good craftsman in other departments of art: he makes it look so easy to do. Recall that wonderful scene in Best Years of Our Lives when he has become drunk while celebrating his return to Civvy Street. Fredric March not only staggered drunkenly as other actors do, he looked and spoke drunkenly. Yet how rarely does an actor make us forget that he is acting drunk. In An Act of Murder, it is worth while noting the tones of voice he employs as the judge in court, the way he walks when out with his wife, the manner in which he quizzes the young advocate in his home. These details are all a consistent part of the character he is interpreting. The anguish he suffered when informed of the fatal disease of his wife was, somehow, real anguish, not just a facial expression assumed for the sake of the camera.

He has had poor parts to play. He has had parts in which he could not be expected to be either convincing or sympathetic. One remembers The Sign of the Cross, or Smiling Through or The Barretts of Wimpole Street. The first two were ham parts, the third, not even March's ability could make us accept as a true portrait of Browning. But then think of The Adventures of Mark Twain, Anthony Adverse, Les Miserables or even his Vronsky in the Garbo version of Anna Karenina. He played his parts in these films with an intensity and devotion which places him on the top rank of American actors. Mark Twain, in particular, whatever the defects of script may have been, was a tour de force, both of make up and of character-playing.

Fredric March was born in Racine, Wisconsin. His flair for figures in the University of Wisconsin carried him into the National City Bank in New York. This, though a compliment to his ability, was too boring as a life for him. He capitalised his prowess in the University Dramatic Club and obtained a footing on the New York stage. After a comparatively short period in American repertory companies, he caught the eye and fancy of the Hollywood impresarios by playing the part of John Barrymore in the play The Royal Family which deals with the Barrymore family. Paramount signed him up to play the same role on the screen. After this picture he quickly reached the top in a succession of films: Paris Bounds, Anthony and Cleopatra with Claudette Colbert, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Design for Living as well as the films already mentioned above. He returned to the "legitimate" stage in 1940 and has since divided his time almost equally between Broadway and Hollywood. He met his wife, Florence Eldridge, when he first went on the stage. He has played with her in many stage shows and in An Act of Murder she plays his wife on the screen too. His latest film, made in England, is Christopher Columbus. The high reputation which Sydney Box has achieved for production coupled with the outstanding ability of Fredric March give us the right to expect a first-class piece of film work and we look forward to it eagerly.

JOHN VINCENT
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**THE CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY**
(Affiliated to the Office Catholique Internationale du Cinema)

**President:**
His Eminence Cardinal Griffin, Archbishop of Westminster.

**Aims and Objects**

1. To encourage the development of Catholic criticism of films with the object of influencing, as far as possible, the type of films publicly exhibited.
2. To promote the organisation of discussion groups for the study of films.
3. To establish a library of films of Catholic interest.
4. To organise a Summer Film School.
5. To encourage the production of entertainment and documentary films calculated to demonstrate the Christian cultural heritage of Europe, in its arts, crafts, religious life, agriculture, architecture, etc.
6. To establish when and where possible, Cameo Repertory Cinemas where films of permanent interest and value may be seen.

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**Hon. Secretary:**
REV. J. A. V. BURKE, Mayfield College, Tunbridge Wells.

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RELIGION IN FILMS

Lecture given by Rev. Fr. H. A. C. Connell, Cong. Orat., at the Annual General Meeting of the Catholic Film Society in St. Wilfrid's Hall, Brompton Oratory, on December 15th, 1948.

My Lord Cardinal, Rt. Rev., Very Rev. and Rev. Fathers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I don't think I have ever felt in such a state of trepidation, since the first time I sat, clutching a script, in front of a BBC microphone, knowing that it was going to go live on me in half a minute. I'm supposed to speak on "Religion in films". Religion, in the presence of the chief official of Christ's Church in this country. The Films, in the presence of one who might be described as one of the primates of film criticism.

I think it was Fr. McGovern, of this Oratory, who spoke of the gynaecrats of the Sunday breakfast table. As with the pre-Reformation Church in England, and as in the established C. of E. to this day, there are two such primates. And every Sunday morning, whether I break my fast at 7-30 or not until 1-0, there, by the welcome teapot, repose the "Sunday Times" and the "Observer", and the tea is hardly in the cup before I turn to page 2.

There are some readers who think that Catholic film criticisms (at least the ones issued by this Society) ought to be restricted in scope and dry in manner. But those of us who think that a periodical calling itself a review, should include readable journalism, realise the debt which is owed by the many to the few, to those masters of the craft who have put film criticism, as it now is, on the map and kept it there.

But two things give me courage. One is the gift which both the Cardinal and Miss Powell have of putting others at their ease. The first time I had the honour of meeting His Eminence—it was in connection with a broadcast in which we were both involved—he very quickly made me feel at home. And when, a good few years ago, Miss Powell quoted some rather debunking remarks made by an auxiliary fireman about the film, Mrs. Miniver, and I was so pleased that I wrote and said so, the kind and friendly reply which I received has taken the edge off the awe which I should otherwise feel tonight.

And the other thing. I spoke just now about "clutching a script", which I am doing at this moment, too. No one who had ever had the misfortune to listen to me trying to speak extempore would begrudge the drowning man that straw.

I also feel a certain embarrassment in not being Irish. The advertisement manager of Focus was obviously so carried away by the number of Irish names of people present, or expected to be present on this platform, that he billed me as O'Connell. But Miss Dilys Powell, I am glad to see, has not been turned into Dillon Power.

THE GARISH DAY WHICH HAS BEEN SUBLIMATED

They sent me to Oxford in the distant past, in the hope that I should be prepared there to do something useful afterwards. And I sometimes had qualms of conscience, wondering whether I wasn't spending too little time in the society of Homer and Cicero, Plato and Tacitus (not to
mention Lock, Berkeley, Hume and Kant), and too much in the society of Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks (Senior, of course), Mary Pickford, Lilian and Dorothy Gish, Betty Balfour, Billie Burke, Harold Lloyd, Bebe Daniels, Jack Dempsey (in those days a serial was spelled differently and meant something more exciting than a breakfast food), Mutt and Jeff, and Felix the Cat. Yet in point of fact, whereas my membership of the Classical Association lapsed many years ago, my membership of the Catholic Film Society is very much alive now. It is not the work I went to Oxford to do, but love of what Newman might have regarded as the garish day, which has been sublimated into part of my vocation, as I believe it to be. The presence of His Eminence here tonight indicates that he considers the work of the society important, and I should like to take the opportunity here to express my appreciation of the support which my superiors have given to this work. There is a lot of work to be done at the Oratory, and not so many priests to do it, but they have never made that a reason for placing any obstacles to what I have been able to do in connection with the films.

FIRST MEMORIES OF RELIGION IN FILMS

Having heard of the sort of company which I kept in Oxford, you will not be surprised to hear that my only contribution to a learned periodical published there was an article in "Blackfriars", on "Religion in films". When I wrote this in 1945 I was surprised, and so were its readers, at the amount of material there was for such a study. Actually, my first memory of religion in a film is of one I saw when I was a small boy. It was called The Fighting Parson. When I first heard about it, I regarded it with anything but favour. I had a great sense of reverence as a small boy, and I thought that to depict the choir and clergyman coming into church for a service was, as I put it, "going a bit too far". I was all for church services. And I was all for the pictures. But I thought religion ought to be kept well apart from the wild west and the Keystone Cops. However, I was persuaded to go and see The Fighting Parson. And when some nasty man started a brawl in the church, and the parson hustled him into the church-yard, offed with his surplice and upped with his fists, all with that incredible speed and vigour which characterised the films of those days, while all the Yorkshire lads in the 2d. seats—you could get in for 2d. then—shouted "Go it, parson," I was as thrilled as anybody by the triumph of right over wrong (for, of course, the parson laid his man out) and I became quite converted to religion in the films. I was thrilled, too, in rather another way, by Quo Vadis and St. Peter and Nero's persecution. I expect it was pretty crude really, but I wasn't a film critic in those days.

A HANKERING AFTER RELIGION

But I don't think there was much religion in the silent films. I do remember how in Robin Hood Friar Tuck duly concerned himself with the reverent treatment of some strangely assorted and out-of-period sacred vessels. It was not until the talkies got well under way that religion and matters connected with it began to play a surprisingly large part, and in this the Catholic religion had a remarkably big share. This is perhaps something of a phenomenon, for a decline in religion is characteristic of our age. But at the same time there is a widespread hankering after it. In "Blackfriars" I said that early efforts to portray religion in the cinema were crude, superficial and inaccurate, but that there was an increasing sense of responsibility and accuracy with regard to the presentation of religious matters. That process has continued since. The improvement hasn't been consistent, of course. Few improvements are, I suppose. There is some phoney monkery in an Italian film now showing. In one film showing a year or two ago—it's name eludes me—there was a man about to be lynched who asked for a priest to hear his confession, but none was available. The poor man was so keen on confession and so uninterested in
absolution, that instead of making an act of contrition, he made his confession to a layman and died happy in the thought that the layman would tell his sins to a priest after his death. There were the Anglican nuns in Black Narcissus whose religious life was organised without so much as a thought of a chaplain, and who made an amazing hash of the Hail Mary, as well as doing some even odder things. There was an indirect breach of the seal of confession in The End of the River. (I believe that as a result of representations that was subsequently modified.)

**SOME NICE TOUCHES**

But there have been some nice touches too. The Breton woman in Johnny Frenchman telling the Cornishman who disapproved of fishing on Sunday, that he was an old pagan who never went to church, whereas she and her friends had been miles to Mass that morning. There was the care for the Catholic religion of little Marie Louise, evacuated to a Protestant family in Switzerland, a care not always experienced in real life in this country. There was the man with nine children in Of Human Bondage, who read St. John of the Cross when in bed with gout. (We are apt to regard Mr. Somerset Maugham as the quintessence of irreligiousness, yet in another film, The Razor's Edge, there is an excellent Catholic deathbed.) There were the genial Jesuits in Gallant Journey encouraging scientific research and thus counteracting a prejudice. There was the priest in Open City, who counteracted another prejudice, by being an outstanding example of a friend of the common man in Italy, and not a hanger-on of Fascism and reaction. There was the British film Frieda, the whole story of which, surprisingly enough, hung on an ecclesiastical impediment to matrimony, that of clandestinity. There was The Fugitive, the moving story of a priest in a country where priests were outlawed (though the impression was rather given that his most vital function was Baptism, the very thing, of course, which could be done without him). This priest, unlike the original in The Power and the Glory, did live up to his religion. Graham Greene's peculiar genius lies more in describing Catholics who don't conform to the standards of the Faith. So it was in Brighton Rock. The sinners were well portrayed. The nun was not.

This is not the occasion for a comprehensive survey of all the films in which religion plays a part. But I must make an exception and mention in passing Andrew Buchanan's masterpiece, the super-documentary "Visitation", the story of the Medical Missionaries of Mary.

There are noticeable waves of fashion in films. The particularly persistent fashion for would-be comic heavens has mercifully abated. The film to end all films of that kind was called Heaven only Knows. It began by being the most exasperatingly objectionable of the lot. I should like to quote from the review in Focus. "Can we be witnessing," it says, "a series of attempts, no more naive than some atheistic propaganda, to undermine the Christian conception of life and its purpose, by a reductio ad absurdum of the traditional poetic imagery about heaven? But as the picture continued (the review goes on to say) as a bad stained glass window of the Good Shepherd inspires religious emotion and Pastor Wainwright pastorises like anything, as the hope of reunion for a bereaved mother is allegorically suggested, it dawned on me that the inspiration of this film at least is not the crude blasphemy of godlessness but the well meant blunderings of Protestantism."

**CATHOLIC ELEMENTS IN FILMS**

To return to Catholic elements in films. There are some who query their value. But if they are accurately presented, they must have an educative effect. Consider the number of people who go to the cinema, and who know nothing of Catholicism or indeed of any religion and assume that religion plays no part in normal life. One lady who was received into the Church by one of the Fathers here, attributes her conversion to seeing The Song of Bernadette. And don't imagine that this was something sudden or emotional. It was simply, that actual Catholicism had hitherto
been something entirely outside her ken. The film started a train of thought which led, about a year later, to her asking for instruction.

**Even the most resolute opponents of the cinema must surely admit that there has been some progress in the course of its career from “The Fighting Parson” to “M. Vincent”. The student of religion in the films can, I think, detect a gradual evolution which is not unsatisfactory. Speaking of preaching, Cardinal Newman said it was a gradual work, first one lesson, then another. Some such gradual instruction can be discerned in what, for want of a better term, I may call “popular” films. “Going My Way” contrived to explain that Catholic priests are not monstrosities, but ordinary human beings with a sense of humour. “The Bells of St. Mary’s” did the same for nuns, for the first time, I think. Another film associated with the name of Bing Crosby (though he didn’t appear in it) was a regrettable throwback. Abie’s Irish Rose was a kind of sentimental propaganda in favour of mixed marriages, involving a very casual attitude to an invalid marriage on the part of the Catholic contracting it, absolutely different from the correct attitude shown in Frieda. If it be argued that the casual attitude is only too common in real life, then (said the review in Focus) “for the sake of balance let us have for a change a film which makes clear something else no less real”. And the review goes on to ask for a film calculated to interest the many non-Catholics who say: “The religion of Catholics means more to them than ours does to us; there’s more to it somehow”. And it seems to me that anything in that direction is progress. What someone called the scoutmaster priest, like Fr. O’Malley, is better than the repulsive puritanical type or the untheological indifferentist. But something more than that is called for.

**THE CINEMA AND LIFE**

Bruce Marshall, the novelist, has introduced something quite new into literature, the placing of the priesthood and the deepest spiritual and theological issues side by side with the most everyday, the most irreligious and materialistic and the least elevated elements, in contemporary life. Mgr. Knox, in “The Mass in Slow Motion”, has analysed the structure of the supreme act of Christian worship with trivial, commonplace and extremely telling analogies. This sort of juxtaposition is much resented by some Catholics; its vitality and relevance to life is much appreciated by others. On a lower level of artistry the cinema has recently done something on rather the same lines. I know that I'm venturing on very controversial ground now. The disputes between the Dominicans and the Jesuits are nothing to the difference of view in Catholic circles as to how _The Miracle of the Bells_ should be regarded. So I want to emphasise that I am speaking entirely for myself, and not with the authority of the Catholic Film Society. Those who disagree with me think that theological considerations have blinded me to the artistic and cultural shortcomings of the film. And it may be so. But I think that those very limitations have tended to obscure some very remarkable facts. Remember that this is an ordinary, popular, commercial film, presumably conceived no less than any other in terms of box office. It’s not like “M. Vincent”, which though produced and distributed in the ordinary way was clearly inspired by Christian principles and financed by Catholic contributions. If Catholic Action were to produce a feature film in England or America, _The Miracle of the Bells_ would hardly be its model. But it is a most interesting, and to my mind hopeful phenomenon, that in ‘the ordinary run of entertainment we find, for one thing, Frank Sinatra being cast as a priest, and making a quite surprisingly good job of it, not in the welfare-worker style of Bing Crosby, but putting across in the course of the film, quite a bit of religious instruction, not in an aggressive or irritating way either. In this secularist and non-churchgoing age we find presented to the common-or-garden picturegoer people who have in many respects the same interests and outlook as themselves but who also speak of God as if He not only certainly existed, but also mattered, who don’t regard worship of
ON THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS

For better or worse, Hollywood decided to film this book—anything but a literary classic—written by a Quaker about Catholics. How infinitely worse the picture might have been! It is very definitely on the side of the angels. Yet some people accused it of sacrilege, while they swallowed hook, line and sinker the religious implications of Life with Father. For me that amusing film was spoiled by its attitude to Baptism. This was not just a matter of a passing crack; so much of the film depended on it. One felt that the author regarded Baptism—at least of adults—as a lot of poppycock, that he wanted the audience to think so too, and had mastered the relevant part of the Anglican catechism with that in view. There is a kind of flippancy connected with religion which can (I don’t say it ought to) accompany real faith and devotion, But I don’t think that applies to the case of Life with Father.

Our attitude to religion in the films should be conditioned by a realisation that in this sphere the film industry is now in its adolescent phase. It has the adolescent qualities of being sometimes gauche, ungainly and self-assertive. But an excess of apparent assurance is sometimes a sigh of actual shyness. There are two ways of treating adolescents. There’s the old-fashioned heavy parent style, the attitude which takes this sort of line: “How dare you? You young people are very irreverent. You’d better leave such things alone. And unless you do everything exactly as I say, I shall have nothing more to do with you.” And there’s the way advocated by contemporary psychologists, of not appearing to patronise, of friendliness and patience, and the winning of confidence. This is the way, I think, that will produce the best results. If we ask for something a little less superficial in the way of religion from the people who make pictures, and then jump down their throats when they try and give it, they might turn round and remind us of the cantankerous children in the marketplace who wouldn’t play anyway.

CINEMA WORK CALLS FOR A STOUT HEART

It needs a lot of patience, I know. But work in connection with the cinema calls for a stout heart. There have been black moments, I feel, when even Miss Powell must have been tempted to abandon film criticism and confine herself to archaeology, or Miss Lejeune to seek her fortune (she would certainly make one) in fashion reporting. But there are more consoling moments, too. To know that hard work in the studio has meant that a religious ceremony has emerged, if not wholly congenial to the liturgical pedant, at least a great deal nearer to the letter and spirit of Catholic worship than the balderdash in the original script, which at that point had been entrusted to a High Anglican lady; to know that the priest in the film The Brothers is slightly (only slightly, I know, but half a loaf is better than no bread) less unreal, repulsive and ridiculous than would have been the case without one’s efforts; to know that producers sometimes read what one publishes about their films—such things are rewarding.

No doubt we of the Catholic Film Society have made mistakes and may make more. For that reason I earnestly ask your prayers for our work, both the analytic and sometimes destructive work of criticism, and the synthetic and more constructive work of collaboration with producers and directors. The influence of the cinema is so great in these days that to be concerned with it is to be conscious of some trepidation. Some of you will be pricking up your ears when you hear that word “Trepidation” again. Yes; the running time has been long and the cutting bad, but at last we have got round to where I came in.
FILM REVIEWS

By Our Panel of Priests


A film that deals with a true story is bound to be interesting as long as it sticks to the truth. In this case it has done so and the result is one of those semi-factual films which point to Boomerang as to a hitherto unsurpassed criterion. Call Northside 777 is very good but Boomerang retains its title. This is not because the first film is essentially more interesting than the second; indeed, they both treat of the same subject; the campaign to free a man innocently condemned for murder. Boomerang managed to avoid those more sentimental touches which mar so many American films and which strain one's credulity even when one's sympathies are firmly enlisted, whereas Call Northside 777, several times overlays its theme, the faith which a mother has in her son's innocence.

It is the mother in this case whose heroism and devotion is the cause which leads a sceptical newspaperman to "tear from a mountain of lies the truth that was to bring justice to an innocent man". She saves 5,000 dollars from her hard-won earnings as a reward to anyone who will bring the true murderers to light. Her son's wife agrees to divorce him so that their son may have a different name and a new chance to live down his father's disgrace. The attitude of the second husband as well as that of the mother and wife and even the child is what I mean by sentimentality. It is a distracting element in an otherwise simple film.

The phrase which I have quoted from the Press Show synopsis also illustrates what I mean. It is not true to speak of a "mountain of lies". A lie is the intention to deceive. What the reporter had to battle against was the unwillingness of police and others to admit that the mechanics of justice might have broken down in this one case. The police are shown in an unflattering light, which is unfair. They can do no more than operate the law with the consciousness that they are not infallible and that justice is a blind goddess.

The acting is almost universally good. James Stewart, of course, knows this kind of character off by heart. He has done it so many times. Lee J. Cobb, as the editor, is pleasing. Richard Conte as the innocent man is dignified as well as pathetic. Kasia Orzweiski as the mother is as dignified as the director would let her be.

There are one or two curious moments in the film. The divorce which the convict, a Polish Catholic, insists that his wife undertake, is compensated for by the manner in which it is accepted. The non-Catholic prison chief says of him: "Being a Catholic, he would feel married in spite of the divorce". The mother to whom the reporter has announced his intention of giving up the case, says, "I have no friend left—no friend left", then, looking towards a statue of Our Lady, adds, "that's not true; I have one".

The deep-focus, about which much was written when it was used for Hamlet is here used effectively without, perhaps, being noticed by the average film-goer.

There is an odd slip on the part of the director. The boy, whose photograph is to be taken by the reporter, automatically moves into the position which he had been drilled to take up!

A worthwhile film with many moments of entertainment, some of tension and lots of power.

WHAT YOUR MITE Might Do
See page 28

This is a film which rather keeps you guessing. Battle scene—the unsuccessful propagation of the philosophy of good-will—knockabout farce. Just what is it getting at? Is it going to be a tract on moral rearmament combined with physical disarmament? Apparently not, for it ends with the blast of a bugle proving the only deterrent for incurably selfish neighbours, which, for all except the pacifist, seems sound enough symbolism.

It is all to the good that a film with plenty of entertainment value should attempt to come to grips with ideas and contemporary problems, even if the grip seems sometimes a little precarious. If at times the picture might be thought a little silly and the sound-track irritating with its "musical comments", there is vitality and a good deal of wit. But the line between satire and cynicism can sometimes be a little difficult to draw.

A short, good natured but devastating skit on the hearty type of parson in a pullover broke some new ground and gave me considerable pleasure.

I look forward to the next film written and directed by Jeffrey Dell.


In this story Margaret Lockwood, who plays Ann Markham, a trusted member of the British Embassy in Rio de Janeiro, rushes into a messy marriage with a borderer called Charles Kent (Griffith Jones) who is wanted by the police for several reasons. Charles (I got the impression that Griffith Jones, who plays this part, has affected the cynical manner of George Sanders, who played Bel Ami, you may remember, in The Private Affairs of Bel Ami) bumps into Ann in a motor accident when he is trying to rescue a dog. I do not know whether this incident had any effect on Ann's sub-conscious mind but from now onwards she goes to pieces emotionally and becomes the lap-dog of Charles Kent, the crookedest of crooks whom she eventually marries and who doesn't even lead her a dog's life. Ann would have done better for herself if she had given her devotion to the rescued dog instead of to the man who rescued the dog. Still, in a way she deserved all she got for a girl who could hold down a job in the British Embassy should not have been so stupid as to take a man at his face value. This sort of Lockwood love is not only blind, it is deaf and daft and dumb. There is no sense in wasting space on this silly piece, but tribute should be paid to Norman Wooland, who plays the part of the millionaire whom Charles cheats and blackmails and whom Ann eventually marries. I should also mention that the direction is very good indeed. Needless to mention, I suppose, that in this film a divorce is as easily acquired as a dog licence.


This film tells of a misanthropic American doctor, who, because his wife has left him, spends his time big-game hunting in India. He wounds a tiger which becomes a man-eater and kills many villagers. The doctor's indifference to the lives of the villagers is eventually overcome and he goes out to seek the man-eater and is killed by the tiger at the same time that he gives it the coup de grace. As a counterpoint to this there is a theme dealing with the vagaries of the local religion which demands that a husband re-marry if his wife is unable to bear him a child. Though non-Christain in background there is an element of parable about this film that is worth pondering. The white man's "civilising" activities have often resulted in death and distress to the peaceful agriculturalists of the other half of the world and all too often the
white man fails to recognise or admit his share in the process of deterioration.

The jungle scenes are more than usually beautiful and convincing and the tiger, who fails to get a credit, steals the acting honours. Sabu is no more an actor than usual. Joanne Page looks remarkably like an Indian woman. The other bit players and the one main set, a village farm, are adequate.

Some children who like jungle stories might care for this film but I think that the rather adult argument and some gruesome scenes make it unsuitable for children in general. V.

**HERE COME THE HUGGETS.**


Inspired by the success of *Holiday Camp* Gainsborough Pictures have decided to produce a series of three films dealing with the Hugget "happy family" to be completed before the end of the year. Is there an element of over-confidence in this scheme? You can overplay your hand even at Happy Family. Quite frankly this film is mediocre; whether it is worth your 1s. 9d. depends on the value you place on 1s. 9d.—I advise the 1s. seats.

The Huggetts, Mother, Father and three daughters, live in lower middle-class suburbia. The advent of gay cousin Diana of the bottom middle-class strata disturbs the domestic scene. The youngest daughter, "Pet", suspects wrongly that her father has fallen under the spell of Diana and acts with juvenile stupidity to mend matters. Jane, the eldest daughter, has a problem of her own; she does not know whether to marry, at short notice, her fiancé whom she has not seen for a long time. Mr. Huggett nearly loses his job, but doesn't. Jane gets married. The film ends.

Some of the home life scenes are surprisingly authentic. The acting of Jack Warner and Kathleen Harrison as Mr. and Mrs. Huggett is excellent. Of the minor parts, Diana Dors as Diana and John Blythe as the garage owner achieve distinction. Maurice Denham and Hal Osmond, who install a telephone at the beginning of the film should have come back at the end to remove it. Such a comedy would help to compensate for the lack of any adequate theme. The humour that is present depends too much on conversation rather than on situation or action. There is an occasional touch of coarseness reminiscent of British Films when they were in the doldrums, T.

**THE VOICE OF THE TURTLE.**


I am assured that the film is a good, indeed an improved version of John van Druten's play which was so successful in New York and so disappointing over here. Although it has no ideas to put over and it would be sheer waste of time to summarise the trivial, yet the film may be highly amusing for those who don't object to sophisticated innocence. The principals (Ronald Reagan and Eleanor Parker) act with great charm, there are many witty lines, and there is a juicy but hard-boiled part for Eve Arden.

The plot, such as it is, trembles throughout on the verge of an impropriety it never achieves. Not novel, yet fresh! X.


It would have been nice to recommend this film. Its atmosphere is of married fidelity and family solidarity. An advocate of a divorce is badly beaten up. Getting drunk definitely doesn't pay. Young Robert Ellis has a form of juvenile talent and S. Z. Sakall is not without humour.

But what a tedious, obvious, used up business it is, this story of the ups and downs of a vaudeville act in 1912 and thereabouts, "You can't walk out on vaudeville," says Jack Carson. But I was sorely tempted. Q.
ON AN ISLAND WITH YOU. Starring: Esther Williams, Jimmy Durante, with Cyd Charisse, Xavier Cugat and his Orchestra. 

Producer: Joe Pasternak. 
Director: Richard Thorpe. Distributors: M.-G.-M. In technicolor. 

Reader: Did you like this film? 
Q.: Not much. 
Reader: Then why did you go to it? 
Q.: Because Mr. McPherson sent me a free ticket. 
Reader: I think that was awfully decent of him. He must be a very nice man. 
Q.: He is a very nice man. 
Reader: Who are in the film? 
Q.: Esther Williams, who dives and swims well, Cyd Charisse and Ricardo Montalban, who dance well, and Xavier... 
Reader: Does he convert Esther Waters? 
Q.: Who? 
Reader: St. Francis Xavier. 
Q.: No, no. This is another Xavier, Mr. Xavier Cugat, the orchestrarian. And it isn't Esther Waters this time. She is often in and out of the water, but the name is Williams. You must try and be more intelligent about the cinema. 
Reader: It's all so confusing. What does Esther Whatshernamedo? 
Q.: She is supposed to be a film actress. 
Reader: What do you mean "supposed to be"? Isn't she really a film actress? 
Q.: Of course. But she's supposed to be another one. 
Reader: What other one? 
Q.: Rosalind Rennolds. You see, in the film they make another film. 
Reader: You mean you see a camera and somebody says "Cut!" 
Q.: That's it. And there's a naval Lootenants who is a technical adviser. 
Reader: What's a technicoloured adviser? 
Q.: Not technicoloured, technical. He sees that when a film star plays a naval officer he doesn't put his uniform on upside down. And he takes her in an aircraft to an island five hundred miles away. 
Reader: What for? 
Q.: To dance with her. You see, she's engaged to her leading man, Ricardo, and so she won't dance with Lootenants at the hotel, only on a remote island. 
Reader: Is that all? 
Q.: No. He tells her he's crazy about her. 
Reader: Then surely I've seen this film. 
Q.: No. Somebody says that in another film too. 
Reader: Really? 
Q.: When they want to return they find that part of the aircraft is missing, so they have to wait and be rescued by the navy. And darkness overtakes them. 
Reader: Overtakes them, does it? What do they do then? 
Q.: They don't. This picture has a U certificate. But when the navy returns her to her fiancé there is an Estrangement. You see, he doesn't really like her spending the night on islands with Lootenants, even under U certificate rules. Also he doesn't like it when she tells a thumping lie "just to help". 
Reader: Quite a moral theologian. Is he a Catholic? 
Q.: I wouldn't be surprised. He is some kind of dago. However, his dancing partner has been in love with him for a long time, and so when he finds out she has a Spanish grandmother he stops being in love with Rosalind and falls in love with her. 
Reader: Of course. And what about Jimmy Durante? 
Q.: How did you know he was in the film? 
Reader: I've just read the bit at the top. 
Q.: Well, he's not awfully funny this time really. 
Reader: I thought he was supposed to be funny. 
Q.: He is supposed to be. He plays opposite Xavier Cugat's little dog. 
Reader: I love dogs. 
Q.: Not this one you wouldn't.
Reader: Well, I think I must go to this picture.
Q.: Why?
Reader: Well, I always say if the cinema is comfy and you can get a good cup of tea, it doesn’t matter much about the film.

Q.


This is a “dubbed” version of the film produced and shown some ten years ago. It has been remade with B.B.C. players speaking the parts of the Italian actors. It is now available for theatrical and non-theatrical distribution in 35mm. and 16mm.

It tells the story of the Saint’s childhood, his seminary days, his work among the youth of Turin and the foundation of the Salesian Congregation. The treatment is frankly conventional and makes no attempt to develop character convincingly. The Italian players tend to overplay their parts though the children are good. The very English voices of David Spenser as the young Don Bosco and of Abraham Sofaer as the grown-up priest come a little incongruously from the very Italian faces and gestures. That is one of the unsatisfactory aspects of films that have a new sound-track in a language that is not that of the country of production.

The photography, as almost inevitably in Italian films, is, in places, superb. An unfortunate feature of the film, however, is the interpellation of 16mm. shots, taken, evidently, by amateurs on the mission fields. Technically, what has happened is that the silent film taken at 16 frames per second, is here shown in a film which is running at the normal speed of 24 frames per second. The result is disastrous. Priests and natives seem to be rushing about in an automatic fever of excitement which destroys the dignity and seriousness of the latter part of the film.

Another thing that may distress the ears of some people is the unnecessarily harsh, strident and unrelenting musical background to the film. This may be largely a matter of taste, but the best films do not need much help from the sound department.

This film will be a great success, doubtless, among the film-starved members of our Catholic organisations. Perhaps the money which they will pay to see this film will enable a really worthy one to be made of this great and lovable Saint, the pioneer of our modern Youth Movements.

V.


The synopsis handed out at the Press Show of T-Men, pictures Dennis O’Keefe with a revolver in one hand and a terri-fied but glamorous-looking blonde in the other. Doubtless this picture will go on the giant hoardings to advertise the film. This will be to misrepresent the film and to do it an injustice. It is not a glamour film. It tells a story about the work of the Treasury department detectives and a love interest has no part in it.

Indeed, T-Men is remarkable in that it has allowed no red-herrings. The script writers have done a good job of work. Treated in the fashionable documentary manner, it ranks with 13 Rue Madeleine, House On 92nd Street and Naked City, though it does not reach the cool and perfect excellence of the latter outstanding picture. The efforts of the T-Men to run a gang of counterfeiters to earth is thrillingly and economically told. I recommend it to all who like a well-built thriller.

Dennis O’Keefe is at home as a detective but the palms go, I think, to Alfred Ryder as his buddy. He has great power of suggesting something held in reserve. We may see him again.

The subject is pagan but there is, somehow, if only in the names of the detectives, an undertone of Catholic morality which is welcome.

V.
ROPE


"E" says that because a film is about decadent people that does not mean to say that the film is decadent. He thinks that "Rope" is morally sound, dramatically good, technically fascinating.

After the press show I found myself talking to a man in the cinema world who expressed surprise (if not amazement) when I told him that I liked the film: Rope. "Er... that's very interesting," he said; he seemed to look at my collar and added: "I'm surprised to hear you say that, Sir... I should have thought that a man of your calling would have disliked it." "But, why?" I enquired. He offered me a cigarette. As we lit up, he answered... "Well it's so decadent, morbid and sordid." We fell into argument and I endeavoured to make the point that because a film is about decadent people that does not mean to say that the film is decadent.

The film: Rope (I presume by now that everyone knows that it is from Patrick Hamilton's world famous stage play) is about two decadent young university men, Brandon (John Dall) and Philip (Farley Granger), who have convinced themselves that murder is just as much a creative art as painting, sculpture, music, etc., and that it gives the same rewards. They believe that it is right and proper for the intellectually
superior to kill off the intellectually inferior. They consider their college companion, David Kentley (Dick Hogan), to be intellectually inferior and just for the fun of the thing, just to prove their belief, they kill him; moreover, in order to show how very tough and superior they are (so much superior that they can step outside the moral law) they throw a party and invite David's father (excellently played by Sir Cedric Hardwicke), his girl friend Janet (Joan Chandler), some other friends and professor Rupert Cadell, who initiated them to this idea and who will be intellectual enough to appreciate their art; to get the full flavour of their creative act, the sadistic brutes make the chest in which they have hidden the dead man serve as the banqueting table which they adorn with flowers and the most dainty of dishes!

Of course, if there was anything in this film which upheld this decadent doctrine, it would be a morally bad film, however, the whole story debunks this lunatic doctrine, for the intellectual superiority which these so called intellectuals had hoped to demonstrate does not come off: "Conscience doth make cowards of us all"; after the murder we see Philip going around like a nervous disease (he takes an awful lot of drink, but that does not quieten his conscience). Brandon affects to be cool, calm and collected and to be experiencing the joy that comes to the creative artist when he has completed a piece of work, but inwardly he is quivering like a rat, his very excitability gives him away and leads Rupert Cadell to suspect that something phoney is going on. Rupert Cadell makes it his business to find out. A childish mistake which the intellectual Brandon has made gives him the clue. When Philip knows that Rupert knows about the murder he goes to pieces and we see Brandon pleading hysterically with Rupert to understand them for it was he who gave them the idea. In no uncertain terms Rupert tells them that they have twisted his words said in joke into a foul crime. To Philip he says:

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The superior man (Brandon) rejoicing in his "creative art"!
"Who do you think you are . . . God?" He denounces them as murderers and reminds them of the fifth commandment: Thou shalt not kill. Then he calls in the police.

As a thriller, *Rope* is good entertainment; in this film you have screen suspense at its best; there is not a dull moment, and there is not a dull actor. It is a long time since I have seen such all-round good acting. A fine piece of casting! Joan Chandler and Constance Collier and Cedric Hardwicke as the meek, rather sombre Mr. Kentley provide the exact amount of relief in a play which is so very fast and intense and all suspense.

Technically, this film is fascinating; it reveals a new world of camera technique and production technique; and we are in Alfred Hitchcock's debt for this latest invention which keeps the camera moving for as much as ten minutes at a time and which eliminates a lot of waste of time and money; but whether this technique will suit all films I have my doubts. It suits this particular film admirably, it heightens the drama, it increases the element of suspense but—Will this technique give us the best of two worlds: the theatre and the cinema or will it destroy film as a distinct art form?

E.
members of the expedition in the ward-rob of the "Terra Nova" opening telegrams of good wishes

Dr. Wilson (Harold Warrender) tries to comfort his wife about his decision to go on the expedition

Ilison examines a flea as part of his work for the Grouse Commission

**SCOTT OF THE ANTARCTIC**

Captain Scott's last journey to


There can be few stories more moving than that of Captain Scott's last journey to the South Pole. Foiled by Amundsen in his attempt to be the first to reach it, and failing at the last to reach his base when only eleven miles from it, his heroic failure becomes, as it is revealed in his diary, his triumph. A triumph of the human spirit, and as such it takes its place among the glorious episodes of our history. The story once read is not easily forgotten; and to see it, as it can now be seen, is to share in an intensely moving experience.
ole is a triumph of the human spirit. As such it takes its place among the glorious episodes of histo

The difficulties involved in making this into a worthy film must have been immense. Quite apart from the physical problems involved in coping with all the paraphernalia of a film unit on location, on glaciers and snowfields, there is the far more delicate problem of selection. A proper balance must be maintained between the preliminaries to the journey and the journey itself. The parting of these men from their wives, charged as it must have been with deep feeling, must not be allowed to develop into sentimentality. The fantastic beauties of the setting must not interfere with the proper development of the story. Above all, interest must be maintained in the long march to the Pole without allowing the spectator to become so involved in the weariness of it that his attention wanders; yet hunger and thirst, discomfort and pain must never be lost sight of. And then finally, it is essential to present convincingly the peculiar reserve of the English character, by striking a nice balance between mock heroics and meaningless understatement. Remembering always that these were men of tradition, trained in the strictest discipline, with a code of honour and an absence of cynicism that after two wars seems like a manifestation from another world. In spite of these difficulties, the greater part of this film is indeed worthy of its theme.

That the opening sequences are not so good as the rest, is partly due to the limitations of technicolor. This remarkable invention is by no means perfect, and still lends an air of extreme unreality to indoor scenes. The colours are still too garish to be natural (perhaps that is why it is so successful in Cartoons and fantastic comedies) and it is difficult to be fully absorbed in
The suffering Oates (Derek Bond) is supported by Dr. Wilson Scott (John Mills) with one of the ponies at a depot.
the story when the faces of the actors change colour from time to time, or when, as here, the scenery outside Dr. Wilson's cottage looks exactly like a painted backcloth perhaps it was). Yet in the sea and snow-scapes, the technicolor comes into its own, and save for two shots of the Aurora Borealis which are bad, actually helps to make this a picture of wonderful beauty.

Unavoidably too, the first part of the film has to be exposition. There are some fine moments in it, particularly where Scott decides he will take Oates, and later where Bowers is accepted; but on the whole it cannot very well help being rather pedestrian. The women of Diana Churchill and Anne Firth have the thankless task of creating an atmosphere of distress at the departure of their men, and of emphasising the dangers they are about to undergo, after which their work is done.

The men are entirely convincing. Whether they are faithful replicas of the originals or not is immaterial, for they act as one would expect such men to behave, and strike no false-note at all. Consequently their experiences become our experiences; what matters to them soon begins to matter to us; we cease to watch, we begin to live the story.

As Captain Scott, John Mills triumphantly avoids all the pitfalls. His work is a fine study of a great leader: natural, consistent, and a delight to watch. It is a well-written part, and of course dominates the film, as it should. But as a team the others too are magnificent, and each in his own way gives a perfectly balanced performance. The part of Dr. Wilson however, stands by itself: it is by far the most difficult. He was rather older than the rest, and on him therefore the effects of hardship were more evident. This gradual change, in voice, in bearing and in expression is brilliantly interpreted by Harold Warrender in one of the finest performances I have ever seen.

To Derek Bond falls the delicate task of coping with the death of Captain Oates. It will be remembered that on the return journey one of his feet became badly frostbitten. So badly that in the opinion of Dr. Wilson he was unable to walk any further. The supply of food had nearly come to an end. With him as passenger there was no possibility of the other three reaching the base camp. Without him there might still be hope. So, according to the Diary, he left the tent, knowing full well that this would mean certain death from exposure. It has been held that this was suicide and therefore unjustifiable. Theologians however distinguish between direct and indirect suicide. Indirect suicide means that you do something which itself is indifferent (such as leaving a tent) but from which you forsee as a result, that your life will be lost (from exposure). This kind of "suicide" is lawful if there is a proportionally grave reason (the lives of his three companions were at stake) for permitting the evil effect (his death). Fr. Henry Davis, S.J., actually quotes this instance: "One may offer to another the means of life at the certain risk of one's own life, such as to . . . leave necessary food for others, as Captain Oates did in walking from the tent into the Antarctic cold to certain death." ("Moral and Pastoral Theology", Vol. II.) And that is exactly what is suggested in the film.

The direction gives us some admirable moments. A recitation at the Christmas party at the base camp struck me as being successful because it included the audience at the camp, and was not played as a "turn" to the audience in the house, as in some recent films. The appearance of the penguins is wholly delightful, and is not kept up for too long, and the same economy of time can be observed when one of the party falls into a crevasse. Scenes like these which contribute, but are in no way essential to the action, are so often carried on beyond endurance. But the most moving scene of all is perhaps that of the shooting of the ponies, where all we see is halter thrown upon halter in a pathetic heap, and where the only sound is that of the shots and the howling of the wind.

The music has been composed by Dr. Vaughan Williams. Here it really is background music, acting as an accompaniment to the very beautiful shots of snowfields, mountain scenery and glaciers which from time to time are shown for their own sake. As I cannot listen to music when I am intent on something else, I can only say I was not disturbed by it, and that it seemed, as one would expect from so eminent
a composer, to fit in very well. Nor does it interfere with the dialogue. Indeed, in this film the sounds of nature are so wild as to be musical in the extreme, and they are fortunately allowed to play an important part in creating the atmosphere.

Is this a gloomy film? I think not. To a Catholic there is nothing gloomy about death when it is linked to an ideal. And although the ideal of Captain Scott and his companions was not manifestly supernatural, they had, besides being imbued with the spirit of high adventure, a deep-rooted belief in God. They knew the meaning of selflessness, of humility, of loyalty, and in the practice of these virtues, came to their heroic end. For that we should honour them, and for showing these things we should be grateful to those who made the film.

W.


Those who were moved by the great Australian epic The Overlanders will not be less impressed by its American counterpart Red River. Theme, treatment and individual scenes are similar, but this time it is a record, not of the trek across the Australian desert, but the Chisholm Trail from Texas over the wild country and across the Red River to Aberline—and this with 10,000 head of cattle. All the possibilities of such a story are exploited, and we have magnificent displays of ranching, horse-riding, crack shooting, to say nothing of the mutiny of the men and the stampede of the cattle. Here we have cowboy adventure at its best.

Consistently convincing are all the members of the large cast. John Wayne (Dunson), Walter Brennan (Grout) and Montgomery Clift (Garth) are outstanding. Clift is a new-comer to the screen, and combines all manner of prowess with charm and good looks. I fancy the public will want to see more of him.

G.


This is a harmless film in which James Cagney plays the part of an eccentric philanthropist. With the exception of one very villainous villain, everybody is charming to watch, though alas, Miss Jeanne Cagney cannot act, even when she is showing that she can't. The action takes place almost entirely in a saloon (bar), since the story, which is from the successful play by William Sarayon concerns the lives of the customers. It is an actors' piece, but while the acting is adequate, the theme and plot are too slight and the lack of the third dimension too evident—perhaps just because it is all played in one setting—to make a very satisfactory film. Even if it is rather long, those with plenty of time on their hands may well be entertained by it.

W.


An overlong and silly story in glorious technicolor about a girl who dreams that she is in love with a pirate while actually engaged to a solid pumpkin of an elderly mayor. The mayor turns out to be the pirate and the pirate turns out to be Gene Kelly. The latter arranges a series of quite effeminate dances which will not add to his reputation in this art. Judy Garland does her best (which is not very good), with a part that is never sure whether it belongs to the category of farce, extravaganza or simple cabaret. The last 20 minutes of the film are made bearable by the spritely clowning of Judy and Gene, but they do not eradicate the painful memory of an hour's "singing" of "songs" "written" by Mr. Cole Porter.

V.

The story of a woman to whom a frantic and criminal husband suggests that she is suffering from a mental illness. This theme has had its classic version in Gaslight. This alone, however, need not lessen the value of Sleep My Love. (The medieval farce—"The Peasant Deceived by his Wife"—exists in more than ten different versions, four of which are of a really high standard.) But this film, although far from being a failure, lacks the tragic, tense character of Gaslight; it is a bare, cynical felony.

Dick Courtland (Don Ameche), apparently happily married to Alison (Claudette Colbert), has got entangled in the snares of a vamp, Daphne (Hazel Brooks). Daphne's sex-appeal technique is reminiscent of Marlene Dietrich in The Blue Angel. She is too, too vampish. She wants everything Alison has got: her jewels, her home, her name. Daphne is a model for Mr. Vernay (George Coulouris) who also wants to be in on this easy filching. His face is his fortune—quite sinister when he puts on his glasses—and with that face appearing before Alison at unexpected moments, and she the only one to see it, well, is there a psychiatrist in the house?

The deus ex machina is Bruce (Robert Cummings) who meets Alison on a plane and from then onwards takes more than a fatherly interest in her. So there you have it: Dick the poison and Bruce the antidote.

The acting by the minor characters is good, especially by the volatile and gushing Barby (Rita Johnson) and also by Mrs. Vernay (Queenie Smith) who plays the honest soul feigning ignorance of her husband's dark machinations. Claudette Colbert can play the person happy "under the influence" to perfection, but then she's been playing that for many years now.

The plot is not always as transparent as it might be. The photography is good, but the film lacks the tense atmosphere of Gaslight.


Not everybody has the gift of telling a funny story really well. We all know how embarrassing it is to be button-holed by a fellow who (with the best will in the world) tells you a funny story and all you can produce in return is a hollow ha ha or a watery smile. But, if it is difficult for some people to tell a funny story without making it a pain in the neck, it is doubly difficult for some people to tell a whimsical story without making it a pain all over the body. The quality of whimsy is not strained. If it is strained it loses all its savour. To my mind, the film Another Shore (which is about Gulliver Shiel's who dreams of the day when he will rescue a fair maid or an old maid and pick up a fortune and then turn his back on the noise of civilisation and buy up an Island in the South Seas) has lost all its savour because it is directed and played by the wrong people. Robert Beatty is a fine actor, but he is not the whimsical type—he is no Gulliver; and though Stanley Holloway can play the Cockney to perfection he does not understand the Irish mind: a few beorras and bedads and don't you know's do not make the Irishman. The faults of this film lie not in the stars but in the man who chose the (wrong) stars. There are some Irishmen who by nature are whimsical and when they tell this type of story they have some quality in their hearts which make it delightfully amusing. A man after the heart of F. J. McCormick would have made a wonderful Gulliver Shiel's. I liked Moira Lister's playing of Jennifer. She gave the impression that she understood the story.

Although this film has not captured the whimsicality of the story it has retained by virtue of its lovely photography of Dublin and its environs a little of its freshness and charm.
David Niven who appears in the film "Bonnie Prince Charlie"
JOURNEY TO VENICE—II
By John A. V. Burke

Abbé Jean Dewavrin, the Director of the Centrale Catholique du Cinema et de la Radio is a warm-hearted, enthusiastic and hospitable Frenchman. He is devoted to his work, which is not finished when he has seen the latest film or written the last moral and artistic appreciation. His welcome to, and interest in Father Declan and myself, is typical of the complete concern with all that is human that characterises the true priest. People have sometimes said that it is indecorous or unnecessary or even scandalous that priests should concern themselves so intimately with the things of the cinema and the studio. Such views are, of course, exaggerated and shallow, but the answer to them, if, indeed, an answer is needed, is to be seen in priests like Father Dewavrin. Absolutely devoted to his work as priest, he is army chaplain, writer of books on morality for youth, film-reviewer, director of Catholic Action and other things besides. He represents the willingness of the Church to be associated with everything that can minister to the ultimate perfection of the human personality on its way to union with the Creator.

The "Fiches du Cinema" which Abbé Dewavrin publishes monthly devote a page to each film, giving an appreciation of the story, technical and acting criticism and an estimate of moral value, placing each film in one or other of five categories. These categories correspond more or less to those of Focus with the exception that the last two are condemnatory: déconseiller, not-recommended, and proscire, forbidden. As our readers know, the Catholic Film Society has, from the beginning, refrained from publishing in the list which is so important a part of our service, films that are positively not-recommended, or those which are condemned. That means that of the films which appear in our official list, all are considered, with obvious modifications, a safe selection for our readers to choose from. We thus avoid advertising the films which we consider really unsafe to be seen.

Abbé Dewavrin was eager to know all about the workings of the Catholic Film Society and our reactions to the various French films which find their way into the British cinema. On the other hand, we were surprised at the poverty of invention and triteness of many films being shown at the big cinemas in the Champs Elysees and our tendency to praise the French cinema on the ground of the excellence of those examples which come to Britain suffered a modifying influence.

We visited the exhibition at the Invalides devoted to St. Joan of Arc. Its exhaustive detail was rounded off with a complete set of stills from Ingrid Bergmann’s new film about the Maid of Orleans. We were able to compare the facsimiles of original places and costumes and characters with those devised for the film and, on the whole, it looked a very promising production. Ingrid manages to look surprisingly like the engravings and contemporary etchings of the Saint.

A visit to the President of O.F.D.A. to enquire about the fortunes of Monsieur Vincent elicited information about its chances in Great Britain which afterwards proved to be misleading. The reason was that nobody seemed willing to risk a general distribution of a French film in Great Britain in spite of the unanimity of the critics, French and British, on the excellence of the film. In the event, we are able to say that, owing greatly to the persistence of the Catholic Film Society the demands for the film in Great Britain have become so urgent that the present owners of the rights in Great Britain have decided to give it a Trade Show. It now remains for Catholics to roll up in their tens of thousands in order that such a venture may not fail through lack of practical support.
Monsieur de la Grandiere also gave us interesting news of the progress of The Divine Tragedy. This is a film which is to deal with the Passion of Our Lord. It is a monumental undertaking. It will be made by Abel Gance, one of the great names in film history, the Frenchman whose contribution to cinema art ranks with that of D. W. Griffiths, even if it does not, at some points, surpass it. The Divine Tragedy is to be a truly international affair. Made in Egypt and Switzerland with an anonymous cast, anonymous author, it will be produced in three languages, English, Spanish and French. I have read the script and it certainly promises to be a work of evangelical impact, bringing to bear upon modern problems such as centre round the atom bomb, the dilemma of Christianity : that that is not with me is against me. More, much more, will be heard of this production as it advances through the various stages of its difficult career.

During my explorations of the Left Bank, the bookstalls along the Seine revealed large numbers of books on the aesthetics of the cinema. The French seem much more willing to go into print on this subject than we are. Perhaps they are inclined to overdo things, but I am sure that there is room for a great deal of thought on the purely artistic aspects of the film. Perhaps the article from the pen of Père Morlion, apostle of "Filmology", which is to appear in the first number of the "International Film Review", will stimulate a controversy on this pregnant subject.

We stayed a night at Basle where we met Dr. Jean Bernard, President of O.C.I.C. accompanied by Mlle. Yv. de Hemptinne, the General Secretary. We also joined forces with the Belgian delegates, Jean Debongnie and Joseph van Liempt, who were, like us, en route to Venice. It was tempting and exasperating to see the magnificent and comparatively cheap cinematographic apparatus in the shop windows. It was interesting to notice the films that were then showing. Monsieur Vincent and Great Expectations faced each other across the main thoroughfare. Rather incongruously, Love Story made a third film for the citizens of Basle that week.

The Swiss are very keen about British films. They are excellent critics and have a highly developed artistic appreciation. They pick out the obvious faults in our films with something akin to apology. They like Odd Man Out, Brief Encounter, Way to the Stars, and rank them very highly. We fear that recent offerings from the British studios will do little to maintain the reputation we have won among these friendly and discerning people.

(To be continued)

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CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY

NOTES

There are always too many things to write about and too little time and space in which to write them. The Honorary Secretary feels like a man holding a number of horses, each of which wants and has the right to gallop off in a different direction! Unfortunately, they have each to be kept in touch, one with the other, and each, naturally, thinks his own journey the most necessary! One of these days, maybe, we shall have a number of stable boys, each with a horse to look after and also, most necessary, a stable to lodge in!

Talking of lodgings: we hope soon to tell you of our new address. Hitherto, we have been the guests of a generous member of the C.F.S. who has allowed us to clutter up her cottage with film reviews, lists, papers, typewriters, books, envelope-addressers, stamp-lickers and the multifarious other paraphernalia inseparable from an office, even the smallest. To her we are very grateful and offer our apologies for the chaos which has reigned at The Blue Cottage for the past eighteen months.

Now it seems that St. Paul, whose motto was omnia omnibus, is about to offer us a local habitation more in keeping with the amount of work we have to do. The Society of St. Paul, which is a Religious Congregation of priests and laybrothers, whose work is the spread of the Gospel by means of Cinema, Press and Radio, has, with the gracious permission of His Eminence, Cardinal Griffin, opened a house in London. We are to be allocated a room as office. The rent will be possible through the enthusiastic and generous support of Mr. Alan Turner. Not only is Mr. Turner a talented maker of films in his own right, he is a member of the C.F.S. who has realised the urgency of our work and needs and has solicited the practical support of a number of business associates. As a result, we now have the rent of our new office guaranteed for a year. We are grateful to all these gentlemen.

It now remains to equip the office adequately. We need all kinds of office furniture. Perhaps some of our readers could indicate the whereabouts of filing cabinets, tables, chairs and typewriters suitable for our task. Hitherto our own and our friends' machines and furniture have suffered depreciation in the good cause. Perhaps the time for their demobilisation has now arrived.

We shall be able to announce the new address and all particulars next month.

We go to press too early to be able to report on the Annual General Meeting. We are sorry that Kathleen Ryan was unable to be present. She wrote to say that the original date, November 29th, had been reserved by her for our meeting. She could not manage the second date. However, she sent us good wishes and said she would be there in spirit.

Liverpool Catholic Action organised an excellent Film Conference on Sunday, November 21st. Bellverdire Convent, through the courtesy of the Faithful Companions of Jesus, housed about 300 teachers and Youth Leaders and others interested in films. His Grace, Archbishop Downey, preached a stimulating sermon at the Mass which opened the Conference. A talk on Catholic Film Action was given by the Honorary Secretary. A Brains Trust was held of which the members comprised W. J. Speakman of the Merseyside Exhibitors Association and L. F. Wilson, Secretary of the Merseyside Film Institute, in addition to the Honorary Secretary of the Catholic Film Society. A practical demonstration of Visual Aids was organised by the Sisters of Mount Pleasant Training College.

It is proposed that the next meeting of the General Council of O.C.I.C. shall take place in London. The delegates are to be the guests of the Catholic Film Society, which is to be our way of working off our debt to the Central Office. Each National Centre in turn
FOCUS

undertakes to organise the Annual Meeting of the General Council. We shall look forward to welcoming our colleagues to London and hope that they will find things more advanced and developed than when last the President of the O.C.I.C., Dr. Bernard, was here in July 1947.

Clearly we shall need much help from many benefactors. The venue of the O.C.I.C. Meeting will be London. It will be the occasion of a Summer School or other Catholic Film Conference. Since all the foreign delegates of O.C.I.C. are university graduates in their respective countries, we shall have assembled an important cross-section of world-wide Catholic intelligencia.

The Premiere of The Sacrifice We Offer will be shown in London towards the end of January. It is hoped that His Eminence Cardinal Griffin will be able to be present to give this new and important Alan Turner film the encouraging send-off it deserves.

The film will be available for general release in April. Details of hire and/or purchase of this film may be obtained on application to the Catholic Film Society or to Alan Turner, Spa Lane Mills, Derby.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FOREIGN FILMS

Sir,

John M. W. Slater has misunderstood the point of our remarks about the showing of foreign films. Film societies, of course, can obtain films already in this country at a comparatively modest cost. What we had in mind was to set up a distributing organisation which would obtain from the producer countries films of Catholic interest not otherwise likely to be seen in this country.

We regret that so far there have been no offers of help from the ten thousand other Catholics to whom Mr. Slater refers, but the assistance which he himself proffers will be very welcome.

Incidentally, is not Michael North “goodly” to look upon?

Yours faithfully,

V.

TWO POINTS OF VIEW

Sir,

There are two criticisms alleged in these parts against your reviews. One is that they are too allusive in character, making it difficult to know exactly what the reviewer is trying to say. The second criticism is that some of your reviews are more an exercise in alleged wit than a truly objective account of the film under review. I suppose criticism is always largely personal, however objective the style of its expression. Nevertheless, people are made hostile to a man’s opinion if they feel that he is writing more to exhibit his own erudition than to instruct. I think film-reviewing on the Observer model is bad policy, and we would learn more from less pretentious reviews. Comparative history, literary notes on the relation of play to film, general reflections on life and films . . . they should be brutally suppressed from reviews.

Yours faithfully,

PATRICK McENROE.

Sir,

I am not a Catholic, but I am glad that my friend has introduced me to Focus. There are films that are well worth seeing even although so many are just plain rubbish. I have discovered that the opinions of your reviewers are, broadly, the same as my own, and to have a reliable opinion does save so much wasted time and money on the said rubbish, and much irritability too. Further, I enjoy the amusing style in which your reviewer writes. My family have this evening been chuckling over “terra more or less firma”, etc., especially as the film was seen and the full point of the joke appreciated!

Yours faithfully,

(MISS) E. E. WILLCOCK.
LEARNING TO SEE
FROM OUR EDUCATIONAL PANEL

This month's educational contribution consists of a set of reviews of "visual aids" which might be used in lectures or discussion groups for young people, with the object of training the taste and appreciation of good design. It is evident that this is a sphere in which visual aids could be extremely helpful, and one in which they will probably be increasingly employed in the future.

LIBRARIES:
Common Ground Ltd., Sydney Place, S.W.7.
Gateway Film Productions, 84 Powys Lane, Palmers Green, N.13.
Wallace Heaton Ltd., 127 New Bond Street, W.1.

WHAT IS DESIGN. Film strip, 1 reel. "Common Ground". CGB 260. On sale from E.S.A. Hire 15/-, from Wallace Heaton, 2/- first day, 6d. subs. days.

The subject is introduced by a series of pictures to show that there is design in everything—an aeroplane, an electric iron, a pine-cone—as well as in a formal design or a tapestry. This leads up to a chart of the factors that enter into design—the idea worked out in purpose, material, proportion, texture, colour and ornament. These elements are then illustrated by pictures of common objects—a teapot, a football jersey, a wooden mallet, a railway station, bridges, telephone sets, cups and saucers, mugs—and the strip concludes with some exercises in comparison.

When presented to a group of intelligent young adults who had given little previous consideration to the question of design, this strip provoked a general comment, "interesting!" which sums it up pretty well. The plan is good: the inductive approach arouses interest, the chart is clear, the examples varied and interesting and the addition of practical exercises is sound. Some of the examples might have been better and the comparisons were rather perfunctory: but the teacher or group leader could and should produce other examples afterwards—in this way the purpose of the strip would be achieved.

CHAIRS. Film strip, 1 reel. "Common Ground". CGB 184. Sale or hire as for last.

This is a splendid strip illustrating the evolution of the English Chair and showing the steady development of the native tradition in response to changing habits of life, modified from time to time by foreign influences.

Pictures of the primitive log seat are followed by those of the highbacked seats and fixed Cathedral chairs of the Middle Ages, and early stools and oak chests. These give place to the chair as we know it—the carved Elizabethan chair or the simple rush-seated spindle chair. The Jacobean Age brings walnut from Spain for the framework, and leather and cane for seating. Later come mahogany and upholstery, which bring us to the days of the great XVIII designers: Chippendale and Hepplewhite and Adams. And side by side with these goes on the slower development of the country types, especially the Windsor chair.

The debasement and vulgarisation of taste, and accompanying decline in workmanship, which mark the Victorian Age are vividly exemplified, and are followed by another portent—the mass-produced bentwood and standard easy chair of the turn of the century. The gradual revival of taste is illustrated, though not very strikingly, by some modern specimens showing the influence of Scandinavian timber and design; and the story ends on a hopeful note with an illustration showing the interaction of the traditional Windsor and the Scandinavian style.

THE HOUSE IN WHICH YOU LIVE. Film in colour, silent, 1 reel. 10 mins. Gateway. Hire 10/- first day, 5/- subs. days.

One of several films and strips that deal with the history of the House, tracing it from the primitive hut to the modern suburban villa. It opens with shots of children playing at houses, with a tent that resembles the dwellings of the Stone Age. The primitive hut is shown developing into the cruck
cottage, and this into the wattle-and-daub of half-timbered houses of the Middle Ages. Illustrations of many later styles are given—Jacobean, Dutch, Georgian and Victorian. Much interesting detail is given, and the colouring is very pleasing. The film suffers, however, in that the styles shown are characteristic of certain parts of the country only, mainly the Home Counties, while other parts, for instance the West Country and the North, are not represented. This would naturally have made the film much more costly to produce: but it would also have made it much more valuable.

**THE LAND, ITS USE AND BEAUTY.**

Film strip, 1 reel. "Common Ground". CGB 118. Sale or hire as for first.

The first of a series showing the work of the National Trust in preserving or reclaiming much of the Nation's heritage of beauty and usefulness, both natural and man-made. In this strip a representative cross-section is given of the achievements of the Trust, notably the beauty spots and open spaces which have been acquired for the Nation. Examples are also given of reconditioned cottages, and historic monuments and mansions that have been preserved, and of the work of the Trust in maintaining well-known breeds of sheep and cattle, and in the protection of wild life, and the preservation of many traditional crafts.

The photography is good, though not for the most part distinguished; the strip is rather lacking in sequence—but it makes one hope that the later strips in the series will deal more fully with different aspects of the work of the Trust—in this way the purpose of the series will be attained.

**NASH’S LONDON.** Film strip, 1 reel. "Common Ground". CGB 168. Sale and hire as for first.

Illustrates Regency building, with its strong and weak points, as an attempt at town planning made possible by the interest of George III. George III was to Nash as Charles II was to Wren. The strip includes a plan of Nash’s London, pictures of the Regent’s Park Terraces, The “Royal Mile”—Regent Street, the Quadrant, Waterloo Place, Carlton House without and within, and Buckingham Palace, left unfinished at the death of Nash’s Royal master and the consequent eclipse of the Architect. The photography is uniformly good and clear, and the pictures are well chosen and of great interest.

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**BOOK REVIEWS**

**Documentary 48.** (The Albyn Press, 42 Frederick Street, Edinburgh, 2/6.)

**Watching Films,** by Vernon Sproston. (Student Christian Movement Press, 2/-.)

**Penguin Film Review, No. 7.** (Penguin Books Ltd., 1/6.)

The Edinburgh Festival of Documentary films had its second triumphant justification this year. It is curious that Great Britain has not hitherto made use of the technique of festival in order to focus attention on her film achievements. Since it is to these islands that the best and first of the documentarists owe their allegiance, it is natural that the first festival of film should be mainly concerned with documentary films.

In this little brochure-form programme, we have articles about the various countries which presented films at the Festival and about the films themselves. Canada, Australia, China, India and Pakistan, Spain, Belgium and Denmark all are noticed in paragraphs from the pens of such well-known writers as Basil Wright, Roger Manvell, Forsyth Hardy and George W. Stoney. There is an especially valuable essay on World Documentary by Basil Wright in which he quotes the definition of the documentary film accepted in the Constitutions of the World Union of Documentary. It is
worth considering it in connection with and as a commentary on some passages of the Papal Encyclical on Films. "By the documentary film is meant all methods of recording on celluloid any aspect of reality, interpreted either by factual shooting or by sincere and justifiable reconstruction, so as to appeal either to reason or emotion, for the purpose of stimulating the desire for, and the widening of, human knowledge and understanding, and of truthfully posing problems and their solutions in the spheres of economics, culture and human relations." A curious shyness evidently precludes the mention of Religion in this list. It would, presumably, be allowed a corner in "human relations".

Mr. Vernon Sproxton provides a handy little introduction to those who wish to equip themselves with sufficient elementary knowledge of the cinema to be able to indulge in critical discussion of the films they see. Readers of Focus and its predecessor, Catholic Film News, will recognise much that is familiar in the pages of "Watching Films", for we have been saying these things for many years past. The sections headed, "Be Your Own Film Critic" and "The Christian Approach to Cinema" are particularly interesting to our readers. "Contact the managers of your local cinemas and tell them the kind of films you want. Plague them until they put on a film your group wants to see."

"Film Strip Projectors—Their Use in Education and Industry". Obtainable from P.D.A. House, 46 Bloomsbury Street, W.C.1.

A useful little handbook issued by the Photographic Dealers' Association for the guidance of people interested in film strip projection as an aid to education. It gives a short account of the development and principles of film strip projection and its use in education, medicine, industry and salesmanship, as well as in the home. Photographs of eight good makes of machine are included, and information as to the equipment required and how the film strips can be obtained. The booklet is well got up and the illustrations are good.

**SOME FILMS REVIEWED**

**NOTE.** Inclusion in this list does not connote positive recommendation. Films that are positively harmful are not included here. Readers are reminded to refer to the full reviews when assessing a film.

Category A, indicates adults only; B, adults and adolescents; C, family audiences; D, particularly for children.

**REVIEWED IN “Focus” (Vol. I, Nos. 11 and 12)**

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INTERNATIONAL FILM REVIEW

A New Cinema Quarterly, edited by the
International Catholic Cinema Office
FIRST ISSUE READY JANUARY 1949

Contents include:

OUR PLACE IN INTERNATIONAL LIFE
A Cinema Worthy of Christian Civilisation
Roger Millet

THE CINEMA AS MORAL AND CULTURAL EDUCATOR
Louise Marin

THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE CINEMA
Jean Benoît-Levy

UNESCO'S PROGRAMME
William Farr

A CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY OF THE CINEMA
Felix Morlion, O.P.

HOLLYWOOD CRISIS
Tom Prior and William H. Moore

THE CINEMA IN AMERICAN EDUCATION
Floyd Brooker

AIMS OF THE LEGION OF DECENCY
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It was the pennies of the Catholic population in France which made possible the making of the film Monsieur Vincent.

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COVER PERSONALITY

JOHN MILLS

To read the list of the films in which John Mills has played is like reading a miniature history of the renaissance of the British Cinema. Though the list inevitably contains some artistically deplorable pieces, it is characteristic of John Mills that the tendency, as reflected in his films, has been a consistently rising one.

From Britannia of Billingsgate in 1933, through Tudor Rose (1935), O.H.M.S. (1937), Goodbye Mr. Chips (1938), Old Bill and Son (1940), Young Mr. Pitt and In which we Serve (both 1942), This Happy Breed (1943), Waterloo Road (1945), The Way to the Stars (1945), Great Expectations, So Well Remembered and The October Man, all 1946-7, to the latest John Mills film, Scott of the Antarctic, which has been accorded the honour of a Royal Command Performance, there is discernible a constant note of pain-taking ability coupled with a true versatility which have well-merited the Press distinctions heaped upon him. So often one has grounds for the suspicion that the names at the top of such popularity polls are more indicative of bromide and endurance than of critical ability on the part of the audiences. In the case of John Mills it is satisfactory to know that the popular vote is also the critical vote.

Perhaps more telling than his evident ability as an actor is a certain, warm, human quality of kindliness about his performances that imparts to them an intimate sense of actuality. It is curious that John Mills is, of all actors, the coolest and most able to detach himself at once from the part he is playing to deal with the next thing on the programme, yet there is in all his pictures that note of complete accord with the character he is portraying. One remembers the endearing young schoolboy of Goodbye Mr. Chips, played as a grown-up by Mills; or the part of Wilberforce in Young Mr. Pitt; the sailor, the soldier and the airman in the two Noel Coward films and Waterloo Road. This last, by the way, is surely one of the finest of the "London" films. Its evocation of the atmosphere of S.E.1 was perfect and the anxiety of the young soldier, overstaying his leave in order to find out what is wrong with his wife, is surely one of the tenderest studies given us by Mills or any actor. Incidentally, this film marks also the apogee, in my opinion, of the work of Stewart Granger. He has not surpassed the splendid performance he gave in that film.

Pip, in Great Expectations, is another endearing portrayal. Mills captured all the bewildered astonishment and intoxicating pride of the Dickens' character. The easy transition from boyhood to manhood, too, was as much due to the conscientious playing of Mills as to the care of the casting director and the make-up artist.

In So Well Remembered, his study of the local boy who remains true to his home town in order to help bring relief to the mill-workers, is again impregnated with that powerful quality of earnestness which adds verisimilitude to whatever he does. The story has weaknesses due to sentimentality of conception as well as to faulty casting and uneasy direction, yet the parts of the mayor and the doctor stand out as convincing, precisely because one feels that Mills (and in the case of the doctor, Trevor Howard) believed in them.

Scott of the Antarctic has received mixed notices. But, from the moment John Mills appears, bowler-hatted, on his way from the Admiralty, we feel we are meeting a live person, who is Captain Scott.

In his next film, Mr. Polly, Mills also produces. It remains to be seen whether this added concern with the paraphernalia of film production will detract from that concentration on his parts, which has, hitherto, been the secret of his success.

To complete this notice, let us add that John Mills was born in Suffolk in 1908; that he has played on the stage in revue, musical comedy and drama and that he is married to Mary Hayley Bell, the playwright, and that he has a little daughter, "Bubbles", who appeared with him in October Man.

JOHN VINCENT.
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Vol. II

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FILMS AND THE FAITH

During the past two years I have given talks on "The Church and The Cinema" to different organisations and I have discovered that a number of Catholics believe that the Church and the cinema cannot mix and, moreover, should not try to mix; these people seem to think that faith and films do not make agreeable companions and that pastors of souls and producers of movies have nothing in common. However, it is a fact that when Church and cinema do mix, we get from their union such masterpieces as Hamlet, Farrebique, The Open City, Four Steps in the Clouds, Monsieur Vincent. Throughout the ages Mother Church has fostered the arts and when art has refused to be tied to its mother's apron strings, all has not been well for art.

But aren't you taking films from the realm of recreation and giving the cinema an importance that it was never meant to have? To many this appears to be a real difficulty. The answer to this problem resides in the truth that whatever expresses ideas, good, bad or indifferent, takes itself from the realm of recreation, for whatever expresses ideas in an emotional manner becomes an art form.

I think that people who believe the Church has no right to butt in on the cinema would change their point of view once they realised that religion is not something tacked on to life but that it is the whole of life. Any film which accords with fundamental Christian principles and upholds the dignity of man is a religious film. I like to argue that, in the wide sense, Hamlet, which suggests Christian ethics, is a religious film.

The film which deliberately sets out to be a religious film is never a success. If Focus has done nothing else it has revealed that a vast number of Catholics (and, we are pleased to say, a number of non-Catholics) desire to follow the lead which the late Pope and the present Pope have given to the cinema.

On this point under discussion Pope Pius XI has written:

Recreation in its manifold varieties has become a necessity for people who work under the fatiguing conditions of modern education but it must be worthy of the rational nature of man and therefore must be morally healthy. It must be elevated to the rank of a positive factor for good and must seek to arouse noble sentiments. A people who in times of repose give themselves to diversions which violate decency, honour or morality, to recreations which, especially to the young, constitute occasions of sin, are in great danger of losing their greatness, even their national power.
A surprisingly large number of people talk about documentaries in a way which reveals they don't really know when the term should be applied. It is by no means correct to assume that because a film is not of a fictional nature is must be a documentary.

The word is, of course, derived from document, which is a paper for information or proof, containing instructions for the establishment of facts—to teach—to instruct. The primary object of the documentary film is, therefore, to present the results of research into a given subject from every possible aspect. Some consider the word factual, more suitable.

It can be seen, then, that a pretty tour of the Bahamas, or a highly-coloured glimpse of the Devon coast in August, is not documentary film production. Most newsreels fail to qualify, even though they do present evidence that certain events have occurred; but they have no time to explain the significance of anything. They rarely tell you why something has happened. They offer pictorial headlines, but it would need a skilled documentalist to present the full stories. The real documentary film probes; it digs down to the roots of a matter. Frequently the research side is far lengthier and more difficult than the actual making of the film. When all visuals have been obtained, they are shaped into a smoothly flowing whole, and then the commentary is written to enlarge upon them. Thus the audience will see all the visible evidence which could be obtained, whilst listening to spoken evidence which goes beyond such visuals.

Actually, there's a third word one can use to describe documentary or factual films—reportorial—symbolising all subjects which are examples of intelligent screen journalism—reports on conditions anywhere in the world. These films don't sacrifice truth for entertainment. They show the bright and the black side of a subject. They give a dramatic interpretation of reality, which does not mean they either falsify or glamorise it, but that by the skill of the film-maker, the visuals are moulded together into a nicely-moving pattern, and are probably strengthened by music.

The documentary film brings to you the everyday world and surprises you with little known facts about the activities of the man who lives just round the corner. It aims to widen experience and vision by making you fully conscious of your relation to the community as a whole, at home and abroad.

And so the documentary film is really an educational film for pupils of all ages, giving education its widest meaning. It is more than a pity that market conditions and double-feature programmes give such small opportunities for documentaries to be included in cinema programmes. Only occasionally does one see them, and although their non-theatrical public is vast, the infinitely greater cinema public knows little about them.

Two series qualifying as documentaries which have succeeded in penetrating into cinemas are March of Time and This Modern Age, and they give a good idea of what is meant by presenting detailed facts about subjects.

The religious-documentary, at present in its infancy, has a tremendous future before it, and is of far greater spiritual value than the acted religious film, for it presents religion as a reality in our midst.

This is the story—in brief—of a millionaire’s daughter who marries an idealistic student of economy who hasn’t a penny to bless himself with. Barbara Stanwyck plays the daughter, Van Heflin plays the idealistic student. For a time they are happy and I have no doubt they would have remained forever happy if Polly Fulton had possessed a little common sense. She did not understand an elementary law that no husband wants to “be run” by his wife and turned out to her image and likeness. Polly desires success for her dear idealistic Thomas, and she gets it (you can get anything with money!).

Thomas W. Brett becomes a luminary, his books are read; he gains fame as a lecturer; he goes places; he secures an important government position in Washington and is recognised as one of the leading economists.

Just when Thomas is at the height of his fame, the ladder of success slips and he gets an awful shock and eye-opener. He finds that his fame as author, lecturer, economist has been bought by his wife’s money.

This is not a masterpiece, but it is quite a sensible story: such things do happen. It is well directed and the acting is very good indeed.


This is a sort of Hollywood charade—it is not sharp enough to be compared with a Greenroom Rag—which ends with mudlarks between Walter Pidgeon and Greer Garson (Mr. and Mrs. Miniver, remember). Miss Garson throws over the usual traces to be a chorus girl who married into the English aristocracy but soon returned to the stage, leaving behind a small daughter to grow up and provide an excuse for this film. Cesar Romero is one of a fraternal team of acrobats, but his muscular agility is nothing to the phonetic virtuosity of what he intends to be a low class English accent, which ranges swiftly over the dialects of all parts of Great Britain, darting now and again across the Irish Sea. Mary Boland (whose appearances nowadays are rare enough to be notable) is the raddled and alcoholic mother of the acrobats. Elizabeth Taylor does everything that is expected of M.-G.-M. starlets (non-singing type).

The young lovers elope to matrimony, the 1914-1918 lovers are reunited and the dirty old man (Nigel Bruce) is led up the garden. The fact that he got what he richly deserved and my unshakable conviction that Julia would never really misbehave, diminished distaste for that last episode.

Film actors are a hard-working lot, and if this picture is their idea of a little relaxation, we should not be too hard on them. But my duty is to audiences first, so I hope there won’t be too much of it.

E.


It is the policy of this paper to say something about all films reviewed, which (at times) is hard luck on the Reviewer for there are some films which do not even merit a tiny paternal pat on the back. All this Feedin’, Fussin’ and Fightin’ about nothin’ is one of ‘em.

Q.

It appears that for once the representative of Focus was forgotten in the Press pre-view arrangements, for our invitation was for a day two days after the first criticisms had already appeared in the Press. And in his solitary state the present reviewer found that the courtesy of the staff of the Plaza Cinema was not a complete compensation for the absence of the printed synopsis and list of characters and actors which can recall in tranquillity the main theme from the involutions of side issues and can enable credit to be given where credit is due to particular minor characters.

Most of the reviewers seem to find that Sealed Verdict is—at least in purpose—compensation for the crudities of A Foreign Affair where the work of governing and re-educating the Germans seemed to be all black market and frauleining and only the defeated had any dignity. Sealed Verdict had good chances of saying something worth saying. And it does say it in so many ways, quite often, though the events which should speak instead of verbal protestations, are of the "whodunit" type, reducing the action to just that kind of film.

Major Lawson (Ray Milland), a soldierised lawyer who has gone through a course in preparation for the Nazi trials, makes a striking success of his first job as prosecutor in the trial of certain Germans of whom the most important is a General Steigman—having no synopsis I may have the name wrong. In the flush of congratulations on his success he is led to doubt whether Steigman really was guilty of the crimes against humanity or whether the so clever and successful prosecution had in fact condemned a man merely because he was a defeated soldier of important rank. Lawson's conscience leads him to suspect the ghoulish principal witnesses of the prosecution and to seek the aid of the mysterious witness for the defence, a Frenchwoman. His efforts to undo his own work and for at least to find further real evidence either way lead him into situations which prejudice his relations with his own military superiors. Fortunately the General provides dramatic evidence of his own guilt and love in the person of the mysterious Frenchwoman comes to Robert Lawson.

Ray Milland gives a fine, balanced performance of Major Lawson who is a credible character. The Frenchwoman is portrayed sympathetically, the German General is well done, too; while there is a jewel of human portrayal in the can't-go-wrong part of a plain American mother who rambles effectively into the story at one of its too many angles.


The title is from the song "Waltzing Matilda" which appears to be the national anthem of the speedway fraternity and it is played at every available opportunity in the course of the 100 minutes of the film, sometimes gaily and sometimes tremolo and slowly for the sad bits.

The film is so obviously healthy and well-intentioned that it is a pity that the story is a strange mixture of "Chums", "Peg's Paper" and social commentary.

The uncertainties of the speedway, with its element of daring and possible fortune and limited fame, appeal more to Bill Fox than his work at the factory. Helped along with rough kindliness by the experienced riders and calculatedly surveyed and brought along by the management he becomes an ace at the game.

Success goes to his head and he neglects his track-loathing girl friend for a society dame elegantly called Dotty Liz. Bill makes a melodramatic renunciation of her and the smarty-smart set and returns home to Mum
and Dad whom he has neglected for months, to find that brother Dick has arrived safely home also after fighting "for democracy in Spain".

Bill now marries the girl friend and behaves rather foolishly by anti-boss talk in his reply to the toast just proposed by the Boss himself, thus finding himself "out". Then he stupidly quarrels with the wife over his determination to go on with the speedway life. They part and with the coming of war both join the forces. At the end of the war she asks for divorce and back at the old speedway he finds he has lost none of his old skill as a rider, but turns down an attractive offer of re-engagement because he still loves his wife and faces the issue that he must come to her on her old terms.

Such is the story, a very simple one. To one not at all interested in speedway racing the story did not seem quite enough to hold interest, not even when overlaid with shots of Hitler and Mussolini speaking to cheering crowds and men and women going to war.

For so slight a story there is plenty of talent to be used: Dirk Bogarde as the somewhat spivvish hero; Thora Hird and James Hayter as the authentic, decent, honestly hard-working and right thinking cockney parents; Renée Asherson, just a little too effortlessly well-spoken for her part as the sister of one rider and the wife of another, but very charming in her sober style and freedom from mannerism; poor Moira Lister in the atrocious part of somebody’s idea of a smart society woman; Bonar Colleano and Cyril Cusack, each with a part suited to his talents; and to the thousands in the suburbs who will flock to the film I could recommend the excellent study of the harassed but efficient Labour Exchange official.

The shots of the drab, empty track and then of the hysterical watching crowds are in themselves a savage commentary on the inanities and the bloodlust connected with this peculiar yet popular sport. It was no wonder that one of the track riders present at the preview was overheard later in the lobby: "We were told this was our film, but it makes me so and so ashamed of being a speedway rider". I think he was ribbing the film, but it might well have been the sport.


At the start this film antagonised me with its hard, ethicless, "sophisticated" atmosphere. Paulette Goddard, clothed in a sort of sarong which has grown a long skirt, is a gambling maniac who welshes and is then pursued by a detective employed by her creditor-cum-suitors.

But the picture has several things to its credit. The characters display a surprising awareness of some of the more obvious implications of the sixth commandment. When the film gets away from the gambling joint and the jail, it contrives to put over a certain something which is not unrefreshing. And the small part playing, for which Hollywood is deservedly famous, is conspicuous; not well known, second-rate actors playing conventional types, but a number of fresh, individual, finished performances.

Q.


A comedy which leaves the beaten track deserves some commendation. So does good presentation of facial reactions, a thing within the province of the cinema more than the stage. And the morning after an excess of sleeping tablets is a situation which still delights me.

There is much incidental amusement in this story of the girl who left her husband on their wedding day and managed to get a passage to California in a freight plane together with several other unauthorised passengers and a comically assorted cargo.
The Catholic reviewer is often up against the attitude to divorce in films. Here there is a slight variant; it is a case of matrimonium non consummatum. This is something which, in the case of Catholics, the Pope can dissolve for good reasons after an exhaustive inquiry. But here we have a bride plighting her lifelong troth in a Protestant Episcopal church (she is wealthy and a "socialite"), promptly leaving her husband for inadequate reasons, regarding a purely civil annulment as a matter of course, and not even waiting for that before considering herself as quite free to love another man. A contract is regarded as of no consequence as compared with an emotion, in this case, apparently, a pretty crude kind of emotion. Now this sort of thing, treated though it is with some delicacy, is surely more regrettable than, for example, a certain Rabelaisianism in a purely imaginary world of farce, just because it reflects and encourages an attitude only too common in real life. For this reason alone You Gotta Stay Happy made me kinda sad.

Q.


In view of the fact that this is a film directed by Alfred Hitchcock and that it assembled a number of players who have, in the past, given excellent performances as well as deplorable ones, I looked at The Paradine Case with exceptional interest. The script is by David O. Selznick himself. Therefore it has behind it the experience of many years of what the public will endure. The result? A film in which all characters scintillate separately but do not coalesce. A film in which the art direction is almost perfect, but stands out as if on exhibition by itself. A film in which the story, a common enough one in all conscience, is made, by devious studio tricks and turns, to lose all semblance of conviction. Yet a film which will certainly hold the interest of most people who want entertainment on the screen to be something more than pedestrian posing.

As the story opens, Mrs. Paradine (Valli) is arrested for the murder of her husband by poisoning. She is enigmatic and beautiful. The famous young barrister, Anthony Keane (Gregory Peck) is engaged to defend her. He is happily married (Ann Todd) but is fascinated by his client. The case is tried by Lord Horfield (Charles Laughton), a "hanging judge" who is also a marital tyrant and a rogue. Andre Latour (Louis Jourdan), saturnine manservant of the murdered man, complicates the case by his unnecessarily mysterious behaviour. The trial at the Old Bailey provides the focal point of the film and is carried out with satisfying performances from all concerned. The end of the film is not difficult to guess but is reduced to melodrama for the sake of effect. I found myself wondering why the characters behaved as they did. Had they acted naturally, the story would still have been interesting and with the galaxy of acting talent at his disposal, the producer need not have worried about lack of appeal.

Gregory Peck gives a studied and charming earnestness to his part and is convincing, within the limits of credibility imposed by the script. His English accent was good, suggesting a West of England University. Ann Todd is also charming with a sweetness that gives us one of the few really convincing persons in the play. Charles Laughton enjoys his judge and so do we. Ethel Barrymore as the judge's timorous wife is back to her old form. Louis Jourdan is compelled to be peculiar but is very effective. Valli, likewise, in the hands of her director, manages sufficiently well to suggest hidden fires, the main evidence of which are alternate glances of loathing, menace and melting affection.

The whole production is glossy, standard Hitchcock, and will satisfy all but the hard-boiled critic. There is a curious lack of synchronisation of sound as the steps of Louis Jourdan are heard following him round the court to the witness box.

V.

The family album of our youth is giving place to the home movies; and no doubt when we have returned to illiteracy, the newspapers will be entirely superceded by the newsreels. Meanwhile Pathé gives us a National family album on the home movies principal, though of course technically it is as far removed from Dad's 16mm. as Grandpapa's snapshots are from "Picture Post".

The Documentary Film has been called the drama of the doorstep. It is based on reality: on ordinary people going about their usual business against their own background. Often enough it has turned the world in which we live and which we take for granted into a drama of absorbing interest.

The Newsreel, though it too is concerned with reality (or should be), is different chiefly because in the nature of things it has to be put together in a hurry. At its best it can give a genuine first-hand picture of important events; but therein lies also its danger, for with a twist to the commentary or a little judicious faking of the pictures it can become the handmaid of the Father of Lies.

The Peaceful Years is a film which combines the technique of the Documentary with that of the Newsreel. The significant bits and pieces of twenty years of newsreels have been carefully edited to form a coherent picture of sustained interest, of the length of a second-feature film, and in it we are shown the British Family from November 1918 to the day when, menaced by the powers of evil, it stood once more on the brink of war.

Emlyn Williams introduces the picture from an armchair, complete with script and pencil. He grows large as he addresses us, tapping the arm of his chair with the pencil to focus our attention. Like responsive school-children we can but attend under that stern gaze. But the pencil comes to rest, the gaze modestly turns to the script, and we are told that this is our picture. And so, God help us, it is.

Our mentor disappears and becomes one among the many voices that accompany us on this journey through the queer years of our youth, or of our fathers' youth. Voices refined, fruity cockney or strident female, with here and there a provincial accent to make these the voices of a nation. And sometimes, too, a recorded voice comes as an evocative ghost to stir up memories of a great or sad or terrible occasion. It is all very well done, very convincing.

Now I do not question the truth of these pictures, but I do hope that this complacently interpreted hotch-potch of headlines is not history, as those who made it would have us believe it to be. For if indeed it is history—that is to say, if it is not merely a pictorial symposium of the most striking events of twenty years, but the considered analysis of them, then it is a terrible picture indeed, showing us rushing helter-skelter to our doom, like animals into a slaughterhouse.

Chesterton once wrote to the effect that you cannot leave religion out of life any more than you can pack a gladstone bag and leave out the bag. Yet that is just what this picture tries to do. It shows us like puppets, jiggling up and down in our aimless courses, having, apparently, no hope and without God in the world. Were we, are we, really like that?

Given perhaps a more significant title, with a rather more responsible commentary, this could be a powerful sermon on the decline of Western Civilisation. But then, of course, it would cease to be good entertainment. And the more's the pity, that I suppose is what most people will take it to be.

W.

WHAT YOUR MITE Might Do
See page 56

One must be fair to the makers of the film as well as to the people who will pay to go to see it. But it is so difficult. We had a letter the other day which thanked us for saving time and money by letting our readers know which were the films worth seeing and which were a waste of time to see. Since the publicity people are always telling us that it is the public which matters, I conceive it is my duty to tell my little part of the public at least, what to expect when they go to see such films as Taproots. If they do not go to see it, I shall be glad, the producers sorry and the public much better off. Why should I be glad? Not because I want to take the hard-won and expensive pâté de foie gras from the mouths of the starving film millionaires, but because I think they are doing the public an ultimate disservice and themselves no good either by trotting out these fatuous productions to the sound of brass and technicoloured publicity methods as if they were the last word in cultural entertainment.

Is there anything worth seeing in Taproots? Yes; I think the battle in the river at the end of the film is quite interesting to watch as a piece of studio make-believe: "real" blood incarnadines the green water as the men are shot. It looks like a slaughterhouse waterway. Is the end of the film so good that it is worth sitting through the rest of it to see? No. Is it a bad film? No. Is it a good film? No. What is it, then? It is a réchauffé of the colour, period, characters, theme, situations, battle-scenes, running houses and dying soldiers which helped to make Gone With The Wind memorable. But G.W.T.W. also had a credible story, capable acting and first-class direction. Taproots has none of these things. Hence, if you see it, you will be encouraging the producers of such things to think that they are right in their estimation of your mental age and you will deserve the things that are coming to you.

Am I being too cynical? Take this as an example of what I mean. The heroine (Susan Hayward) sprains her ankle (they call it paralysis). The doctors say it is incurable. An old Indian with an Oxford accent (Boris Karloff) and two black pigtails, tells her that it can be cured (which it is) by an old Indian remedy which, he says, "we call massage"!! Is the scriptwriter pulling our legs? Or don't they know? The publicity-writer gives us the following as an indication of what we are to see: "Susan Hayward as Morna Dabney, and Van Heflin as Keith Alexander go through a battle together before realising that they love each other". We have seen this before, haven't we? And we are rather fed up with the mixture-as-before, aren't we? See what I mean?


A fellow critic who has more physical endurance than I have, tells me that the last half-hour of this film was quite lively with escapades à la Miranda with Wallace Beery dancing a rumba. Which only goes to show that patience is ultimately rewarded. Had I remained to the end, I should have had a much better feeling towards this film for Carmen Miranda is one of those electric personalities whose ceaseless sparkling gyrations win my enthusiasm almost in spite of myself.

Carmen comes late into the film which tells, tediously, of the teen-age growing pains of that school of young Americans to whom Mickey Rooney and others have already introduced us. I cannot believe that such junketings are either real or healthy. I have placed this film in Category C because it is one of those spectacles which, in company, can be swallowed tolerantly, since they contain enough entertainment-powder to keep the collective appetite tickled.
The greatest charm about such films is the young beauty and freshness of players like Elizabeth Taylor and Jane Powell, both of whom have that colouring to which Technicolor is kind. It is a sad thought that, in spite of their apparent innocence, they may be undergoing sophistication as a result of the false philosophy to which their films subscribe. Good as it is for boys and girls to be natural and friendly, it is not good to suggest that the callow amours and self-conscious cavortings of these young people need to be taken seriously.

The colour and music, for those who like this kind of thing, is pleasant and not too thickly laid on.

V.


Some time ago I suggested that Glynis Johns should be given the opportunity to star in a film. I did not for a moment think that she would be asked, still less agree, to play in a film like Third Time Lucky. It is the story of a "good" girl who falls in love with a gambler who thinks that the secret of gambling consists in having the right mascot around at the right time. His pockets full of mumbo-jumbos, rabbits' tails and other absurdities having proved inefficient, he decides to use the girl. She agrees. She points out to her friend who remarks on the danger, not to say the impropriety of such an arrangement, that she knows that it is wrong but that she cannot help herself. After a first burst of success, the gambler goes to the dregs, is wounded, calls in an underworld doctor, and when the "villain" of the piece has been safely disposed of by the girl, who shoots him, makes the easy promise, as the film fades out, that he will give up gambling and live happily ever after.

Grant the efficiency of the production as far as sets and lighting goes. Grant also that the acting, even of Dermot Walsh, is not without its merits. What is left? A film that is an essay in various forms of superstitious practice, all carefully explained. A film that teaches by suggestion that a girl "cannot help herself" when she "takes up" with a man she knows to be worthless. A film that disposes of moral objections on the grounds that "all comes right in the end". It does not and it cannot. Brighton Rock, which dealt with the same kind of people taught the positive lesson that the "wages of sin is death". It left one with the conviction that this kind of life is vicious and not glamorous. In Brighton Rock a "good" girl fell for a bad man and was moved by a desire to save him. This is true to some extent of the girl in Third Time Lucky, but how false this film is compared with the other. It shows that the theme of a film, no matter how sordid, can be made to serve truth; and that a "happy-ending", no matter how glamorous, cannot make up for a lack of integrity in the production. Do not bother to see this film. You will lose nothing.

V.


A connoisseur of port once contemptuously described champagne as a concoction for making housemaids tipsy. Similarly one feels that the provision of escapism for waitresses must be in the mind of those who make films like this, with so much immaculate evening dress (M. and F.), general de luxerie and prolonged, repeated osculatory pressure. All ends too in accordance with the recognised standards of the novelette: youth triumphs over disparity of age and democracy over caviare.

The title is, of course, misleading. The selfish little liar round whom the film revolves, is described in it, more accurately, as a minx. And the warning if you ask me, is less for the likes of her than for such as suffer at her hands. Most of her adventure take place in some unspecified, primitive and
schismatic country, which accounts for the occasional and unexpected irruption of Bruce Belfrage as an archimandrite. (Perhaps the day is dawning when our dissident brethren of the East will come into their own in films. I should like to see Hollywood's idea of Mt. Athos.)

The film is not without its moments. David Tomlinson has perfected an individual kind of stupidity which is amusing. But when I looked around, as usual, for some character in the picture to put things in a nutshell for me, it was the croupier, who said: "Rien ne va plus".

Q.


This is a reissue and was reviewed in the old "Catholic Film News" in 1942, but it is so good a film and there are, I am sure, so many young people of the early forties who did not see it that it is certainly worthwhile giving it another notice now.

In the first place, it makes one realise how far the British cinema has fallen away from its war-time excellence which, in spite of a movement in the British studios which could have gone on to real greatness. Nowadays, the British cinema shows signs of self-consciousness and a failure to grasp the opportunities which the war offered. We have become glossy and vacant, copying the best Hollywood manner but without the Hollywood skill.

One of Our Aircraft is Missing brings us back with a jolt to the days when community of feeling brought community of effort and the film-makers were concentrating on the native subject, with obvious knowledge and natural success.

An air crew, a business man, an actor, a professional footballer, a mechanic, drawn from different social groups but united in danger, are forced to bale out over Occupied Holland. Their adventures and escape, through the efficiency and loyalty of the Dutch Resistance (in this case a group of ardent Catholics), makes good cinema.

The players have all, since, done other and worse work. Eric Portman and Hugh Williams, in particular, seem to have lost the air of earnest conviction in their parts which this film manifests. They now give us the film-star-doing-his-piece act. The ladies, too, are satisfactory. Joyce Redman, Pamela Brown, Googie Withers, as Dutch women helping the British to escape, give us studies that are worth watching. Miss Withers has had better and worse parts since this film. She maintains a consistent level of intelligence. The other two have returned to the stage where their talents are obviously rightly placed.

It is a saddening but also an entertaining experience to see this film again.

V.


Jericho, of course, is in Kansas, U.S. It is a pity it has no walls; they might have fallen down to relieve the tedium.

Dave, the County Attorney (Cornel Wilde), is not happy in his married life but has enough gump to resist the blandishments of Tunisia, sorry Algeria (Linda Darnell), wife of his friend Tucker Wedge. But it is no good, he's a Romeo after all and so meets his Julia (Anne Baxter). Julia, if you can believe it, is a lawyer and so is able to clear a young girl of a murder charge after Dave has been shot by his wife. Julia goes to console Dave in hospital and the film ends. Presumably they live happily ever afterwards as soon as Dave has been divorced from his disagreeable wife.

If films were animals, this would be an aged and slightly intoxicated centipede.

Those who enjoyed the first William film should certainly see this. Unlike so many sequels, it has gone one better. William Graham is again ideal in the part (incidentally, the northern intonation which formerly made him not quite fit into his family is less noticeable) and he is adequately supported by the rest of the gang.

The film is more concerned with entertainment for young and old than with the finer points of constructive child psychology.

A. E. Matthews has risen in the world; in Just William's Luck he was a tramp, this time he is the Minister for Economic Affairs. But these films are innocent of political satire. The adventures of William and his friends take them to Downing Street and to the Bertram Mills' Circus and the customary chaos which reigns when William is at home is intensified when he adopts a chimpanzee.

There is a technical matter of great interest. More than once in moments of crisis, tension is built up and emphasised by the abandonment of "talkie technique" and a reversion to that of conversations being seen but not heard, but accompanied by emphatic music and sound effects.
The Small Voice


One of the factors about films which rob them of reality for the majority of thoughtful cinema-goers is that the camera is constantly enlarging the every action, every facial twitch, every nervous gesture of the player to such an extent that, after two or three films, one feels one knows the face on the screen as well as one knows one's own. It is difficult to be convinced by a performance even when it is good, unless, like Pierre Fresnay in Monsieur Vincent, by make-up and skill, the actor's own personality is submerged in that of the character he is playing.

One initial advantage which The Small Voice has is that its cast is comparatively new to the screen (with the exception of Valerie Hobson and even she looks different and acts rather better than usually). Another advantage is that the newcomers have ability. A further advantage is that the story and its development does not strain one's credulity unduly. There are one or two situations and clichés—the "happy ending", the glycerine "sweat" of the master crook in a tight corner, the carefully arranged car-smash, which derive rather obviously from the script-writer's stock-cupboard, but in general this film has a surprising freshness and is played with a becoming modesty which places it high up among the lesser films of the past year. A last
advantage is that it has cost considerably less than such films usually do—
a move in the right direction; for it is
fantastic to suppose that good output
is inseparable from astronomical
budgets.

I found myself wondering what I
would do in such a situation: a tribute
to the film; for one never does that with
the average gangster film. A war-
disabled dramatist and his wife are
held prisoner with two young children
in their own home over a week-end.
Three escaped prisoners have taken
over the house. One of the children is
seriously ill with suspected meningitis.
The dramatist tries to break the master
crook's nerve by playing on his
conscience.

The whole thing is well-conceived.
The acting of Harold Keel as the crook
is exceptionally promising. He is an
American who has been playing in the
stage version of *Oklahoma* in London.
He should be an asset to British films if
he can be induced to stay over here.

James Donald as the dramatist, gives
a sensitive study of the man on edge
with self-pity who finds himself when
faced with a situation which needs a
cool head and courage. Valerie Hobson
in this film redeems a rather poverty-
stricken recent past.

V.

[Image of Harold Keel]
THE FILM OF THE MONTH

JOHNNY BELINDA


Jane Wyman's characterisation of Belinda, the deaf mute in Johnny Belinda is an astounding achievement. She has studied every movement and reaction of deaf mutes from Elizabeth Gesner who has taught and worked for the deaf for years, and from a young Mexican girl who is herself a deaf mute. Tests made after a year of hard work left Jane Wyman still unsatisfied. Eventually she realised that one thing was wrong—that she could hear. So plastic ear-stops were made which she wore throughout the making of the film. The questioning hesitance of the deaf she convincingly portrays by ingenious device—by always acting a beat late, by using the left rather than the right hand, by eloquent yet unexaggerated gesture. She said so much—but spoke no word.

No less commendable is Lew Ayres who acts with admirable restraint. As Dr. Richardson he befriends Belinda. She was brought up by her father, Black McDonald (Charles Bickford) and Aunt Aggie McDonald (Agnes Moorehead), whose only care is to make a meagre living on an unproductive farm and to see to it that Belinda should do
her share of labour—and more. They treat her as a non-entity and a drudge, incapable of sense or feeling. Education for Belinda they could not afford, nor would it be of any use. The doctor, however, discovers her by accident, feels sorry for her and desires to help her. His interest is not encouraged by the McDonalds who oppose him at every turn. However, overcoming every obstacle and by much experiment and persevering tuition, he teaches her a sign language and opens up to her new worlds of interest and self-expression.

With many differences it is a kind of Pygmalion theme. The doctor becomes increasingly attached to his young and responsive patient-student. An attractive story—so far.

The sudden intrusion of the violent rape of Belinda by another, Locky McCormick (Stephen McNally) is stark and shocking but quickens the story into intense excitement. Belinda is unaware of the consequences of such action, but cannot hide some sense of shame. After the baby, Johnny Belinda, is born, Locky, recently married to Stella Magnaire (Jan Sterling), wants to seize the child from his mother and adopt his son. In attempting to defend the child Belinda shoots Locky.

The subsequent trial of Belinda seems a trifle unreal—or is that the carry-on of courts in Nova Scotia? Belinda is finally acquitted, and you can guess the end of the story—and you will guess right.

This is an absorbing film. See it. But see to it that you leave the children at home—and the adolescents, too.

G.
These two pictures show what joy and radiance Doctor Richardson brought to a benighted young girl.
Anna Neagle's name has now become synonymous with success and Coupland with propriety. This is not a bad thing and I for one will not quarrel with it. I do, however, wonder whether it is quite fair to Miss Neagle and her public. The limitations possible on a theme confined to a deuce of streets in Mayfair are somewhat restricted. Downstairs-upstairs; upstairs-downstairs and in my lady's chamber. What happens now that we have a cinema in one street and a millionaires' hotel in the other, to say nothing of the flats in which members of the Government are wont to meet their boy friends, is, of course, another matter. Still, if the formula is to be honoured, the Government must be one of aristocrats, and the films shown in the cinema only such as those who understand foreign languages would care to see.

However, Elizabeth of Ladymead goes as far as a country house in Surrey, though it is, naturally, strictly "county", and the lady of Ladymead, at one period of her peculiar existence, makes so bold as to favour the losing side in the Boer War. The curious thing is that though these Neagle-Wilcox films are so frankly snobbish, they seem to appeal to the multitudes who, if the pundits of the Left-Wing Press are to be believed, are thirsting for the blood of the "privileged" classes. The truth is that in spite of their superficial and novelettish stories,
The theme of Elizabeth of Ladymead is that women left behind by their soldier husbands, must change for the better or the worse.
FOCUS

these films are treated in a manner which pays regard to the general public’s desire for an entertaining film, escapist, if you like, but maintaining a certain and strict level of decency. Truth and honesty and kindliness and the fundamentals of home life are always given a proper position in the Neagle films.

The theme of *Elizabeth of Ladymead* is that women, left behind by their soldier husbands, must inevitably change, for the better or the worse. The story is a kind of omnibus in which the same wife appears at four different periods of recent history, from the Crimean War to the Second World War but with a different husband. This is not a subtle attempt at polyandry but, I imagine, a device intended to let Miss Neagle wear as many period dresses as possible, together with a period husband to go with the dress. There is much argument about the place of women, votes for women, equality of women and the woman careerist. However, the film is not to be taken seriously as a contribution to discussion on these points. One is reminded of Chesterton’s dictum that he was against giving women more rights but would certainly wish to give them more privileges. Of the four periods represented, it is not easy to decide which, if any, comes near the Christian ideal. The subservient little wife of the mid-Victorian period is silly rather than pathetic. The self-conscious social-worker of the Boer War period speaks too easily of leaving her husband if he does not agree to her ideas on careers. This family has, at least, some children around the house, a little too dressed-up and starchy, but definitely a family.

The wife of the 1918 period is frankly a harridan. She is ready to sacrifice both home and husband for the sake of a gay time. The social commentary implicit in this section of the film is pointed and the artificiality of the period which was the beginning, as someone on the radio said recently, of the age of irresponsibility with its devotion to mechanical music and herded pleasures, apparent. The age of the lost generations. We have never recovered from the wounds to our social and moral fabric which that war inflicted upon us. The acting and make-up of Anna Neagle in this section is startling. She cannot quite convince us that she is as revolting as she pretends to be but she certainly gives us a new light on her ability as an actress.

The present-day wife, is, perhaps, the most agreeable of the four. She cannot make her husband understand how tired she is of being “ordinary and stay at home”, the “heroine of the home front”. On the other hand she does not understand how very much he wants to be at home and have the warm comforts of his fireside.

It may seem that we are making too much fuss about a film which is, after all, a vehicle for entertainment with Anna Neagle as the chief ingredient. But it happens that *Elizabeth of Ladymead* provides a useful jumping-off ground for a discussion on the influence of the cinema. Technically it has the colourful perfection of all the Wilcox productions. As film art it is ingenious. As a social document it is significant. It is a mirror reflecting both the disease of our days as well as the remedy. It does not use the word “Christianity”, but implicit in its suggestion that a properly ordered home is the core of content is the truth that only with Christianity as the bastion can the happiness of the home continue.

Hugh Williams is the modern husband but has little to do. Nicholas Phipps who adds to the dialogue also gives a satirical study as a heavy Victorian husband. Bernard Lee is pathetic as the returned South African soldier. There are competent players to fill up the period *Mothers and Friends*, Ursula Jeans, Michael Shepley among them.

One wonders a little whether the very passionate embraces given to the modern couple are necessary as a contrast to the cold and distant relationships of the previous spouses? Even if they are, is it necessary to picture them quite so powerfully on the screen?

I have not placed this film in the *Family* category, not because I think it intrinsically unsuitable but because I imagine that some families would be bored with the theme of the film.
Focus

JOURNEY TO VENICE—III

By John A. V. Burke

Two very Australian-looking business men from "down under" were in the train from Basle to Chiasso and when they had recovered from their astonishment at learning the object of our journey, told us of their interest in films. Both had money invested in the industry and one owned cinemas in Melbourne and Sydney. They were enthusiastic about Overlanders and Bush Christmas and told us something of the latest Australian film Eureka Stockade which, by the time these lines are in print, will have had its London premiere. Both these Australians had a natural pride in the large potentialities of their continent and were certain that, as a source for film production, it would prove to be a great asset to the native industry.

Their main concern, it is a little sad to relate, was one of finance. By that I do not mean that profit is not proper or necessary. But it is certain that much good film work has been hindered because of a too great preoccupation with the question of financial returns. They thought that Australia could produce more money from films than, say, Africa or New Zealand. They did not wonder whether Australia could produce better films. That aspect of the question was to them of merely academic, that is to say, unpractical, interest.

After marvelling over the beauties of Swiss and Italian mountain scenery and finding our "camera eye" itching to pin some glorious vistas down within the magic box, we had to submit to the tedium and exasperation of the customs barrier, that modern device enabling this civilised century to show how much superior it is to the "Dark Ages". It is a sobering thought that in the "Dark Ages" one could walk freely through the countries of the Continent, unmolested save by brigands. Dare one suggest that it is the brigands who now have charge of things!

At Milan we left the train to explore the city. On our return the carriages had been moved and after some difficulty we found our compartment in charge of a policeman who with great dignity but definitely refused a tip! Eureka!

The train journey to Venice was taken up with discussions on future policy, the production of the International Film Review, the English translation of the Brussels Congress Handbook, and on other matters concerning the Church and the Cinema. Since we had the presence of Dr. Jean Bernard, the President, Mlle Yvonne de Hemptinne, the General Secretary, and Dr. Andre Ruszkowski, the General Secretary for External Relations, the final part of the journey to Venice assumed something of the aspect of an Executive Committee of O.C.I.C.

I was quartered with the other members of the Executive at the Casa Fontana, a delightful little pensione, managed by some German Franciscan Sisters. We turned the vine-covered loggia into an emergency Committee Room where I spent most of the first day after our arrival in making translations of agenda, advertisements and other notices for the benefit of the English-speaking delegates to the General Council Meeting of O.C.I.C.

About Venice I had better say nothing else than that I think it a very overrated place. The exterior sets, so to say, are pleasant to contemplate from a distance, but the smell and the squalor and the crowding of the interiors is quite overpowering. The Lido, on which the Film Festival had its venue, is a couple of miles across the bay and has a garish attraction of its own. Since the primary purpose of a Film Festival is to show films, the important thing is to have a place in which to show them. The Lido boasts an imposing Festival Theatre behind which is a vast open-air cinema, capable of seating several thousand persons. Those who could not get in to the Festival Theatre could see the films outside. These were projected for the benefit of the outside audience immediately after the indoor showing, a spool behind the indoor projection, so to say. The definition and the image on the outdoor screen was very satisfactory. Only the climate, which once
or twice was uncertain, made the sessions somewhat hazardous.

The atmosphere at the Film Festivals depends considerably on the locale. That of Brussels in 1947 was very much more a business affair than was the Venice Biennale in 1948. The Venice Festival is the original Film Festival. It was inaugurated by Mussolini in 1935 and made part of the famous exhibition of art which was the original reason for the Festival. Why it is still called a Biennale when it functions every year I cannot say. Other places, Cannes, Brussels, Nice, developed the Film Festival idea but to Venice belongs the honour of being The Film Festival. It is an idea which might be copied by other countries and continents. The notion of competitive festivals of art is not a new one. But to be satisfactory they need to be freed from the clamour of the publicity men. There is a tendency in the film festivals to stun the critics with outsized publicity methods. The larger the poster the better the film; the more advertisement stunts the better the industry, and so on. Britain's advertising campaign at Venice this time was less ostentations and therefore more effective that it was at Brussels in 1947. Many of the international critics were inclined to be cynical and wearied by the intense methods of some countries to put their wares before the buying public.

The holiday mood of the Biennale was reflected in the attire of the audience at the film sessions. Beach attire of a most exotic character was à la mode as well as the rigorously proper tails for some of the more conservative males and the extravagant swathings which women assume for formal evening wear. I envied the priests of the Religious Orders who, like the Dominicans in their cool-looking white habits and the Franciscans in their brown, gave at least the appearance of scantier robes for an Adriatic summer. Some of the secular clergy from the Continental hinterland doffed their roman collars, looking rather peculiar in tennis shirts with black alpaca jackets. I had neither the courage nor the wherewithal to follow this practical example. As a result, I was frequently accosted by American and some British critics as if I were a Protestant minister. But then, I presume, I should have been indistinguishable in "mufti"!

The film sessions were dated at most un-English hours, beginning at 9-30 p.m. and continuing until 2 a.m. There were minor screenings at odd times in the afternoons, but the major occasions were always in the cool of the evenings. Publicity let itself go with a vengeance at these sessions. Stars from the various producer countries would be placed on the stage surrounded by a barbarous collection of instrumentalists called a Combination or a Jelly or Blanchemange Roll or a Dixieland Five or Hot Club of France, etc., etc. These persons, with brass and woodwind equipment, would writhe and contort themselves, as though in agony, in front of a microphone, what time a group of vocalists would suddenly rush up to the mike and bending confidentially and affectionately around it and each other, make the sort of noises one hears on some American films.

The most interesting part of the evening was the break between the programmes when the esplanade overlooking the sea would be crowded with a throng of stars, critics, cinema executives and others, excitedly discussing the films we had seen or (if they were producers or actors) the films (their own) which we were about to see. Jean Marais, Orson Welles, Mary Pickford, Anthony Asquith, Anna Magnani, Roberto Rossolini; these were a few whom I picked out at random on one such occasion.

I must leave some comment on the reception of the films until the next issue.

(To be continued)
CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY
NOTES

Readers will already have seen the excellent lecture given by Fr. H. A. C. Connell at the Annual General Meeting. Unfortunately we failed to get a complete record of the equally brilliant talk given by Miss Dilya Powell on the duties of a film critic: however, we hope to be able to publish a résumé of her remarks. Members of the C.F.S. will have received a copy of the Hon. Secretary's report; for non-members who are interested there are a few copies over which may be had, price 3d., on application to the C.F.S.

Our President, His Eminence Cardinal Griffin spoke very kindly about the work which has been done, and was most encouraging in his wishes for our future. His remarks on the need for constructive film criticism were very much to the point and we are sure that the large audience present will have gone away more than ever convinced of the need for the work that the Society is doing.

We were very grateful that Cyril Cusack, the well-known Irish actor and film star, was able to be present. He is at present extremely busy in the studios and on the B.B.C. and, therefore, all the more grateful that he made the time to come and support us on the platform.

Kieron Moore was hoping, up till the last moment, to be present, but pressure of work at the studios kept him tied down. It is a good thing for us and for the many Catholics in the cinema industry to have the moral support of their presence on these occasions. We hope soon to have set in motion a scheme for the association of players and technicians which we feel to be so very necessary.

We wish to express our appreciation of the loyal group of voluntary helpers who, month by month, come along to perform the menial but inescapable tasks that go with sending out our monthly organ. Focus could not appear were it not for the help given by these devoted workers, for the Apostolate of the film.

We have now taken possession of our London Office. It is situated at 20 Ovington Square, London, S.W.3. The telephone is not yet installed, which is going to make things somewhat difficult for a while, but we have been assured that the Post Office authorities will do their best to come to our aid in this respect as quickly as possible.

We shall be glad to see our members at any time when they are in London. There will usually be someone at the office, but if it is desired to talk over matters of interest with the officers of the Society, it would be well to make an appointment in view of the fact that we are so frequently absent on film business.

Now that we have a proper office and extra help in the secretarial line we hope to be more punctilious about the matter of correspondence. There have been a number of letters which we have been unable to deal with owing to the nature of their contents. In the general press of daily business, many of these have been overlooked. We offer our sincere apologies.

The first number of the "International Film Review", the world organ of the International Catholic Cinema Office (O.C.I.C.), is now ready. We hope that many of our readers will subscribe to this invaluable quarterly. It will prove to be an indispensable instrument of study to all those who are really concerned with the film as an art and the part which the Church must play in its development.

A Prospectus may be had gratis on application to The English Editor, International Film Review, 20 Ovington Square, London, S.W.3.

There are three entirely separate editions, English, French, Spanish. Subscribers may, of course, have whichever they prefer.

We direct readers' attention to the list of C.F.S. publications which are now available. We hope that there will
be a wide distribution for these leaflets and booklets. People often enquire for information which will enable them to deal with the Catholic point of view in films. Apart from the articles and reviews which appear in Focus many interesting points may be discovered in these publications.

The Sacrifice We Offer. By the time these lines are in print we shall have had the première of Alan Turner's new film. The Catholic Film Society is to have the exclusive distribution of this 16mm. Kodachrome film. It is four reels long and may be hired or copies purchased on a long lease policy. Terms and all details on application to the C.F.S., 20 Ovington Square, London, S.W.3.

Crossbearers to Walsingham. This film of the Cross Pilgrimage to Walsingham is now almost ready. It has been produced by Andrew Buchanan for the Union of Catholic Mothers and the Catholic Film Society. The script is by the Rev. J. A. V. Burke. The commentary is spoken by the Rev. Hilary Carpenter, O.P. It is three reels in length and, at present, is available only in 35mm. It will have its première in London shortly and then will be sent round the country on the same conditions as Visitation, which continues to draw large audiences wherever it is being shown.

WHO'S WHO

It will be of interest to readers as well as members to have the list of members of the Executive Committee, approved by His Eminence Cardinal Griffin. In addition to His Eminence, whose position as President is of constant encouragement to us, the Rt. Rev. Wilfrid Upson, O.S.B., Abbot of Prinknash, hitherto our Chairman, has accepted the function of Vice-President. The present Chairman is the Very Rev. Hilary Carpenter, O.P., Provincial of the English Dominicans; Vice-Chairman, Arthur Leslie, Esq., Hon. Secretary and Treasurer, Rev. J. A. V. Burke; Assistant Hon. Secretary, Mrs. M. Moultrie. The other members of the Committee are Miss D. M. Retchford, Miss Freda Bruce-Lockhart, the Rev. H. A. C. Connell, Cong. Orat., the Rev. Declan Flynn, O.F.M., (Editor of Focus), Morwood Leyland, Esq. (Catholic Truth Society), the Rev. Charles Lowe (Catholic Youth Organisations), Christopher A. Radley, Esq., Alan Turner, Esq., the Rev. F. E. Young.

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BIOLOGY FILMS AND STRIPS

FROM OUR EDUCATIONAL PANEL

LIBRARIES:

G.B.I. Film Library, Aintree Road, Perivale, Middx.
Wallace Heaton Ltd., 127 New Bond Street, W.1.
(L.C.C. Film Library, Stockwell Depot, S.W.9. Free to London Teachers.)

FILMS

SEED DISPERSAL. G.B.I. Sound. Hire 7/6 a reel, 2/6 for subsequent days.

This series of four films showing the various methods of seed dispersal is a marvel of micro-photography, presenting many of nature's ingenious devices for ensuring wide dispersal of the tiniest seeds—devices which most people see for the first time in these films.

G.B. F. 723. L.C.C. 73. 1 reel.

Only a few types are dealt with but fascinating details of the perfection of each mechanism are shown. For each example, the fruit is first seen on the parent plant, then its mode of detachment is shown and the method by which it is airborne. In the case of Salsify, one can watch the fallen fruit bury itself in the soil as the parachute alternately opens and closes with changes of humidity. The Sycamore, Willow-herb, Foxglove and Orchid are treated in less detail but extremely well.

A variety of hooked and burried fruits is shown: Burdock, Cleavers, Enchanter's Nightshade, Bur Marigold and Blumenbachia are presented as examples of external dispersal, clinging to the coats of animals or the clothes of man. A crop of young strawberry seedlings springing up from bird droppings illustrates one way in which succulent fruits may be dispersed.


This method of seed dispersal affords some spectacular "shots", especially those of the exploding or squirting Cucumbers. Catapult action is well seen in Geranium. Other devices shown are those of Bittercress, Sweet Pea and Violet.


The use of plant appendages in helping to bury the seed in the soil is here shown with much interesting detail. The plants selected are Stipa Grass, Heron's Bill and Wild Oats.

HOW PLANTS FEED. G.B.I. Sound.


This is a useful and interesting film. The plant's absorption of the soil solution is clearly shown and some idea of osmosis given. The speeded-up wilting of a plant as a result of endosmosis and its subsequent recovery is spectacular and somewhat amusing.

The crystallisation of plant products in vitro, though beautiful, is confusing to the main issue. Instead, there might profitably have been some attempt to explain the energy relationships connected with the plant's manufacture and utilisation of food substances.

**FILM STRIPS**

**HYDRA.** G.B.I. Price 15/- Black and white. 27 frames.

A useful film strip for a School Certificate class either as an introduction to the study of Hydra or for revision purposes.

The external features and internal structure of Hydra are shown both from actual and diagrammatic vertical sections. Multiplication by budding and sexual reproduction are clearly treated and there are actual photographs of individuals with testes and ovaries. Gamete formation, fertilisation and embryo development are illustrated by diagrams.

(Suitable Grammar School, 13-16 yrs.)

**THE RUNNER BEAN.** Series 1 and 2. Price 9/- each. Photographs and teaching notes by Rodney F. Cosser. Daily Mail. Hire from Wallace Heaton. 2/- each.

Although the life history of the Runner Bean is easily and preferably studied from the plant itself, these two film strips are a valuable adjunct to the living material, summing as they do the growth and development through one generation. The photography is excellent and the structure of the seed and seedling is made very clear. Diagrams are used to show the processes of pollination and fertilisation. These are rather complicated and over-detailed at least for a first approach to the subject but would be useful for revision. Their inclusion in a film strip, otherwise so extremely simple is defensible on the grounds of their importance in the life cycle.

(Suitable Senior School, 12-16 yrs.)

**FEEDING AND DIGESTION IN MAMMALS.** By H. R. Hewer. Common Ground CGA 221. Price 15/- from E.S.A. Hire from Wallace Heaton, 2/.

This gives a comprehensive picture of the process of nutrition in the pig by means of photographs and diagrams.

The digestion of each class of food substance—carbohydrates, proteins, fats is dealt with in turn and the histology of the organs concerned is well illustrated by labelled diagrams.

A comparison of the alimentary canals of various animals is made with a view to showing the difference between that of Carnivores, Omnivores, Herbivores and Ruminants respectively. The dentition of the same types of animals is also compared.

There is a great deal of material most valuable to a teacher in this film strip; it could be usefully employed for revision purposes with a School Certificate class but if used as an introduction to the study of nutrition, the teacher would do well to use only part of it in one lesson for the wealth of material would prove bewildering until the ground has been prepared.
ANIMAL METAMORPHOSIS. By H. R. Hewer. Common Ground CGA 220. Price 15/- from E.S.A. Hire from Wallace Heaton, 2/-.

Metamorphosis is shown in four types of animals, viz., Sea Urchin, Frog, Bristleworm and Butterfly. The treatment is elementary for Higher School work and yet the types selected are not very suitable for pre-Matriculation classes. Nevertheless the strip serves a useful purpose in illustrating the variety of animals in which metamorphosis occurs. The photography, particularly of Echinus is really beautiful.

(Suitable Grammar School, 15-16 yrs.)

It is hoped to devote the next article to "Aids in the Teaching of Religion".

---

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TOO MUCH ROPE!

Sir,

I am sorry Rope was given such publicity in Focus because of the horrible IDEAS remaining in the mind after seeing the film. Such ideas once given access are not so easily dislodged. Our nerves are made tense from contact with the press, radio and we look to things Catholic for some respite, but we are still urged on . . . strangled body in chest, perfect murder, murder as an art . . . dramatically and technically excellent and morally good!

Surely such IDEAS are from the bottomless pit and Catholics should not help in their dissemination even though the film is given the conventional British ending, enabling it to be labelled "morally good".

Yours faithfully,

ALBERT J. FREEMAN.

("E" who reviewed this film says: "I regret that Mr. Freeman thinks that I gave too much of the rope of publicity to ROPE. I think he has misunderstood the very point of my review. I shall be pleased to answer this letter, in full, in the next issue of Focus."")

MORE PUBLICITY WANTED

Sir,

I attended the extremely interesting meeting of the Catholic Film Society the other week and was very surprised to hear of the incredibly low circulation of Focus. Surely with a little more publicity this could be increased two-fold or more. The magazine is attractive enough and has a range of interest matter that would surely give it the selling power needed for even the bookstalls. Certainly, at any rate, more could be sold outside our churches, could they not? Only at one have I ever seen the magazine and that was when it had on its utility garb, as the "Catholic Film News".

If every parish church of any size, sold two or three dozen copies of Focus every month, would not this, combined with the regular subscribers, help to give it the leg-up it needs to earn its rightful place among film publications.

Yours faithfully,

PATRICK McCANN.

(We are in need of many friends who will act as distributors. Any offers?—Ed.)

I OBJECT!

Sir,

I object to the position of the gift subscription forms in the November and December issues. If I had used either of them the covers would have been spoilt and furthermore the "cover personality". The December issue would have left me with only the lower portion of Fredric March's face! Have the form removed from its present spot. Might I suggest the insertion of a fly-leaf so that those of us who keep Focus for reference need not cut it.

The December notes of the Society amazed me! There are 1,400 private subscribers to Focus and according to the address given by His Eminence Cardinal Griffin at the premiere of Visitation "the circulation of Focus was 6,000, which might be larger but for paper restrictions", and yet there are only 170 members of the Film Society!! 6,000; 1,400; 170; something wrong somewhere. I refuse to believe that the subscription fee of 10s. is too high; the membership at the end of the first year,
bearing in mind the above figures, ought to be approaching 500. Something must be done immediately; launch an advertising campaign in the New Year with the little funds we have at our disposal. There must be more members. Hoping for a big increase in membership in the New Year.

Yours etc.,

ANTHONY LLOYD.

(Catholic Film Society membership is now 200. Thank you for your interest.—Ed.)

RESPONSIBILITY

Sir,

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking you and your co-workers for the enormous work you are doing in connection with the publication of Focus. Your review is not only useful, it is inspiring, and it has helped to open our eyes to a responsibility which, I am afraid, we had rather neglected in the past, that of the influence of the film on the minds of our children.

SISTER BRIGID, F.S.E.

(Thank you, Sister. We are pleased to know that we are not beating the air.—Ed.)

INVALUABLE GUIDE

Sir,

During the past year your monthly Focus has proved an invaluable film guide from a Catholic point of view. The reviews are sound and constructive even if at times inviting friendly criticism. Month after month I have noted films of outstanding interest and looked forward to reading your views on them side by side with those of our secular press critics. Only this week the film Fallen Idol reached us here in Bradford, but I am indeed looking forward to seeing this film... A very grateful reader of Focus.

G. CALLAGHAN.

(It is kind of you to say such nice things about us.—Ed.)

MONTAGE

Sir,

What do you mean by montage?

Yours,

FRED KNIGHT.

(Andrew Buchanan—see page 30—will deal with MONTAGE in our next issue.—Ed.)

SOME FILMS REVIEWED

NOTE. Inclusion in this list does not connote positive recommendation. Films that are positively harmful are not included here. Readers are reminded to refer to the full reviews when assessing a film.

Category A, indicates adults only; B, adults and adolescents; C, family audiences; D, particularly for children.

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Another Shore (B) (19)
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Voice of the Turtle, The (A) (8)
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COVER PERSONALITY

ANNA NEAGLE

It is a sad commentary on the state of our times when the position of a film star is based on her ability to earn dollars for the Treasury. The cinema trade-press has recently informed us that on this count, Anna Neagle is the most popular star in the United States. It is sad for two reasons. First, because Anna Neagle is much more talented than her films would lead us to suppose. Second, because they have been made (for the most part) with a very definite eye on the box-office. That, of course, is not a crime, but it may easily be a mistake, and as the Frenchman said, a mistake may be the worst of crimes. It is a sad thing that our country seems now to have come to a pass where the skill of her artists has to be bartered abroad like coal or timber. The Soviet, having frankly taken over the film industry of the country, at least makes films which glorify, to a degree satisfying to the Kremlin, the present Russian way of life. It would be a good thing if the film industry in this country while still comparatively free, could make films picturing the English way of life.

The pictures with which Anna Neagle's name has now become associated may be said to reflect the foreign conception of life in England, but the reflection is sadly out of focus. Mayfair throughout the ages, but always Mayfair: it is like picturing France eternally in terms of Montmartre, or Italy in terms of brigands and gondoliers (a recent visit to Venice brings the latter simile easily to mind).

It is a measure of the true artistry which is Anna Neagle's that she can and does, in fact, survive such destructive treatment. Her entry into films was in 1932 in Goodnight Vienna. That seems a long time ago and the tunes of that pleasant little musical now have a nostalgic flavour. There were two or three "straight" films, including The Flag Lieutenant, The Little Damoel and The Queen's Affair, before the first of the series of musical pictures which started her on her real career as a star. Bitter Sweet in 1933, Irene and No, No, Nanette, in Hollywood in 1940.

But it is the series of historical pictures beginning with Nell Gwynn in 1935, which established Anna Neagle as something more than a charming singer and dancer. It is rather curious that in this year in which Margaret Lockwood is to appear as Nell Gwynn, in a farce, it is true, Anna Neagle, who began her serious film career with the same character, should topple Miss Lockwood off her perch as Britain's No. 1 star. Such popularity polls do not mean a great deal from the point of view of genuine merit, but where the test is one of money, it does seem as if there may be something more than a pretty face to warrant the distinction. Nell Gwynn was one of that group of films which in the mid-thirties, pointed the way to the renaissance of the cinema in Britain. Peg of Old Drury was another though less well spoken of. But it is the film-biography of Queen Victoria with which Anna Neagle's name will most indefinitely be associated. Victoria the Great, in 1937 and Sixty Glorious Years, in 1938, showed that she could act as well as photograph well. Hollywood called her and she made Nurse Edith Cavell in 1939, a picture which, I think, marks the peak of her acting career. It was a test of her powers to the full for it would have been so easy to have made the part mawkish when, in fact, the character of Edith Cavell was so simple and straightforward as to seem to defy histrionics. Miss Neagle played the rôle with such warm and tender sincerity that all criticism was disarmed, and the film remains as one of the very few that we could dignify with the title of film biography.

It is this quality of sweet sincerity that is Anna Neagle's greatest asset as an actress. No matter how fatuous the part she is called upon to play, she invests it with a sweetness that defies cynicism and warms the heart. After They Flew Alone and The Yellow Canary and a period on the stage in Emma, she made I live in Grosvenor Square (1945). Piccadilly Incident, The Courtneys of Curzon Street and Spring in Park Lane proved a series of money makers. Since 1944, Anna Neagle has been among the first ten money-making stars in British films. Her latest film Elizabeth of Ladymead may not be as popular as its predecessors, but it maintains her charm and also gives her a chance to do some acting again.

JOHN VINCENT.
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IDEAS HAVE LEGS

Once an idea gets going you never know where it is going to stop; one idea begets a hundred other ideas and before you know where you are, if you are not careful, you find yourself surrounded with too far-reaching ideals and out-of-touch idealists; you may even find yourself saddled with what some people nowadays like to call an ideology.

Whatever may be said for or against The Catholic Film Society in this country, it must be admitted that it is a society with ideas; you would be surprised if you knew the number of ideas which pour into our office from clergy and laity. We often wonder how Fr. Burke, vital secretary that he is, copes with all these ideas. Last month he made a strategic move by inviting to the Newman Institute a number of friends of the Catholic Film Society, men and women of ideas, to give their ideas an outing, an airing and a hearing. Fr. Hilary Carpenter, Provincial of the Dominican Order, was in the Chair, and if he doesn’t mind my saying so, he handled the situation in a masterly manner. Every idea got a good airing and a fair hearing.

It was interesting to sit back and puff a pipe and listen to specialists in their own line having their say about the possibilities and advisability of setting up a Catholic Film unit; the Apostolate of film strips; ways of advertising and getting money; the necessity of a Cinema Guild to cater for the spiritual and social needs of the many Catholics working in all branches of the Cinema world; the setting up of regional branches of the Catholic Film Society; the desirability of exploiting the mobile cinema for propaganda work.

This time last year Focus was just an idea of the Catholic Film Society getting on its feet; since then it has travelled into many lands and has made many friends and no enemies. More power to its ankles! And more power to all men of ideas.

Editor.
FILM GLOSSARY

No. 2—WHAT IS MONTAGE?

By ANDREW BUCHANAN

In non-technical language, montage stands for a collection of brief scenes, skilfully assembled, which, collectively, symbolise a subject, an event, a character or a location. The effect is usually employed as a prologue or an epilogue to the main subject, and also as a recurring symbol.

If a film is to deal with the toil and patience which the land demands from man, it can begin either by relating the main story, visually and verbally, or with a montage symbolising agriculture, and during the brief pictorial pattern thus created, the narrator would introduce the subject which is to follow.

An epilogue of this kind enables the main points in a film to be recapitulated. More ingenious is the recurring symbol which always heralds the appearance of a particular character, place or event, and if such a montage is accompanied by recurring music, the effect is most striking.

In quite another way, a montage method of editing can illustrate simultaneous processes or happenings. By that I mean all the essential operations involved in, say, the driving of a train, a liner, or a paper-making machine, are presented on the screen almost at the same moment, time and time again to emphasise the inter-dependence of the various controls, human and mechanical.

Film makers are often tempted to introduce montage because it has come to be regarded as rather clever, and if they are not very experienced they may make the mistake of joining together lots of bits and pieces thinking the effect will stagger the public. It is not as simple as that. Even though a montage sequence may last only a minute, or less, every scene has to be selected with infinite care for a specific purpose and the relation of each scene to the next needs to be planned. Sometimes such scenes are just two feet in length; sometimes only a foot, or merely a few frames. Singly, each scene is meaningless. Collectively they create a unity.

On the commercial screen one often sees the montage principle introduced to save time. Journeys across the world, for instance, are usually disposed of in a couple of minutes by ingenious "impressions" of travel—wheels, dock cranes, luggage labels, planes ascending, descending, clocks, calendars, and so on, whilst the rise to fame of an unknown singer is almost sure to be symbolised by countless programmes superimposed over opera houses and audiences. Very strictly speaking, these conventional pictorial impressions cannot be classified as montage. Near relations, perhaps, but not the real thing.

The success of montage depends upon the imagination of the editor, for it is an effect created on the cutting bench, demanding concentrated thought and patience. In a montage composed of, perhaps, thirty little scenes or fragments, one out of place, or out of tune, will ruin the total effect. It is a mistake to associate montage only with the advanced school of filmmaking, for it may have a place in the most simple subject.

Of one thing you may be sure. If an audience is unduly conscious of montage effects, then they have either been overdone or inserted unnecessarily. The finest editing, whether or not it introduces montage effects, is of the kind which leaves the audience unconscious of constantly changing scenes.
FILM REVIEWS

By Our Panel of Priests


Should a film critic read the book from which the film he is reviewing is made? As a general rule I should say not. His duty is to assess the merits of the film as film. As such it may be either more or less entertaining than the novel on which it is based. In any case, it is not very helpful to say that the book is either better or worse than the film. The majority of people are interested primarily in the film and so long as it conveys, in the way best suited to it, the story which the producer has decided shall be filmed, I think that few cinemagoers have the right to grumble if their favourite characters are omitted from the screen version of their favourite novel. There are all manner of technical reasons why a film must be different from many books. Into these questions we cannot go now. It is mainly a matter of working in different mediums.

However, there is an exception to every rule and I think that The Small Back Room is the exception in this case. Here we may make a comparison between novel, radio and film. It happens that I have both read the novel and heard the radio version of this story and I have no hesitation in saying that in order of excellence the radio version came first. This is because of the intrinsic superiority of the radio in conveying, as, I think, the radio can, so much better than film, the interior workings of a man’s mind. The tension, the conflict, the sense of inferiority which is the theme of the story of Sammy Rice, was so much more compelling over the air than it was on the screen. Even the last scene, the dismantling by Sammy of the booby bomb, which is under the circum-
stances, inevitably thrilling, was very much more so in the radio version than on the screen. This may have been due to the fact that Sebastian Shaw’s voice was more expressive than David Farrar’s face, or it may have been due to the fact that, by the time this point in the film had been reached, one could have no doubt that it must have an ending labelled “happy”.

That gives us the clue to why the film, good as it certainly is, is not all that good. In the course of its transition to the screen it has lost its original integrity. Nigel Balchin wrote a story about a man whose false foot makes him feel inferior, especially during the war, and this in spite of the fact that he is doing a job of extreme importance as a research scientist. This inferiority colours his love affair, his relations with the intriguing civil servants who exploit him for their own ambition, his work as a scientist. Eventually he proves to himself that he is no coward by tackling a new kind of anti-personnel bomb which has been causing the deaths of many innocent people. The book and the radio version have the honesty to leave Sammy Rice with his inferiority complex still unresolved—which is true to life—the film leaves him with a major’s crown and a special job in the War Office.

There are other things which one regrets in the film. Sammy needs an opiate to relieve the pain in his foot. He would like whisky but this is harmful. In the book he manages to restrain himself. The film gives us the benefit of an extract from The Lost Week-end, with David Farrar doing a drunken ballet around an enormous whisky flagon surrounded by myriads of alarm clocks while electric organs make glissando shrieks in the top register, all to tell us that Sammy Rice is having a deuce of a time being tempted to drink whisky. In the end he succumbs and smashes up the flat before going into a drunken sleep from which he is awakened by the call to deal with the booby bomb. This is so
unlikely whereas the book was so real that one wonders why The Archers thought fit to drop into such unconvincing vulgarity. The camera aided by the lighting expert and the cutter was doing quite nicely in helping us to understand that Sammy wanted the drink very much indeed. The excursion into surrealism was unnecessary.

On the other hand, the film provides us with a neat piece of adaptation. It starts in the centre, introducing us to Stuart, the R.E. captain who needs the help of the backroom boys. In a series of beautiful visual impressions we are taken right into the heart of the story and made aware of the peculiarities of each character. The direction is crisp and the editing trim. The dialogue, freely taken from the novel, is alive and sparkling. The acting, with the exception of David Farrar's, bright and effective. Michael Gough, Leslie Banks and Cyril Cusack, in particular, give outstanding performances as the R.E. officer, the War Office colonel, and a stuttering corporal who is expert on fuses but unfortunately married. This last characterisation shows Cyril Cusack to be master of his art. It is a brilliant performance and he creates out of the few lines and sequences that the editor leaves him, a warm and endearing personality. Jack Hawkins too, and Robert Morley, for some mysterious reason labelled "A Guest" in the credit notes, give competent displays.

David Farrar was badly cast as Sammy. He has not the sensitivity of countenance, nor the mental pliability to portray the self-torturing scientist. Cyril Cusack could have done this so well, as Sebastian Shaw did on the radio. Kathleen Byron, in spite of a curiously cold and, at times, malevolent expression, manages to convey the taut but affectionately warm-hearted girl who wishes to mother and wife the suffering man.

Though the film avoids much of the pagan promiscuity of the novel and is, on the whole, morally unobjectionable, it has one astonishing lapse from good taste which I can only describe as a completely unnecessary analysis of the art of osculation. It tells us nothing more about the lovers than could have been conveyed by the customary screen embrace. There is surely some limit to what actors and actresses may decently be called upon to do to express the passion which possesses the characters they are portraying!

A lynx-eyed scriptwriter who accompanied me to the press show pointed out that in 1943 the New Look was out of fashion. There is also a lapse on the part of the continuity girl who allows David Farrar to wear a wrist-watch marked 3-15 well before midnight!

V.

GREEN GRASSES OF WYOMING.

Those people who like stories about horses will enjoy this film. Those to whom a horse is a horse and nothing more will find it quite tolerable.

The escaped stallion (Thunderhead) has enticed away a number of valuable mares. However he is captured eventually and so Crown Jewel, owned by Rob McLaughlin (Lloyd Nolan) can settle down to her training as a trotting mare. Her chief rival is Sundown owned by Beaver Greenway (Charles Coburn). There are some fairly exciting trotting races towards the end of the film.

The adolescents, Peggy Cummins and Robert Arthur, try one's patience at times, but that can happen in real life. There are many beautiful shots of the countryside and some attractive and convincing studies of horse behaviour.

T.


This sincere and deeply-moving film faithfully portrays a family disrupted through the war, struggling to adapt itself to the altered conditions of the post-war world. It is a theme often
treated nowadays because the problem of readjustment has still to be solved by so many. Notably successful was The Best Years of Our Lives. If My Own True Love lacks the light and shade of that film—the lighter touches are rarer and less prolonged—it deserves a success as great, because it really does get down to solving this problem and has much to say. In fact it goes deeper and deals with the whole relationship between the self and the other. What is wrong with so many of us in our modern world? Why are so many frustrated, touchy, nervy and so difficult to live with? Why are so many marriages wrecked? Is the war responsible? Or is it merely or chiefly the conditions under which we are living? The truth and the fault, as Shakespeare once said, is in ourselves. The pre-occupation and exaltation of self is the fundamental disease. When we are out for ourselves we become impossible people to live with, and we become caged in the narrowest of prisons, self. And the way out?

It is by what the psychologist calls “extroversion”, the theologian calls “love of neighbour” and the common man practical unselfishness. The film in no way directly preaches at us, and does not go the whole way by showing that all this is very much related to love of God, and that the soundest psychology of all is the fulfilment of the twofold command that we should first and fully love Almighty God, and also our neighbour as ourselves.

The sermon preached in the film is only on half the text, and on the less important half at that, but the beauty is that we do not realise that we have been listening to a sermon at all. In life it is example that really counts; and here we have the shining example of a girl whom all will admire. Hers is an integrated life—sensitive and sympathetic without sentimentality on the one hand, and on the other intensely practical, and displaying in every situation insight and foresight, and above all a healthy disregard of self. No wonder she is a happy person and is popular with all.

Joan Clews (Phyllis Calvert) is this young woman, whose experience in the underground resistance in France during the war, and her subsequent imprisonment in a concentration camp by the Nazis, had taught her a brave, cheerful, philosophic and practical attitude to life and its problems. Clive Heath (Melvyn Douglas), a cultured middle-aged widower, himself just demobbed, first meets her on visiting his daughter Sheila (Wanda Hendrix) in the L.T.S. Joan is scrubbing the floor of a corridor in the barracks. Heath cannot get past. A few words are exchanged, and he perceives at once that she is no ordinary person and through his daughter he arranges to meet. Friendship follows. Then more. They hope to be married.

The situation is changed when Heath hears from the reception station that his son Michael (Philip Friend), who had been reported missing in Burma three years before and long since had been presumed dead, has now returned. In a moving scene, we see the father meet the son. Before, he had been a brilliant and promising young man, full of life. Now he is a changed man, broken in body and spirit. He had lost a leg in an air crash, had been imprisoned by the Japanese, and had seen before his eyes the murder of his Malayan wife and child. Father and son are estranged. Gone is the easy relationship between them. Michael is morose, moody.

It is Joan only that can understand him. She is able to nurse him back, at least in part, to sanity, but in doing so Michael finds he loves the young woman whom his father hopes to marry. Here is a domestic tangle indeed. It is Joan’s patient understanding and wisdom which leads to the happy solution to all the complex problems.

High praise must be given to all the cast; to those three central figures for their essential sincerity, and to the minor parts, such as Mrs. Peach (Phyllis Morris), who contribute so much to the whole. They are all real people. We have met them, or people like them, before.

It is a pity that the film condones divorce and re-marriage. That Joan Clews was awaiting a divorce before she was to marry Heath, added nothing to the story, and forces us to add this postscript of protest.

Canonised the "sainted" sisters—crooks turned philanthropist—never will be, but they get full marks for charm, and are none the worse for being reformed. These two bright young things of 1895, having obtained a fortune by blackmail attempt to escape by horse and trap from the States into Canada, but are held up near the border by a thunderstorm and are forced to obtain shelter in the backward village of Grove Falls, Maine. Thinking it to be unoccupied, they enter, uninvited, the home of an old monumental mason, Robert McCleary (Barry Fitzgerald), and there they settle in—as though they had been there many times before! Robbie, awakened by the noise they make, discovers his "lodgers" and the fortune as well, which he transfers into his own custody.

The villagers are all in debt, and Hester Rivercomb (Beulah Bondi), the lady of the manor, is an exacting creditor. But Robbie is a generous man—especially with other people's money—and thus he becomes a public benefactor. Says he: "it is a sin to steal, but to give—that is a virtue". Soon everyone benefits by his "generosity", and after a while even the sisters enter into the spirit of the thing, and delight in seeing everyone so happy. Complications arise because there only happens to be one young and handsome man in the village, Sam Stoakes (George Reeves), the tinker, and whereas there are two young sisters, each more superlatively charming than the other... etc., etc.

But we can't be too fussy about the story because it is all such good fun, and everyone is so happy in the end (and all the way through) except for Hester Rivercomb (but she oughtn't to be happy anyway—the nasty thing!), and it doesn't really matter about there being only one eligible man because they found in the end another one that did quite nicely, but who married whom I'm not quite sure as two laugh tears got in the way and I could not see very clearly, but anyway it didn't matter because they were all very happy. They really were!

Barry Fitzgerald was at his tip-top best, and Veronica Lake and Joan Caulfield, the sisters, were at their charmingest.

It won't do you any harm to see this film, and if you need a good laugh it will do you good.

G.


All those who know anything of Bob Hope's style will appreciate the possibilities when he plays the part of a comic dentist who subsequently masquerades as a Red Indian Medicine Man. Jane Russell is "Calamity Jane", an escaped gunwoman.

The Paleface is a burlesque of "Old West epics". It is treated in a healthy, knockabout style quite unlike the elusive unwholesomeness of The Outlaw, in which Miss Russell first appeared. It would have been only too easy to have produced a film for these two stars which would have been really objectionable, but that temptation has been resisted. Vulgar elements are inconsiderable. It is only parents who think that their adolescents would be very susceptible to saloon scenes and a brief glimpse of women emerging from bathrooms in the underwear of 1870, who need be at pains to steer them away from this picture. Miss Russell's personal equipment (to use the word previously employed by "V." in the same connection) is not unduly exploited. A long and agonised debate with myself as to whether a reference to Gray's Elegy would be in order at this point no longer continues. "A Special Correspondent" in the "Observer" has got in with it first.

Unlike some critics I found this film less boring than some more pretentious efforts at laughter making, and derived
real pleasure from Mr. Hope's antics with the concertina as he sang "Buttons and Bows" and even more from the almost doglike reactions of primitive man (in the person of an Indian) at his first encounter with a nitrous oxide apparatus. When the gas went "pooff" at him, he went "pooff" back again. I loved that.

Q.


This Australian film brings such sincerity to the screen that Eureka Stockade might be a documented reconstruction of historic detail and not just a story shown against the background and issues of the great Gold Rush of 1853. The reviewer is not so acquainted with Australian history as to know whether there was a Peter Lalor and a Eureka Stockade (although if he became M.P. for Ballarat he probably existed), but Chips Rafferty makes the Diggers' leader as living as, say, Don Bradman, though not so lively.

The concern of the government at the extent and the results of the flight from the farm and pasture to join in the fight for gold is easy to understand. Eureka Stockade brings out the resentment of the gold-diggers at the licence-to-prospect system and the brutality of its enforcement. The Peter Lalor of the story is a moderating influence among the Diggers but by force of dramatic circumstances he becomes the leader of armed resistance to the military. These in the dress and drill of the Peninsula War attack the stockade with spectacular ferocity. The wounded Lalor is hidden and taken by friend and gentle girl friend (Jane Barrett) to the Catholic chapel and the priest sends for an accommodating surgeon. (This sequence is quite a graceful tribute to the considerable Catholic element that went to the making of Australia.) The other surviving leaders stand their trial and, to the discomfiture of the authorities, acquitted. This acquittal makes the government see the red light at last and the necessary reforms are initiated. In the general amnesty Lalor turns up again, now married to his charming schoolteacher, (Jane Barrett) with whom one sympathises rather as having a part to play which does not match the significance of the theme.

This successor to The Overlanders shows that the Australian experiment of the Ealing Studios in planning to make in Australia films dealing with the history and issues of that continent is an experiment well worth making. Beauty of landscape and conditions of light are so much in favour. And the policy of putting on its feet an industry which later may well become a competitor is surely a move into the rarefied atmosphere where men are devotees of an art and not just merchants of entertainment.

X.


An unambitious film does not invite a very searching criticism. Thus this film can be recommended as light entertainment.

Cole Armin (Randolph Scott) comes to Albuquerque, New Mexico, to find that his uncle John Armin, who owns a freighting company, is the most powerful and most hated man in the place. John Armin has a small army of gunmen who encourage all the mine owners for some distance around to make use of his services exclusively. Cole doesn't approve of these methods, so he throws in his lot with a small rival company. Cole overcomes the odds without much difficulty; after all he has done it so many times before. He falls in love, shoots down scoundrels and drives a team of runaway mules with equal ease.

"The film was made for Mrs. Jones. Mrs. Jones will enjoy it. "Isn't Randolph Scott lovely. (I wish Mr. Jones had a face like that.)" “

T.

This is a film the theme of which will be increasingly used on our screens. It concerns the difficulties of life with the Displaced Persons in Europe, both from the point of view of the unfortunates themselves as well as that of those whose task it is to succour and save them. Human nature being what it is, it would be surprising to find things other than as they are: namely, well-intentioned bureaucracy blundering frequently through the tangle of personalities, motives and exasperation, of thousands of herded humans to whom life has become now but a hopeless tedium of remaining alive.

The story tells of the efforts of a British officer to discover the whereabouts of a German girl whose portrait he has seen in the Burlington Art Galleries.

Mai Zetterling, the Swedish actress whom, after her moving performance in the Swedish film Frenzy, we first saw here in Frida, has a fresh and youthful charm which gives great pathos to her part as Hildegard, the German D.P. who is the subject of the Portrait From Life. Following her cheeky little minx in the first episode of Quartet, this adds evidence for the conviction that Mai Zetterling is one of the very few ladies in the British film organisation who can safely be called an actress. She has charm rather than beauty, but she has what is more important than either, the ability to convey character beyond the lights and lenses which so often merely serve to stereotype faces and figures.

Herbert Lom and Thora Hird contribute workmanlike studies to their parts and in particular, it is worthwhile looking for the splendid little cameo given by Philo Hauser as a loathsome camp spy who betrays his confederates for cigarettes. The rest of the cast are efficient without being outstanding.

The script, having opened promisingly and developed satisfactorily, succumbs at the end to cliché and leaves one feeling that another likely film has been spoiled for the want of a little courage and poetic honesty.

It will satisfy most people who look for something a little different, though they will be let down at the end.

V.


I am not surprised that this film had a short run. It is a sincere piece of work, the stars (as noted in the credits above) act well but the whole thing is oh... so turgid and the direction and editing are so clumsy. The story which is about a mixed marriage, that is to say, a marriage between a German and a Jew, is based on the life of Joachim Gottschalk, an actor married to a Jewish actress, Meta Wolff. Both lived under the shadow of the Nazi regime and they committed suicide as a result of oppression during the war. This film tells us nothing new about Nazism and all its nasty works and poms. It is difficult to know why this film was made.

E.


My remarks about this film should be made in whispers for they are not very complimentary. I do not know whether this is the first of the Quebec productions, but it is tediously amateurish, at times very naive, laboured and muddled. It lacks verve and sparkle and I got the impression that the cast was half dead.

E.
The Passionate Friends


David Lean, who has a series of outstanding successes to his credit, here flirts with temptation by using two of the most rococo clichés in the studio stock-cupboard, the triangle and the flashback. That he succeeds in getting away with the first is due in very large measure to the expert team who formed it; whether he succeeds in the second is a matter of opinion.

Granted there is a tendency to become involved in reminiscence: flash within flashback, so to say; the manner in which it is done is enchantingly relevant: dozing in a carriage, or drowsily in bed, or day-dreaming at the
Chelsea Arts Ball: in each case some opposite sound ends the reverie.

Cameraman and cutter combine to make this film a thing of beauty. David Lean's long experience in the cutting-room stands him in good stead, and his poetic grasp of the possibilities of light and shadow, of speed, of what the painter would call perspective, coalesce to give us many moments of visual delight. Watch the girl being borne down the escalator to the Underground, automatically, dreadfully, to what she intends to be her death. It speaks volumes as to her mental condition. Look for the moment when she comes through the door to ask her husband to put an end to the divorce proceedings: there you have depth of focus used purposefully; of course, you also have superlative acting by Ann Todd and Claud Rains.

Other memorable scenes are the scene in the funicular railway; in the boat on the lake; the plane against the massively-clouded sky. In fact so many are the delights of this film that one is in danger of overlooking the weaknesses of art direction (a "struggling" biologist's room which looks like part of the Chantry Bequest), of script which leaves the faces and figures of the characters flawless after fifteen years (including the war).

The story, taken from H. G. Wells' dialogue about free love, carefully omits all censorable material and, indeed, provides us almost with a homily on the fundamental truths about fidelity and self-control.

The intended use of the legal instrument of divorce, is, in this non-Catholic country, inevitable as a way out of matrimonial difficulties. A girl who deliberately chooses a marriage of convenience rather than life with the poorer man she loves, is made to put an end to meetings with the latter, nine years after her wedding, by a husband who states quite clearly the principles involved and the danger being run by what we would call "occasions of sin". When, six years later, a fortuitous and innocent meeting in Switzerland is discovered by the husband, he angrily threatens divorce.

The end is, for once, satisfactory and convincing. One can believe in these people. This is mainly due to the acting of the three principle players. Ann Todd is magnificent in her use of expression and the significance she gives to every movement and gesture. Claud Rains as the husband, has much to do to hold his own as the best actor in the film. Trevor Howard, as the Other Man, is warm and colourful in his quiet and friendly way. Altogether a delightful picture.

V.


The camera, the telephone and Barbara Stanwyck and, over all, the superb direction of Anatole Litvak put this thriller in a class by itself.

With the servants out for the day, while fruitlessly telephoning her husband, a spoil'd rich woman, Leona Stevenson (Barbara Stanwyck) who has gradually flounced herself into becoming a complete invalid, finds she is listening to a strange conversation. It is between a couple of professional killers discussing the final arrangements for one of them in a commissioned job for that night. It has been arranged that the woman to be murdered is to be alone that night, the job is to be carried out as far as possible painlessly, at the wish of her husband, and the rumbling noise of the 11-15 p.m. subway train passing over a bridge is to cover the noise of the murder.

Horror-struck, Leona rings up the police. The story she has to tell has no obvious reference to her, but the telling of it is so mixed up with the petty details of her own invalid condition that there is a fundamental irony in the fact that she is indeed the very core and centre of the situation. The story moves in tension from vague premonitions to the final grim certainty that this is so. The police dismiss her story soothingly and then the story and its tension grows from call to call on the telephone.

We see how the thing goes because we have some experience in thriller
passionate friends, Mary Justin (Ann Todd) and Steven Stratton (Trevor Howard), survey the steep climb ahead...
variations, but the victim has to have the awful truth borne in upon her by a tight-fitting succession of hints and incidents, all revealed by telephoned conversations, while for our elucidation these conversations flow into appropriate flashbacks enabling us to see how this state of affairs has come about.

We see how she practically "bought" her husband (Burt Lancaster); how he very soon realised he was "bought"; how the father-in-law's huge druggist business was not so very fine for a young man who would have liked to stand on his own two feet; how he had sought independence by dishonesty, using privileged opportunities as a member of his wife's family's firm to traffic in drugs; how the State Department were on the tracks of his associates and himself; how he had insured his wife's life for 90 days to meet a blackmailing demand on him; how his wife was not so ill as she thought herself and was in no danger of death through natural causes.

We gain all this knowledge from flashbacks, but the wife in her telephone conversations with various people pieces together the unsuspected truth about her husband until at the end a call from him reveals the fate in store, and quickly in store, for her. Her terror mounts as does our tension as the camera swings slowly from room to stairs to the outline of the shadowy assassin making his furtive entry. The 11-15 thunders by lighting up the nearby bridge visible from the open window and its flapping curtain. Then come the screams and the relaxed hand letting drop the telephone receiver.

I wonder if Miss Stanwyck will ever be called upon for a better performance than this. It is so much a one character piece that one is inclined to overlook the competence of the others. Perhaps that is the measure of the good teamwork of Burt Lancaster as the husband; of Ann Richards as the detective's wife, an old friend of Leona's who tips her off about the mysterious activities of Henry Stevenson; of Wendell Corey as the debunking doctor; and of Harold Vermilyea as the very much telephoning and corrupted chemist.

X.

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Big Dave marries a white slave; he is blind to her charms and talent.

A FILM WORTH

Rachel


Even to this day many people who patronise the cinema refer to films as "the pictures" or "the movies". What's on at the pictures... last night I saw a movie, are familiar expressions. Such expressions unconsciously preserve those essential qualities which distinguish the art of the film—pictorial...
the Stranger

movement—from the other arts. I am not trying to work off a homily on the art of the film; but I do want to say that I consider Rachel and the Stranger a splendid example of film as an independent art form.

If film (see article "The art of the film", by Dr. Knipping in the November issue of Focus, page 242) "Is essentially a visual dynamic rhythm, presented by means of projection on a screen, this film fits that definition beautifully and perfectly.

The story is a simple one but not a silly one, for the widower has his problems. Big Davey Harvey, a widower living in the backwoods and hugging his sorrow to his heart begins to realise that his son (Gary Gray) needs the civilising influence of a mother's love, so he buys Rachel (Loretta Young), a white slave woman, marries her but does not consummate the marriage; Jim Fairways (Robert Mitchum) a wandering minstrel boy, soon comes along and pays court to the slave who is pretty, charming and talented; there is nothing like a rival for taking a man out of the doldrums and as you may guess Big Davey begins to take more notice of his slave wife; rapidly he ceases to treat her as a slave and when she shows pluck in a fight he acclaims her as wife in the sacramental sense of the word.

It is said that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. I would say that the way to Big Davey's heart was through a barrel of . . . a gun. (Look out for the fight with the Red Indians and you will see what I mean.)

The story may be no great shakes; but the camera work, the editing and the direction are distinguished. Film is unlike such arts as painting, writing, sculpture which can be the work of one mind; it is the work of many minds and the minds that matter most are the cameraman's, the editor's and the director's, and when this trinity are creative artists, when the cameraman manipulates light and the position of his camera creatively; when the editor composes the cameraman's pictures so that they flow in dynamic rhythm; when the director can make his story and the actors who tell the story come alive, you have something special. There is a lot in this film which will delight those who like films to be "moving pictures" and not stage representations or photograph albums set in motion.

After the press show I got from a well-known critic this criticism: "I loved it . . . I just sat back and enjoyed it". So did I. So I think will most people. This film moves along, not slowly, but leisurely; it possesses a quietude and sincerity which is restful and refreshing.
Eric and Janet are glad to be away from Saxon’s party


Neither the charm that hangs from the watch-chain, nor the blonde kind that hangs round the neck, but that personal charm whereby a Mr. Saxon, who produces plays, gets away with his ill-manners. And with Robert Montgomery playing him, it is charm indeed, so that in spite of the selfish way in which he nearly wrecks the work and the domestic life of John Payne’s playwright, Eric Busch, he had my sympathy.

But the man is a cad and deserves no sympathy. True, even the charm cannot cope with the situation as it develops: the suicide of his divorced wife, the loss of his money, and at last, the departure of his faithful secretary. Now that, of course, is the moment when we should see whether he is really the cad he appears to be, or whether his charm is the outward expression of some redeeming virtue. But no, the problem, such as it is, is avoided: Saxon walks out and all ends happily with the reconciliation of the playwright to his wife. Whose story is it, anyway? Bah!

The greater part of this nonsense is very well done and most entertaining. The acting, the lighting, the editing, in fact the whole thing has a professional quality and finish which, if not strikingly original, is very satisfying. In fact, just the kind of thing that Hollywood can do so well; but it is not enough.

Once upon a dream

W.


One often hears the term "escape" applied to the cinema. If to eat meringues and drink fizzy lemonade is to escape from real nourishment, here you have an example of that kind of...
FOCUS

ecil Kellaway plays the gnomish man...

film. It is one of the series of rather self-conscious comedies which the British studios are now turning out. It is less flat-footed than most of the others we have seen. Perhaps the light ingredients have been mixed by a more delicate hand. Googie Withers certainly enters with gaiety into the laboured story of a wife who dreams that she had flirted with the impeccable batman whom her soldier-husband sends on ahead of him to help in the house. This is the film that Margaret Lockwood refused to make. One does not blame her, but it must be confessed that Googie succeeds where Margaret would surely have failed. Griffith Jones escapes from spivvery and lands as an Admirable Crichton. Guy Middleton has his biggest and best part so far. Maurice Denham as a caricature of a parson reminds us of Much Binding, and Agnes Lauchlan as an eccentric aunt reminds us of the late lamented Edna May Oliver.

A moderate film which is almost painfully proper in circumstances in which, one feels, it hopes you are preparing to be shocked.

V.


The idea of a leprechaun appearing in New York to act as the manservant of a young American journalist teems with possibilities. Some of them are hinted at and provide very welcome relief in a film that is otherwise a torture of boredom. Cecil Kellaway as the leprechaun gives a delightful performance, but alas, he is not always there, and then Tyrone Power and Anne Baxter struggle heroically with an overpoweringly dull script. For some unaccountable reason the music keeps harping in variation upon variation on a tune that sounds remarkably like Greensleeves, than which surely there is nothing more essentially English. When are the Irish going to be able to give us a picture all their own? But there is a lovely free-for-all at an Irish wedding feast, which leaves no doubt as to the validity of that marriage.

W.
The Glass Mountain


Anne (Dulcie Gray) goes to the war (1939 brand); he gets wounded in the head (his plane crashes in the Dolomites) and in the heart by the arrow of Nurse Alida’s (Valentina Cortese) love which seems to hit him hard. Alida is beautiful and young and Richard is young and handsome and when Alida nurses him back to health he is more than grateful and in a land

In the Dolomites

It is not an uncommon thing for a patient to fall in love with his nurse and there is no reason why he shouldn’t; but it is another matter if he is a married man and the nurse is engaged to be married: a conflict then arises which for the sake of sanity must be solved. In this story, Richard Wilder (Michael Denison) happily married to where life seems all singing and skiing they begin, in more senses than one, to tread on the ice. The legend of the Glass Mountain which Alida relates to Richard and the nice things which the famous baritone Tito Gobbi from the Scala Opera House, Milan, says about his music, fire Richard’s musical imagination and he decides to write an opera.

The opera is sung by Tito Gobbi and Elena Rizzieri of the Scala
In the Doldrums

Richard jumps from the Dolomites to the doldrums. When he returns to England he is no longer the devoted husband but goes around the house like a bear with a sore head and makes his opera the excuse.

Anne is patient (much too patient I would say, she shouldn't have fed the brute) and when he doesn't improve she suggests his return to Italy to finish his opera. Richard, of course, meets Alida and very soon he decides to ask Anne to divorce him. What a man! While he divorces her with one hand he (so to speak) with the other hand invites her to Venice for his opera. On the evening of the opera, Richard goes to the station to meet Anne. She doesn't arrive. He is heartbroken. His opera is a success. As he enters his dressing-room Alida tells him that Anne's plane crashed on the Glass Mountain while en route for the show. He is shocked back to his true love, who is Anne. As he is leaving the Fenice Opera House, Alida calls him back. "I understand," she says, "this is good-bye." They part . . . forever.

With a search party Richard climbs the cold, impassive mountain and finds Anne hurt but alive. They are reunited. In their own lives they have played out the opera of the Glass Mountain. He is Antonio. She is Francesca.

Show or Cinema?

As a show this is a good show and enjoyable but I do not think that anyone would say that it is good cinema in the strict sense of that word; the emphasis is on the ear rather than on the eye. The opera sequences sung by Elena Rizzieri and Tito Gobbi of the Scala Opera House, Milan, with the orchestra and chorus of the Fenice Opera House are lovely to hear, but in a film should not the music serve and not surmount? I got the impression that the picture story was just an
The opera of "The Glass Mountain" is a success but...

excuse to record some lovely music and is that a correct impression? The Italian location photography by William McLeod and O. Martelli is grand and nostalgic and there are many other beautiful things in this film, but it jumps about too much, there is lack of rhythm and unity and the contrast between the Italian members of the cast and the English members is too pronounced.

I thought the acting of Michael Denison and Dulcie Gray was very uninspiring, particularly in the opening sequences when they talk in that staccato stage-English manner which is as untrue as stage-Irish; but maybe they appeared dull in contrast with Valentina Cortese and Tito Gobbi who are so alive and radiant. Prophets (and all kinds of artists) are not known in their own country, I know, but in this film the Italians take pride of place.

I have written a lot about this film because there is a lot in it and I recommend it; but I do think that with a little more trouble it would have been a winner. I commend the morality of this film in which the conflict is solved in a Christian manner.

E.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

If every reader of "FOCUS" secured another reader, we should have a circulation of twelve thousand.
JOURNEY TO VENICE—IV

By John A. V. Burke

The films which were submitted to the Venice Festival of 1948 were not, as a whole, a very outstanding group. *Hamlet*, *Red Shoes*, *Fallen Idol*, *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, excited great interest, but the general level was low. As I have suggested before, the tone of the Festival seemed to be unpleasantly and unfortunately political. *Gentleman's Agreement*, for example, aroused some feeling among the audience and its over-emphasis on the anti-Semitic problem produced some animosity. *Morituri*, an Austrian film about prison camps and international problems, too, was the cause of some mutterings in the audience. It reminds one a little of *The Last Chance*, but has not the simple, single-eyed purpose of the Swiss film *Der Prozess*, the new film by Pabst, likewise, struck a political note which, under the circumstances of time and place, perhaps one can the more easily forgive. The Italian films, since this was Venice and post Mussolini, were precluded and postulated by a deafening welcome from the native populace. Nevertheless, though Rossellini, the maker of *Open City* and *Paisa*, was to be seen at the Festival and there was to be at least one of his films in the programme, the films submitted by Italy were not of a high standard. *Senza Pieta*, a second-rate piece about an intrigue between a white girl and an American negro, again stressed the political angle unpleasantly. The negro is victimised by his white comrades and eventually shot. Italy knows no colour bar but it seems a pity that films should be used to stress this un-Christian attitude and make capital out of it as is done in this case. Yet another aspect of the use of films for political propaganda was to be noticed among the Mexican productions where, for example in the film *Rio Escondido*, the peasants and the Church were presented as equally the victims of the rich land-owning classes, while the government were shown as tolerant sympathisers with both—a simplification of history that is far from the truth.

A film that caused something like consternation, at least among the English-speaking critics, was *Amore*, a two-part film by Rossellini. People have been saying that this talented director has Communist tendencies. I think it is a too facile way of trying to explain a man's sociological motives when one is out of sympathy with them. Nevertheless, though the treatment of *Open City* and *Paisa* and the forthcoming Franciscan film give evidence of Catholic understanding, it must be admitted that the bizarre and crude imagery of *Il Miracolo* left much to be desired.

The French films were decidedly poor. There was no *Monsieur Vincent* to win prizes for the motherland this year. *Dédée D'Anvers*, *L'Aigle a Deux Têtes* and *La Bataille de L'Eau Lourde*, were the only major pictures presented and the first two were proscribed by the French Catholic Film Centre.

America sent, in addition to the anti-Semitic film already mentioned, *National Velvet* and *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*. The latter with Humphrey Bogart, is a rugged piece in the style of the only film which, to my way of thinking, used his talents intelligently, namely, *High Sierra*.

Among the American offerings, of course, must be mentioned Orson Welles' *Macbeth*. We had an interview with Orson Welles, about which I will speak in the last and concluding section of this journey. For the moment let me say that it was one of the most disappointing afternoons I have had for a long time. Having been specially invited by Orson Welles to a private showing of the film at which Campbell Dixon of the *Daily Telegraph* and Anthony Asquith were the other English guests among a group of Continentals, I went with expectations at their highest. Never have my ears been so assailed with noise in the name of art. Shakespeare with all the stops drawn out. Scottish accents, Wagnerian backcloths and characters, and English mist-enshrouded action. The witches, so often merely comic drones on the stage, here became wail-
ing laundry-women seen through steam. The contrast which Welles assured us he had envisaged between Macbeth as the willing minion of the powers of evil on the one hand, and the forces of righteousness presented by Macduff and a hybrid priest on the other, petered out into a stage army battle in the everlasting mists.

The special triumph of the Festival was Carol Reed's Fallen Idol. This gratifying recognition of British artistry was the more welcome in that we of the home country had been conscious of the decline in the standard of native productions. The captivating photography of Georges Perinal and the miraculous patience of Carol Reed in dealing with Bobby Henrey are the two main factors of this film's success. Everyone was entranced by the beauty of the film. The Winslow Boy was another film which intrigued if it did not satisfy the Italians. Anthony Asquith was very anxious about its reception. He told me that he had a telegram from London saying that the Trade Show had been successful. I ventured to remark that this was a good sign. He refused to be comforted and spent a miserable time waiting like an undergraduate for the grilling experience of the viva voce. I wonder whether he heard what I heard about it? A voluble Italian woman, after the showing of the film, said with a shrug: "What's all the fuss about? What does it matter if the boy did steal 5/-?"

The one certain topic of conversation at all gatherings of film critics was Hamlet. Enough has been said about this film in other places. Here let me be content with the remark that it achieved the great compliment of being referred to as in a category by itself. Whenever anyone spoke enthusiastically of this film or that, one would say, "But what do you think about Hamlet?" The answer would always be, "But that is quite different".

Red Shoes, too, gained a special niche for itself in the conversations at the receptions and meetings that went on all over Venice. The beauty of Moira Shearer and the perfection of her dancing with the promise of a new light on ballet which the film has opened up: these were the points that held attention. The rest of the film was regarded as, perhaps, not more than competent.

A Film Festival is a kind of shop window for the selling of films. This side of the Biennale was strongly marked. But there were also the more cultural aspects to be discerned. Père Morlion, the indefatigable and inexhaustible Dominican, was the centre of many a conference on the art of film, the science of film criticism. The meetings of the International Catholic Film Office were not the only ones dedicated to the consideration of film as culture. Still, O.C.I.C. was the only section of the Biennale seriously studying the film in the light of man as Christian.

At the sessions of the O.C.I.C. Reunion, reports were brought in from every part of the world outside the Iron Curtain. Dr. Andre Ruszkowski and Mrs. James Looram were the two main centres of interest. Mrs. Looram, the representative of the American Legion of Decency, and Dr. Ruszkowski, speaking of his visit to the many other American countries which loom large on the film horizon.

STOP PRESS

At a recent Committee Meeting it was decided to hold a non-residential Summer Film Conference in London this year. The provisional dates are Thursday, September 8th, to Sunday, September 11th, inclusive. The programme will be based on last year's Conference—with the addition of classes in camera and projector technique.

It is realised that many members and enthusiasts from the provinces will be disappointed, but the difficulties connected with the arrangement of a residential course are, at the moment, too great for our Committee to cope with.

However, it is proposed that a series of Regional Film Conferences be organised, one for each month following the London Conference, at, say, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Derby, etc. We shall need the enterprise and co-operation of our provincial friends and members. What offers and suggestions? We shall do all we can to help. Will you?
CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY NOTES

The Fathers of the Society of St. Paul who, in their kindness of heart, asked us to share their house with them, reckoned without the Law. We have discovered that we may not use the rooms which the Fathers let to us, as an office. No name plate, no telephone, no good! Therefore we seek a new resting-place.

The meeting in London of the General Council of the International Catholic Cinema Office in July is going to take up a great deal of our time and we wonder whether a Summer Film Conference will be possible this year. At the moment it seems quite certain that we shall not be able to organise a residential course. However, it has been suggested that we hold regional conferences of several days' duration in some of the provincial centres. This will impose a great deal of work upon the officers of the Committee, but, it might prove to be the effectual beginnings of regional branches of the C.F.S. such as we have in mind. It would at least enable local enthusiasts to see what they could do and we should be willing to help in all possible ways from London. The main problem would be dates. We must avoid clashing with each other. Perhaps members will consider this point and let us have suggestions.

Lectures have been given at Bristol, Tunbridge Wells, Cambridge, Manchester and Portsmouth. At the end of February a Conference is to be held at Newcastle, organised by the Union of Catholic Students. It is to be a very full week-end with lectures and discussions on various aspects of film and the theatre as they affect Catholics. A report will be given in our next issue.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

Lest perhaps my previous letter (apropos Rope) should seem ungracious, I would like to say how very much I appreciated the review of Scott of the Antarctic.

What a help to know that theologians distinguish between "direct and indirect suicide" thus enabling us to assess accurately the selfless character of Capt. Oates, a thing which hitherto I had been unable to do.

Many thanks "W".

Yours faithfully,

ALBERT J. FREEMAN.

Sir,

Like most I think Focus is a first-rate film review. The reviews are excellent, down to earth and always seeking to be constructively critical, even to the worst films. They are invaluable to the Catholic who wishes to know the moral faults of films and who wishes to spend his entertainment money wisely.

I come into contact with several non-Catholics who are keen to see Focus month by month. One non-Catholic told me, unsolicited, that the common-sense style of the reviews was to his liking. Like me he has a corner in his heart for "Q".

Carry on the good work; there is a great need for reliable film reviews like Focus.

Yours faithfully,

P. E. WHITE.

WHAT "FOCUS" DESERVES

Sir,

I asked the "Catholic Times" for information about Catholic criticisms of films and they sent me a copy of the January number of Focus. It is just what I had hoped it would be and I should like to take it regularly.

The magazine deserves in my opinion to be more widely known.

Yours faithfully,

E. W. ALCOCK.

(If every reader secured another reader we should be pleased.—Ed.)
ROPE

Sir,

I did not give publicity to Rope, but I did endeavour to do justice to it, which is something quite different. A person who sets out to review a book, a play or a film must first of all grasp what the author is trying to say. If, as a Catholic critic, I find that a film propagates evil or glorifies it or explains it away or waters it down I am bound to condemn it; but if I find that the film portrays crime to condemn it or laugh it out of court I would be a fool to condemn it. The whole point of Rope is that no man can commit murder and get away with it and that those who think they are intellectually superior are in fact intellectually inferior; for sin is the worst form of insanity. To portray evil to cast out evil is as old as the Greek dramas. They had a word for it: Cathar-is.

I do not think that Mr. Freeman is wise in worrying about the effect thriller films have on our nerves. (I have in mind, of course, normal people.) Lots of people are nicer to live with after a murderous film has cast murderous or unkind thoughts from their hearts. I dealt with this problem once before when I said that: "Why Dons and Deans and Archbishops and the respectable man in the street delight to read thrillers (and see them) and murder stories; why children love ghost stories and nervous maidens indulge in eerie, creepy novels is a problem for the psychologist. My point is that this type of fiction gives entertainment to many innocent people and must be judged as such."

I said Rope was "a good moral film because it condemned evil"; I said that it was a good thriller because it thrilled and I'm sticking to that opinion.

Yours faithfully, E.

BOOK REVIEWS

Rising Twenty, by Pearl Jephcott (Faber, 1948, 8/6).

The cinema is one of the problems which looms large on the horizon of all those who have charge of or interest in young people. Magistrates, teachers, psychologists, to say nothing of parents, all at some time or other have asked themselves questions about the influence of the film upon the young mind. Delinquency among children is a fact which cannot be denied or hidden. On the other hand, people are apt to pin the blame for delinquency too easily on this or that social factor. The cinema has come in for rather more than its fair share of blame in this connection. I think it would be extremely difficult to produce evidence to support such a charge. That is not to say that the cinema has no influence and indeed, a bad one, on the child mind! The harm that is done, however, is much more in the region of the intellect than of the will. It is the harm which comes from unsuitable intellectual nourishment.

Ifitherto there has been a conspicuous lack of evidence as to the effect of films on children. People have been free with their opinions, sometimes pre-conceived, but seldom has such opinion had any evidential value. Now we are given a book which to some extent supplies what has been wanting.

Pearl Jephcott, well known for her sociological work for girls, has made a detailed study of three groups of adolescent girls in three distinct areas of the country. Her findings are set down in this most readable and informative book. The chapter headings are suggestive: Background, Relations, Dominant Interest, Educational, Earning and Spending, After Work. The last two chapters have the greatest interest for those connected with the cinema but the book is such that it ought certainly to be in the hands of all who have charge of the young: priests, parents, teachers, youth leaders.

The author lets the girls speak for themselves and they are astonishingly
wise and alert. Also they provide useful points for thoughtful discussion on a variety of problems and aspects of problems to which the cinema forms a kind of backcloth to the stage on which the girls' mental development progresses. Catholics need have no qualms about the principles stated. Even their practice is gratifyingly orthodox.

A Film Star in Belgravia Square, by Robert Henrey (Peter Davies, 1948, 12/6).

This is a book written in a fascinating manner about a little boy who became a film star as a result of his mother's flair for writing rambling causeries about her family. Mrs. Robert Henrey has a number of books to her credit, three of them about London life during the War, when her little baby was the centre of interest in Mayfair. A picture in one of these books captured the imagination of Carol Reed who was looking for a child to play the chief part in his film The Fallen Idol. He sought out the child and Bobby Henrey became the most discussed film personality of the year.

The book is difficult to classify. It is ingenious. It shows a great power of observation. There is a curious detachment about it and yet one feels that the author is more than usually egocentric. The child is clearly the centre of her life. There would seem to be some danger that the child will be spoilt. There is no question but that his mother has talent as a writer. Without seeming to do so, she absorbs and gives out in the easiest possible way, a large amount of information as to the way in which a film is made; life in the studio, the personalities and peculiarities of the personnel connected with the film. There are interesting vignettes of well-known film people like Carol Reed, Alexander Korda, David Niven, Ralph Richardson, Michele Morgan. These people come to life under the childlike magic of the author's style and emerge warm and human and understandable.

A book for those who know nothing about the science and art and mechanics of film-making and who are willing to have the deficiency remedied in gentle doses.

SOME FILMS REVIEWED

NOTE. Inclusion in this list does not connote positive recommendation. Films that are positively harmful are not included here. Readers are reminded to refer to the full reviews when assessing a film.

Category A, indicates adults only; B, adults and adolescents; C, family audiences; D, particularly for children.

REVIEWED IN "FOCUS" (Vol. II, Nos. 1 and 2)

Another Shore (B) (19)
April Showers (B) (8)
Call Northside 777 (B) (6)
Date with Judy, A (C) (36)
Don Bosco (C) (10)
Elizabeth of Ladymead (B) (45)
Hazard (A) (33)
Here Come the Huggetts (B) (8)
It's Hard to be Good (B) (7)
Johnny Belinda (A) (42)
Julia Misbehaves (B) (31)
Look Before You Love (A) (7)
Man-Eater of Kumaon (B) (7)
On an Island with You (B) (9)
Once a Jolly Swagman (A) (32)
One of Our Aircraft is Missing (C) (38)
Paradine Case, The (B) (34)
Peaceful Years (B) (35)
Pirate, The (C) (18)
Polly Fulton (B) (31)
Red River (B) (18)
Rope (A) (11)
Scott of the Antarctic (B) (14)
Sealed Verdict (A) (32)
Small Voice, The (B) (40)
Talents (A) (36)
Third Time Lucky (A) (37)
Time of Your Life, The (B) (18)
T-Men (B) (10)
Voice of the Turtle, The (A) (8)
Walls of Jericho, The (B) (38)
Warning to Wantons (A) (37)
William Comes to Town (D) (39)
You Gotta Stay Happy (A) (33)

WE RECOMMEND

An Act of Murder (B) (283)
Fallen Idol, The (A) (252)
Hamlet (B) (130)
I Remember Mama (C) (200)
Iron Curtain, The (B) (178)
London Belongs to Me (A) (228)
Monsieur Vincent (230)
Oliver Twist (C) (180)
Red Shoes, The (B) (204)
Swagman (A) (1)
Winslow Boy, The (B) (248)
VISUAL AIDS TO TEACHING RELIGION

By Our Educational Panel

LIBRARIES:
Dawn Trust, Aylesbury, Bucks.
Wallace Heaton Ltd., 127 New Bond Street, W.1.

FILMS

JAIRUS’ DAUGHTER. Dawn Trust, D.C.F. 19. Hiring charge £1 5s. 0d.
Extra day 12/-.  

This film is probably a more than usually successful attempt to express the Gospel message through the medium of the film, and seems to be almost entirely free from the defects which make these films unacceptable to the Catholic teacher. The narrative follows the text of the Gospel quite closely, and the passages involved give plenty of scope for picturesque detail without recourse to apocryphal embellishment. The film opens with good pictures of Jesus teaching by the lakeside surrounded by a crowd which includes the little daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue who has recently received orders to keep a close watch on Jesus of Nazareth. The little girl and her friend go on to visit a sick friend (the woman with the issue of blood) and tell of the words of Jesus which inspire the sufferer with hope. The child falls ill; her life is despaired of and the distracted father seeks out this new healer with a humble petition. The scenes in Jairus’ house are acted with restraint and with an absence of sentimentality which seems to be the result of genuine reverence on the part of producers and actors. The photography is excellent, and though the faces of some of the “real life characters” cannot be said to suggest the appearance we associate with the men and women of Israel, the general reconstruction of Jewish life is well done, and the atmosphere is very pleasing. Another advantage of the film is that the scripture words used by Christ have only very slight variations from our Catholic versions. Our Lord’s gestures and voice have a quiet dignity combined with simplicity and clearness, and it is possible for most listeners to forget the incongruity of the other bible characters talking in American tones and accents.

(Suitable to all ages.)


The origins and history of this fine colour film of the Holy Mass have already been described in the pages of Focus, and it only remains to mention those aspects which are of special interest to those engaged in education. The film is planned to teach a lesson, but is not a “teaching film” in the narrow sense. Beauty of colour and rhythm of movement would appeal to older schoolchildren, and Catholic children of all ages would appreciate the opportunity of seeing so exactly what the priest “is doing at the altar”. The showing of this film to a group which had been making a special study of the Mass would be excellent for bringing together what they had learned in a more fragmentary way from books, charts and film strips, but the film and commentary as they stand are not really suitable for the actual learning process. Most of the adverse criticism seems to centre on the spoken commentary which, though excellent in itself, is too hurried for the film. This is probably inevitable if so much is to be fitted in both of interpretation and of translation of the Mass prayers. Perhaps this could be avoided in private showings of the film by switching off sound and showing “stills” of some of the more beautiful sequences, and these are many. Yet the lesson conveyed by the commentary is one which needs emphasising, and indeed no one, however familiar with the Mass, can fail to be stirred to new resolution to use better the moments of the great Sacrifice. The film ends with scenes from daily life—a housewife scrubs, the
ballet girls dance, the work of factory and field goes forward, and over each picture is imposed the shadow of the Mass: the priest's hands offering the Host or the figure of the crucifix remind us of the unity of our work and our life with the one great Sacrifice.

(Suitable to all ages.)

**FILM STRIPS**

*A CERTAIN NOBLEMAN.* Dawn Trust, JKF 6. Price 10/-. Hire from Wallace Heaton, 2/-, extra days, 6d.

This is a good example of the film strip technique as used by Dawn Trust. The story is attractively told and the photography though variable in quality is on the whole very good. There is a certain lack of clearness in the portrayal of the social background and a confusion between the Jewish and non-Jewish elements. From the point of view of teaching some may find it unsatisfactory in that the imaginary and the scriptural are so closely interwoven as to be likely to confuse the child mind. So often what remains in the imagination is the picturesque detail which is irrelevant to the gospel story. The emphasis on the necessity of faith is good, but the virtue here depicted is rather a subjective confidence and a will to be cured than a real faith in the divine power of Christ. Thus the nobleman's son, an attractive chubby youngster, is the central figure rather than Christ Himself.

(This and the following strips suitable to all ages.)

**PAUL'S EARLY LIFE.** Dawn Trust, JKF 9. Prices, as last.

This is the first of a series of five strips which provide a complete life of St. Paul. Each frame consists of a map showing the part of the world where St. Paul lived and worked with a picture inset relating the events of his life. Although helpful to impress topographical details this device detracts on the whole from the value of the strip as many of the pictures are too small and indistinct. Possibly the use of maps alternating with pictures would have been more successful. But the facts of Paul's early life are clearly brought out. There is a Class Quiz at the end covering the matter of the pictures, and this is simple and comprehensive and would be useful for checking up the information acquired while listening.

(Suitable to Junior or Lower Forms of Secondary School.)

**THE BOYHOOD OF JESUS.** Dawn Trust, JKF 3. Prices, as last.

This is quite a useful collection of pictures for teaching the facts of Our Lord's early life, although it is not outstanding in merit or in the choice of pictures. Great emphasis is laid on the story of the Loss in the Temple, and one cannot help feeling that children would tend to interpret these pictures wrongly. The Child Jesus of this story gives an impression almost of sullenness in his attitude towards his parents. On the other hand, the temple scenes could provide useful matter for a simple study of the contemporary Jewish worship.

**THE STORY OF BERNADETTE.**

Dawn Trust. (No number given.) Price 10/-.

The captions of this film are given in French, but it could be used even by those unfamiliar with French provided there was a fairly detailed knowledge of the life of Bernadette. This strip seems to be intended for quite young children, but the views of Lourdes and the countryside are not clear enough to be effective and are in too marked contrast with the drawings of other frames with an obviously junior appeal.

**THE SACRIFICE OF JESUS.** Pt. I and Pt. II. Dawn Trust. Price 10/- each.

This French strip shows in very clear pictures the actions of the Mass; the pictures are linked by simple explanations interpreting the mystic significance of the Rite of Low Mass. These are interspersed with prayers and reflections appropriate to the different stages of the Liturgical Drama. The French captions though probably within the range of older Grammar School pupils may lessen its usefulness. An English version should prove satisfactory.

The next issue will contain a set of science reviews; and a list of educational films and strips reviewed up to date will be added.
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COVER PERSONALITY

 Cyrill CUSACK

W. B. Yeats, the great Irish poet and playwright, writing about the Irish Dramatic Movement, said, comparing English and Irish actors, "whatever they play, they have one advantage the English amateur has not; there is in their blood a natural capacity for acting and they have never, like him, become the mimics of well-known actors". This was written a good many years ago and there has been much controversy since about the work of the Irish theatre, but there has never been anyone to deny that the school of acting which came into being and flourished under the aegis of the Irish Literary Theatre has been surpassed for quality when at its best. The death of that lovable actor F. J. McCormick, the "bird-man" in Odd Man Out has unearthed a lot of memories about the early days of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin and of the exciting things that happened there: players and plays, straight from the heart of the people, presenting in poetic form, the heart of the people to the people.

Each of us has his favourites among the great names that decorate the Green Room in the little theatre on the banks of the Liffey. This is not the place to dilate on these matters but it cannot be helped if the mind wanders lovingly around the old times when thinking of something to say about one who is the latest of the talented band to break into the British film world.

It was against the background of the Irish Literary Theatre that Cyril Cusack was nurtured, so to say. Though still well on the right side of forty, he has a long past spent with the Abbey Theatre. It was more than twelve years ago that I first saw him acting in a play of St. John Ervine's in Dublin and it is difficult to realise that the youthful-looking car-driver in Odd Man Out is the same person. That was his first film part and it stood out among a group of first-class players; people like Robert Newton, Denis O'Dea, William Hartnell, Fay Compton, W. G. Fay. Each small part since then has had something about it which made people ask to see more of him. The little lay preacher in Esther Waters, almost the only live thing in that singularly dead film; the double-crossing mechanic in Escape, the sentimental soldier speaking of his wife in Once a Jolly Swagman, the endearing and pathetic sketch of the stuttering corporal in Small Back Room, each of his performances has had about them something of the care and precise skill of the artist in miniature. Which is not to say that Cyril Cusack is relegated to small parts. His is one of the coming names among film players. After parts in Blue Lagoon and All Over the Town, still to be press shown, he has just completed the part of Chauvelin in the Archers' version of The Elusive Pimpernel. He has jeopardised a rapid rise in film fame by his insistence on parts that are in keeping with what he considers artistically and morally worth while. It is characteristic of the care that he bestows on his work that he went to the trouble to read up Rousseau's "Social Contract" in order to get something of the feeling of the French Revolution for his part in his latest film.

I have mentioned the word "little" in connection with Cusack, and, indeed, have been taken to task by him for it; but there is about his work a warm, human quality that carries a suggestion of intimacy and friendliness that can only be conveyed by the intimate adjective. One thinks of John Mills in the same way: a nice little actor. In fact, both actors are above middle height. There is a curious resemblance between John Mills and Cyril Cusack. Not only do they play similar roles; they have a similar attitude to their work. They take the greatest trouble to get into the skin of the part they are playing but yet can cast off one skin to take on another with ease when called on to do so. Cusack gave a splendid radio performance of Pip in the B.B.C. version of Great Expectations, another interesting comparison with Mills. Some people thought that Cusack's interpretation of the part was better than that of Mills. At least it was as carefully thought out.

Cyril Cusack is a Catholic whose faith means everything to him. That is something to be admired in a profession in which it would be so easy to sacrifice principle to ambition. But then, the true artist knows that art and morals are so closely linked that one cannot be cast away without the other. A lesser man might have succumbed. Cusack is reaping the reward of his integrity in both spheres. We look forward confidently to a long and distinguished career in the service of the Seventh Art.

JOHN VINCENT.
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OUR efficient, good humoured, overworked, ever-obliging Manager has just written: "So many requests for the first three issues of Focus are coming in. I wonder if it would be any use putting a note in Focus to the effect that we should be most grateful if anyone who still has copies of these issues, but does not want to keep them, could send them back to:

The Blue Cottage, Summer Place
Mews, London, S.W.7."

This note, which we are pleased to insert, speaks for itself and spreads the news that more and more people are becoming interested in Focus. Someone (Dr. Johnson?) has said that interest is the mother of learning, which is no doubt very true, but as far as we are concerned interest is the mother which, in fifteen months, has pushed up our sales to 7,500 copies per issue, and the facts say that interest is growing. Last week some of the staff met a director of a big advertising firm in town who, after he had examined Focus, quite cheerfully said that it should have a circulation of 50,000; we all thought this a good idea and now the Editorial Board bequests all readers to enter into the fun of the thing and help us to reach our 50,000 target by 1950 (if not before)!

I once knew a business man who told me that he didn't care a hang what people were saying about his business, as long as they were talking about it; if they were talking about it he knew that it was alive! Judged by that standard, Focus is very much alive for a lot of people are 'talking about it and saying constructive things about it. I hear, for example, that C. A. Lejeune, in an article in the Keys, has paid it a compliment and, just recently a big film publicity man spoke of it as an inspiring publication.

From time to time there crops up the old question: When is the Catholic Film Society in this country going to produce a film after the nature of "Monsieur Vincent"? Very Rev. Fr. Hilary Carpenter, O.P., has this matter in hand and very much in his head and heart; he says that he has had a most encouraging response from people in the film world, in the financial world and from the General Public. At the moment, Fr. Hilary is working on a preliminary treatment for a script about St. Thomas More. What a magnificent subject and how very suitable for the times in which we live!

EDITOR.
AM often asked the difference between a Producer and a Director, and whether the former ever directs, or the latter ever produces.

The difference between these functions becomes immediately clear when one realises that a feature-producing studio must, for commercial reasons, be engaged on making several films simultaneously, all of which are envisaged and controlled by the producer in charge. Thus, he is producing, say, half a dozen films, each of which is being made by a different director. The producer is not only the captain on the bridge, co-ordinating all technical departments, but the inspiring force who, in most instances, conceives the subjects, selects scenarists, and makes all major contracts. Like the conductor of a great orchestra, he will probably have worked his way up, and is a technical expert with a thorough knowledge of the numerous departments he controls. If inexperienced in practical film-making he could not, of course, criticise results. Every day, he views, approves, or rejects the previous day's work. He may never walk on to the studio floor, yet he knows what is happening every minute, whether this or that film is up to schedule, and if not, why not. He carries tremendous responsibility, for the output flow, suitability of subjects, and the handling of them all depend upon his judgment. In contrast, the director is the man responsible to the producer. He physically makes a film, and is, perhaps, the only person, throughout production, capable of visualising the final effect on the screen of the countless scenes and fragments of action he is directing, when they have been assembled in correct story order. For remember, nearly all scenes are filmed out of order to meet studio building requirements.

Few people realise this important fact. A scene of, say, a drawing-room, or kitchen, will probably recur during a story, at irregular intervals, and if scenes were filmed strictly in story order, the studio staff would be forever building and pulling down the drawing-room or kitchen, each time it had to appear and disappear. Therefore, all action in each scene is gathered together and filmed on consecutive days, after which that scene is demolished. Although most of the leading players have knowledge of the final order of scenes, they cannot be expected to remember all the dovetailing details involved, and so they rely entirely upon the director, who is mentally fitting together this huge jigsaw as he directs each fragment of action. Apart from being able to act, speak correctly, and move with grace, the screen actor needs to be malleable—and sensitive, for the director shapes him by playing on his emotional strings and extracting just the right expressions, vocal inflections, and movements. Sometimes, you may have seen a star who does not seem so good as in previous films. This may be due to an unsuitable story, but it is more likely to be due to the fact that a different director made the film, who has not succeeded in getting the best out of him or her. The producer provides the guiding brain in a large studio, and is controlling several directors simultaneously, each of the latter bringing a film story to life. If you are perceptive you may be able to see the reflection of a director in his players, for they are, to a large extent, mirroring his personality. He is the unseen star, and the intelligent film-goer can and should select productions by certain directors rather as one selects the works of artists, novelists, and dramatists.
Mr. Dogsbody?

That’s right.

So you are the No. 1 Back-Room Boy? The most valued man in the film industry? The person without whom no film can exist?

Eh? I think you’ve got the wrong fellow.

You are Mr. Dogsbody, the screen-writer? The underpaid, unwanted, ill-used—

Why didn’t you say so before? Come in.

Thank you.

Mind the hole in the carpet. Sit down. I think there are two inches of light ale in that bottle I am using as a paper-weight. No? Perhaps you’re right. Well, what can I do for you?

Mr. Dogsbody, a cold, cold wind is blowing through the studios and cinemas in this country—

So they tell me. It is liable to become even colder.

I believe executive producers are smoking only two cigars where they smoked three before.

I am not familiar with the habits of executive producers. I am only a writer.

-Critics, in need of a stimulant after seeing the latest British comedy, are denied a drink “on the house”.

Too true. They don’t even get a cup of tea.

How does the economy wave effect you as a writer? Are you getting nervous about your option?

I have no option to get nervous about. It is not the custom to encourage screen writers with regular payments.

Mr. Dogsbody, several things have been blamed for this state of crisis. Production costs, high entertainment— tax, lack of spending power on the part of the public—

Lack of what?

Spending power.

Is that so? It does not seem to have affected football-match attendances. Even county cricket clubs have been showing a profit. Furthermore the theatre is doing very nicely—

Mr. Dogsbody, are you suggesting that people are keeping away from the cinema because they do not want to go?

It has crossed my mind. I think that audiences are becoming more selective, and that the old habit of going to the pictures twice a week, regardless of the film, is dying out.

That is a very original opinion. How do you think this extraordinary state of affairs has come about?

During the war years the standard of the British film reached a level never before attained. A small, select band of producers and directors turned out a number of films that could not be beaten, and for the first time in history British films took more at the box office than the Hollywood products. Moreover these pictures were not escapist. They reflected contemporary conditions and eschewed the happy ending without which no film was supposed to succeed. By and large there has been an alarming falling-off in quality since then.

How do you account for this falling-off?

The Industry, committed to the policy of making modest budget films in large quantities to fulfil the high quota, has been turning out a stream of routine efforts made to an old formula. Inadequately directed, unimaginatively written, these films are aping the Hollywood productions that took second place to the quality films we produced during the war. Hence the slump at the box office.

They say that it is impossible to turn out a good film on a budget of less than £250,000.

Nonsense. A film costing £250,000—or even £400,000—can be just as bad as a film costing £125,000. Conversely, a film costing £125,000 can be just as good as a film budgeted at £250,000. It is all a matter of direction and writing. Lavish production does not necessarily make a good picture.

You believe the writer is important?

Certainly I do. It is a highly significant fact that the excellent films made a few years ago came from producer-writers or director-writers who were in control of the script from start to finish. Now we have returned to the
state of affairs where the writer is at the mercy of everyone from the star down to the boy who empties the waste-paper baskets.

You don’t say so.

I do. In addition there are far too many cooks on the production side. Look at the credits of the average British film nowadays! Executive Producer — Producer — Associate Producer — Director — Associate Director — Dialogue Director — Production Manager — Production Controller — Are you still awake?

Er—yes. What are your suggestions for getting over the crisis?

Pruning the gentlemen on the production side. Finding screenplays that are more original and more down to earth. Discovering new personalities—and I do not mean charm school youngsters whose acting ability is in inverse proportion to their looks.

Acting ability? You certainly have some very original thoughts. What else?

I should like to see the formation of compact, permanent teams consisting of producer, director and writer. At present the director flits from one producer to another, and the writer, after handing in his script, has no further association with the production until he sees the finished film. He then discovers to his horror that he is sharing the screenplay credits with two other writers of whose existence he has been completely unaware. This does not make for good pictures.

You think that the writer should be in contact with the film all the way through production?

I do.

That is a very revolutionary suggestion. You are not a Communist by any chance?

No.

I was only er—asking. Well, thank you, Mr. Dogsbody.

Thank you. Good morning.

Good-bye.

(Horrible crash off.)

Heavens—there’s that wolf getting in the way again! Get off the doorstep, you dreadful beast!

LYN LOCKWOOD.

SOME FILMS REVIEWED

NOTE. Inclusion in this list does not connote positive recommendation. Films that are positively harmful are not included here. Readers are reminded to refer to the full reviews when assessing a film.

Category A, indicates adults only; B, adults and adolescents; C, family audiences; D, particularly for children.

REVIEWED IN “FOCUS” (Vol. II, Nos. 2 and 3)

Date with Judy, A
Elizabeth of Ladynead
Eureka Stockade
Glass Mountain, The
Green Grasses of Wyoming
Hazard
Julia Misbehaves
Lack of the Irish, The
Marriage in the Shadow
My Own True Love
Once a Jolly Swagman
Once Upon a Dream
One of Our Aircraft is Missing
Paleface, The
Paradine Case, The
Passionate Friends, The
Peaceful Years
Polly Fulton
Portrait from Life
Rachel and the Stranger
“Sainted” Sisters, The
Saxon Charm, The
Sealed Verdict
Silver City
Small Back Room, The
Small Voice, The
Sorry Wrong Number
Taproots
Third Time Lucky
Walls of Jericho, The
Warning to Wantons
William Comes to Town
Whispering City
You Gotta Stay Happy

Date

S recommendation.

An Act of Murder
Fallen Idol, The
Hamlet
I Remember Mama
Johnny Belinda
London Belongs to Me
Monsieur Vincent
Oliver Twist
Visitation
Winslow Boy, The
Scott of the Antarctic

We Recommend

(B) (283)
(A) (252)
(B) (130)
(C) (200)
(A) (42)
(A) (228)
(230)
(C) (180)
(134)
(B) (248)
(B) (14)
FILM REVIEWS

By Our Panel of Priests


Nowadays mews are very respectable, high-class localities. (The manager of Focus lives in one.) But at the time when bustles were fashionable Britannia Mews was a sordid place inhabited by ostlers, criminal types, an old woman nicknamed "the sow" (what low language!) and habitués of the "Red Lion". And one of the rooms was occupied by the impetuous Mr. Lambert, a bearded, bohemian art master. Needless to say, such a man was intemperate and a philanderer, the kind of person young ladies of good position, who take drawing lessons, fall in love with, to the grief of their families and their own eventual regret. So it was with Adelaide Culver, who married the regrettable Mr. Lambert, kept house for him in the mews and had to endure his insulting behaviour until his untimely but fortunate death. I lost the thread a bit here and thought this was due to an accident when he was flung out of the "Red Lion," but apparently Adelaide gave him "the lightest of pushes". This was noticed by Mrs. Mounsey ("the sow") and in spite of the verdict of accidental death, she contrived to blackmail the widow to the tune of ten shillings a week, and generally sponge on her.

This environment, I regret to say, had quite a coarsening effect upon Adelaide, who even went so far as to have recourse to the off-licence department of the "Red Lion" for (dare I say it?) gin. But her speech and manner became instantaneously ladylike again as the result of a chance encounter with a Mr. Gilbert Lauderdale. This gentleman bore a remarkable resemblance to the late Mr. Lambert. (This is contrived by the ingenious method of having one actor to play both parts, with and without beard respectively. An unfortunate misprint in a Catholic weekly implies that Mr. Lauderdale is played without a head!) A romance seems inevitable but unfortunately he is married. He remains on the premises, but the proprieties are safeguarded by his using as a bedroom that part of the accommodation originally designed for a horse. Having been a lawyer he knows all about blackmail (though not very well up in the finer points of English law regarding marriage formalities) and gets rid of Mrs. Mounsey.

In time the couple come to be known as Mr. and Mrs. Lambert, and when contact is re-established with the Culver family, they naturally take him for Mr. Lambert without the beard, being unaware that the adornment in question has in fact accompanied its owner to the grave. To his intense satisfaction Gilbert now learns that his wife, who has been in America, has indulged in the American custom of divorcing him and he proposes to marry Adelaide. The fact that he is divorced at first strikes her as a deterrent (these Victorian scruples!) but he explains that though divorced in the name of Lauderdale, he is now called Lambert and so a bachelor. What could be more convincing?

There are some real puppets in this film, made by Lambert and operated by Lauderdale. And most of the characters are puppets too, with two notable exceptions. Wilfred Hyde-White gives a small but excellent performance as Mr. Culver, and Sybil Thorndike is perfect as Mrs. Mounsey.

Wanted, a film. Preferably thriller. Take the following ingredients, proprietory brands if possible. Female star with refined British appearance; male star with American or Canadian accent and tough exterior. One or more murderers, according to taste. If the tough is to be heroic the killing can be accidental; this suits most palates. A police chase, several dark alleys (the same one can be used from both ends and at different angles), some fog (essential if it is a London murder). One room occupied by nice girl. Put the killer into the room with the nice girl and mix well. After things have come to the boil, draw off the scum and throw away (not too far, though, as it will be needed again before the end of the film). The mixture should simmer for several days. Throw in a zoo, a racecourse and a train journey to flavour. This will produce more scum. Draw off as before. Now is the moment to stir in a really bad man. With him you will need a little blackmail, some blackmail, double-crossing, a few threats, more blackmail, some sharp scissors and a scuffle. When these have been well kneaded, a suggestion of tension may be produced, but not too much as the film is intended for light stomachs. An unscrupulous sea captain, complete with vessel, may be kept in the background, but will not be needed as the mixture will result in a Grand Renunciation. The principle ingredients must walk off to the nearest police station to give themselves up, leaving the audience like the mixture, a little flat. The whole may be garnished with an enigmatic title, the bloodier the better.

This recipe comes from a book called Kiss The Blood Off My Hands, by a gentleman called Gerald Butler. I suspect he may be a relation of James Hadley Chase, the well-known supplier of tripe. The screen writers, however, with half an eye on Miss Blandish's orchids, have filleted the novel, leaving only the attraction of a nice girl for a nasty man who, because of the Production Code, manages a reform. There is some realistic grimacing and twitching by Robert Newton who gets mixed up with the scissors; a few bouts of commando stuff and a kick or two, but the protagonists come through their ordeal without any objectionable facial disfigurement or other horrifying "realism," and the violence is commendably restricted.

The sets and the lighting are reminiscent of Odd Man Out. Joan Fontaine reminded me of Rebecca; Robert Newton re-echoed Odd Man Out and Henry V. His habit of leering is too much of a habit. Burt Lancaster is again cast in a gangster mould. He could do much better. He has talent and charm and ought to be allowed to use them in a wider field.

In spite of its hackneyed situations and dialogue the film is competently handled and should entertain those who relish a little violence from a safe and comfortable seat.

V.

The Management of
LA CONTINENTALE CINEMA
TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD,
LONDON, W.1.

offer the Readers of
FOCUS

Reduced Prices for Admission to their Foreign Films for Parties of 20 or more persons

 Apply directly to The Manager, mentioning the Catholic Film Society
UN AMERICANO IN VACANZE.

Starring: Valentina Cortese.

Director: Luigi Zampa. Certificate: U. Category: C.

It is a pity that the Italian title of this film has been altered to the English caption A Yank in Rome. The combination of "Yank" and the Eternal City might suggest slapstick and vulgarity—characteristics that are notably absent from this production. "On Leave in Rome" would have been a happier expression.

I much enjoyed seeing the film, in the first place, for its Roman setting which we are given generously. The views of various monuments—the Trevi fountain, the Colosseum, the ensemble of Santa Maria in Cosmedin, the Mater Matuta temple and Newman's old titular church of San Giorgio in Velabro, and above all, the Vatican and St. Peter's—re-create a nostalgic atmosphere. The pictures of St. Peter's and of Rome as seen from on top of the colonnade of St. Peter's and the appearance of the Holy Father at a reception for newly-married couples are admirable. Respect and discretion are the keynotes.

In the second place, the two themes of the story are allowed to develop without exaggeration or sentimentality. Two American G.I.'s are given seven days' leave in Rome. On their way, they halt in a severely shattered village where the majority of the inhabitants are numbed by their war experiences and remain listless and apathetic. The parish priest combating this mood sends his niece to Rome to beg for assistance from an old seminary friend, now a Monsignore. The themes intertwine. The young signorina travels to Rome; one of the American soldiers falls in love with her.

The themes are ordinary enough and they are not worked out with any special sublety. However, the pleasant and sympathetic acting of the cast and the natural and unaffected behaviour of the village children and some of the street characters in Rome lend a grace and wistfulness to the picture. And with true Italian taste, the producers have avoided the obvious pitfalls. The story might so easily have turned into a sentimental romance under an Italian sun, and many a Western producer would have succumbed to the temptation. But no. Here it is resisted. It is this feature more than any other that gives a particular quality to this pleasing film.

The principal character is not the American soldier nor the young niece of the parroco. It is the Eternal City, with its associations and appeal.

K.

VOTE FOR HUGGETT. Starring: Jack Warner, Kathleen Harrison, Susan Shaw, Petula Clark, with David Tomlinson, Diana Dors, Peter Hammond and Amy Veness. A Gainsborough Picture.


This is one of the second feature Rank pictures which are being sent out like orphans without a proper Press Show. After some of the appalling attempts at comedy which have come from the British studios of late, it is no wonder that the producers were a little nervous of the welcome which the critics might give this one. However, in spite of its generally cool reception at the hands of the national reviews, I consider that this is one of the more successful efforts to make us laugh. I saw it in a suburban cinema with a large and obviously enthusiastic audience. Its merits are that Mabel and Denis Constanduros wrote the screenplay, and therefore the dialogue and characterisation were crisp and amusing, and that Ken Annakin directed, therefore the pace was brisk and the presentation competent, as one would expect from a man trained in documentary.

Local politics come off rather badly in a story which shows Joe Huggett upsetting both sides in an election in which he is put up as a stool pigeon. Jack Warner and Kathleen Harrison can do this sort of thing blindfolded. Petula Clark sings and acts prettily and there are some amusing sketches from a number of other supporting players.

We are badly in need of comedies. It seems that comedies are very hard to write for it takes a team of four in addition to the two original brains specialist, who turns out to be (yes, you are quite right) a beautiful woman. Before the film can end everybody has to have an attack of nerves, which has its amusing aspects.

Robert Cummings shows a nice taste for light comedy, and Anna Sten as a temperamental vendor of beauty preparations, is a pleasing if watered-down version of Marlene Dietrich. Hedy Lamarr, of course, still looks beautiful, if a trifle seared, but she is still unable to act. As the nerve specialist she looks more like a cause than a cure for this distressing complaint.


The lost continent of Atlantis must always excite our imagination. For the sake of drama one is prepared to allow that, instead of being engulfed by the ocean, it really continues to exist in some remote mountain country of the Sahara. But no one with any respect for his intelligence can be prepared to admit the absurdities of this film.

It seems that this lost civilisation is ruled over by Queen Antinea (Maria Montez) reputed to be an offspring of Neptune and a descendant of Caesar and Cleopatra (perhaps the Brains Trust can work that one out: it is a wonder they didn't throw in the Queen of Sheba and the Old Man of the Mountains for good measure). Her beauty is irresistible, at least one of the two French officers captured in the desert behaves in such a way as to indicate the Producer would like us to believe that. Her cruelty, apparently, is pathological. Her palace, her attendants and her dresses show that she has studied and approved the most artificial and extravagant standards of Hollywood.

An escape film, but not a very pleasant escape.
Treasure of Sierra Madre


There is much in this film which immediately meets the eye; but much more which later on meets the mind.

IMMEDIATE REACTION

My immediate reaction to this film was to affirm that it was head and shoulders over most films. The story which is related to life (and that's how we like our stories, isn't it?) concerns three men who go in search of gold and discover after much blood and sweat and tears that money is not worth the candles burnt before its shrine. Dobbs (Humphrey Bogart), Howard (Walter Huston), Curtin (Tim Holt) dig for gold and find it; but in doing so they lose their souls in the true sense of the word; we are made to see what lust for money does to a man.

The story is told in a direct, straightforward manner. The pictures, often rugged, sometimes beautiful, always good, move with a strong, faultless rhythm; the dialogue is crisp and brisk, too brisk perhaps for an English audience, and maybe the philosophising
of Howard is a bit too sententious, but it is always sincere and intelligent; the plot is securely built and the characters, even the minor ones, are fully developed; the acting of the whole cast is splendid and the music is so onomatopoeic that it never disturbs, for which many thanks. If genius is a capacity for taking pains this film has the touch of genius; it gives the immediate impression that pains have been taken to get everything right and that producer, director, cameraman and editor and script-writer have worked in harmony.

Like every good story there are elements of surprise and suspense. The suspense is as good as anything done by Hitchcock. I am thinking of the sequence in which Dobbs, after he has attempted murder, goes to sleep by a log fire which leaps up to such heights that you feel sure that at any moment you will see him burning like a log... but you don't; of the sequence in which Howard administers artificial respiration to the Indian boy... all the time you are wondering whether he will save the boy... the mother, drained by sorrow, stands by, with pitiful restraint.
slowly the child moves . . . then cries . . . then comes alive and the mother's face lights up with a radiance which is lovely to behold; of the sequence in which you see the reflection of Gold Hat in the waterhole as he stands over Dobbs who is on the run with all the money and is now slaking his thirst. What will Gold Hat do to Dobbs? Will Dobbs get away with his stolen booty? This film is certainly good entertainment.

(2)

DELAYED REACTION

The film concludes with Howard and Curtin shaking with hysterical laughter. Dobbs, who tried to murder Curtin and attempted to run away with the booty, while Howard was administering artificial respiration to an almost dead child, is attacked by bandits who bump him off, not to get the booty but to get his boots. In the eyes of Gold Hat and his not so merry bandits, boots and more boots constituted real wealth! They thought the gold which Curtin was carrying away was sand and threw it to the four winds! That is the first half of the macabre joke. The second half of the macabre joke is that Howard was the only one who got anything out of the adventure and that the riches he received came to him when he was not looking for them! In gratitude for saving the life of a child the Indians were prepared to make him a Great White Chief and surround him with all his heart's desires for the rest of his life.

Memory of this film remained with me for many days and I began to realise how sane, sound and correct is the philosophy and the psychology which informs it. I suddenly realised that this film was completely in accord with the teaching of Christ and I thought of those golden words: What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul . . . lay not up to yourself treasures on earth where the rust and moth consume and thieves break through and steal . . . it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven . . .

I admired the clever way in which the two fundamental instincts of human nature: The will to power and the will to community, ever in conflict, are analysed and contrasted; against the sordid struggle after power and money, I saw the kingdom of God and the reign of love. How philosophically and psychologically true it is that in seeking self we become sad or mad and that in serving others we become sane and find peace.

I admired, too, the manner in which the characters of these three men in search of gold were developed. How true it is that the idealist (Dobbs was an idealist who believed there was nothing wrong with money, but all depended on the man who handled money) is often the first to go to pieces when up against temptation, for the simple reason that he has never known himself. Howard, the fellow who doesn't think too highly of human nature, is the man with a heart of gold. Curtin, the simple, straightforward fellow who remains honest all this time develops true to type.

This film is first-class entertainment which does more than tickle the emotions. It is a film which makes one realise in what manner the cinema may serve Christian thought and culture.

E.

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£157 4 1
FOOLS RUSH IN. Starring: Sally Ann Howes, Guy Rolfe, Nora Swinburne, Nigel Buchanan, with Raymond Lovell and Thora Hird. 
Producer: Aubrey Bar ing. 
Director: John Paddy Carstairs. 
Distributed by Pinewood Films. 
Certificate: A. Category: B. 
Running time: 82 minutes.

There is an underlying current of seriousness in this comedy which is as admirable as it is unusual. A young woman is waiting to go to the church for her wedding. Like so many, she has not given the marriage vows a thought until the last moment, when she glances through the Prayer Book, and is shaken by the solemnity of what she finds. The marriages of those about her all seem to have been unhappy, while her own mother divorced her father before she was old enough to remember him, and is now actually contemplating a second union. The evidence would seem to show that if marriage is such a serious affair, it needs very much more consideration than she has in fact given it. Perhaps men are not all they seem to be.

The unexpected arrival of her father adds to her perplexity; for, instead of the villainous prodigale she had learnt to think of, he turns out to be an entirely delightful person. Perhaps it is not only the husbands who are not all they seem. So, though bridegroom and guests are all waiting in church, she decides to call the whole thing off and wait a bit.

Round this theme Kenneth Horne wrote a most amusing comedy, which has not I should imagine suffered from being made into a film. John Paddy Carstairs who directs it, has done his work well. He has wisely stuck to the play, and not tried to add a whole mass of explanatory or irrelevant matter for the sake of the film. Above all he has succeeded in getting his cast to work as a team, which has given the piece an exceptionally happy atmosphere. It has the pace which a comedy of this kind cannot do without; it starts right in the middle of things, which is as it should be; and it does not pause for glamour but goes on steadily from climax to climax to the end. And somehow, though the thing is a comedy and depends for its humour upon one ridiculous situation after another, one is left with the impression that marriage is sacred, and that the ridicule has been focused upon divorce. I suppose this is what the director intended to do: it is certainly what he has achieved. I am astonished and grateful, and admire his courage.

The photography too is courageous and dispenses with glamour and self-conscious striving after effect. It tells the story quite naturally, and even allows shadows to fall on people’s faces when they walk under trees. And the music for once is unobtrusive, pleasant, and used with the utmost restraint.

As for the acting, I found it wholly delightful. Nora Swinburne is a first-class actress whom one can expect to be good. And here she is good enough not to swamp the play, which is saying a lot. As for Sally Ann Howes, here at last is a lovely young actress who is not frightened of using her face as well as the rest of her. She is very young, very natural, and gives a very good performance indeed. Nigel Buchanan, who plays the unfortunate young bridegroom, juggles most ably with emotions that switch from utter bliss to bewildered despair, and Guy Rolfe is as convincingly charming as the charming father is supposed to be. These parts, and the small parts as well, do not “play themselves”. In a comedy such as this, everything must be neat, well timed: there must be no fumbling, or the very delicate balance will be upset. I commend the work of this team as an object lesson to amateurs.

All this is rather superlative; and indeed on its own level it is a faultless little piece. But do not expect a great film, for it is a comedy transported from the stage and suffers from the limitations that that implies. But within those limitations it is healthy and most charming entertainment, which I am very happy to commend.

W.

The parish pump has been getting a bad press from recent British films. After the Huggett election we are now presented with another comedy turning on the theme of seaside self-interest and the Chestertonian battle joined by a quixotic local newspaperman. The screen play is by Derek Twist and Michael Gordon and is unusually compact and alert. There are the usual clichés one expects in such a plot, but they are carried through with pleasing skill and a really superb piece of satire at the expense of the local operatic society will take the edge off all such performances for a long time to come.

Norman Wooland has his first starring role but has little opportunity to confirm the promise he has already shown. Sarah Churchill's return to British films is welcome, but she, too, has little chance to shine in a pedestrian part as a girl reporter. The outstanding feature of this film is the excellent performances of the supporting players, Cyril Cusack, Fabia Drake and James Hayter. As hotel proprietor, Chief Magistrate and prima-donna of the Local Operatic Society, Fabia Drake gives a gem of a character study. Cyril Cusack goes from strength to strength. As Gerald Vane, the peace-at-any-price part-owner of the local paper, he gives us a beautifully-timed and well-thought out portrayal. After his lovable stuttering corporal in Small Back Room, this is in complete contrast and the best thing he has so far shown us.

With actors of this calibre and the wealth of truly British stories waiting to be told by Britons on the British screen, there is little excuse for the dearth of credible films or the synthetic crisis which has threatened an end to the native output. It is difficult to believe that the problem has ever been considered as having any other aspect than the financial one and that is something that could at once be solved if those concerned thought more of film art than they do of film industry.

Anyway, go to see this excellent British comedy. It may be the last chance you will have.


Whispering Smith (Alan Ladd), the good man, is quick on the draw and shoots plenty of wicked men, but he is very good always to his boyhood's friend, Murray Sinclair (Robert Preston), who has turned wicked. When the boyhood's friend dies from justly incurred wounds, Whispering Smith's problem about boyhood's friend's wife is solved. It is as simple as that, but there is enough shootin' and gallopin' to please all the boys in the audience.

It is a Western (period 1890) of healthy intent, with some lovely scenery. Why is it, we keep on asking ourselves that, as far as colour goes, while every prospect pleases, only man is vile?

Don't get the idea that this film is an excuse to have Jean Simmons in scanty attire monkeying about on a beach with a sort of Tarzan. Actually there is always a sort of sweet decency about the picture, but it is much too long.

Most people know H. de Vere Stacpoole's novel, to which additions have been made by the script-writers, Frank Launder, John Baines and Michael Hogan. A young boy and girl reach a desert island escorted by a sailor (who does not survive for more than a few months) and equipped only with a book on etiquette. We see the shipwreck. "Must be awful sensation" said someone near me. Until Focus has a larger circulation we must expect its representative to be sometimes
Paddy (Noel Purcell) finds the children

LAGOON

...seated in the back circle and not the best circles.) And we see the island. Although the little girl aptly remarks that it reminds her of Torquay, the location shots really were made in the Fiji Islands.

The young people remain there long enough to grow up, fall in love, marry and have a baby. (Not being Catholics they would not be bound by the form of marriage which apparently requires witnesses for the marriage of a Catholic in such circumstances. So I can reassure you that the validity of their very explicit marriage contract would be upheld by a Catholic ecclesiastical court.) The ending of the film is ambiguous and presumably unhappy.

It would be easy to ask sardonic questions as to the exact menu at meals, how the young man learned to dive so well and lose the American accent of his childhood, what he used for shaving tackle, etc. But I don't want to crab the film, which has a certain easy charm and a slight background of faith and morals.
EDWARD, MY SON

"Q." recommends reflective adults to see this film more than once . . .


Theatregoers are familiar with this story of Arnold Boult, a self-made man who with complete ruthlessness rose to a peerage and acquired a fortune, not for his own sake but for that of his only son, whom he effectively spoils. The character as created by Robert Morley was, I understand, consistently detestable; Spencer Tracy, as might be expected, elicits a grain of sympathy.

The film inherits from the play two dubious devices. The son never appears. This exclusion is apt to seem self-conscious and forced and hence irritating. And there is the direct approach to the audience, a prologue and epilogue spoken by Lord Boult. It seemed to me that the film preaches its own sermon so unpriggishly yet so well, that it was unnecessary to underline the moral. But perhaps the public might otherwise have missed the point behind the entertainment.

For the picture, though it may lack specifically cinematographic qualities, is excellent theatre. The scene, when Boult visits Miss Perrin and the later appearances of Lady Boult are most memorable. So are the performances of Deborah Kerr as the eventually dipsomaniac Lady Boult, Leueen MacGrath as the almost dual personality of Boult’s secretary and mistress, and Ian Hunter as the family doctor.

But what makes the film specially remarkable is the way in which, sometimes rather subtly, it shows that worldliness is a failure even in this world. A series of catastrophes result from the attempt to use evil means to a good end. Nor is a good end attained. The son is brilliantly
depicted in the conversation of others as the sort of young man who is rude to waiters, sick in the hall when drunk and caddish in his love affairs. And the facile ending is avoided. He does not redeem the life of a waster by a hero’s death in the war; it is by showing off with complete disregard for the lives of others that he causes his aircraft to crash. The contemptible machinery which sets the divorce laws in motion appears in all its absurdity. The jettisoned mistress dies in what the doctor calls “the usual way”—an overdose of sleeping tablets.

But the highest point is reached in the candid musings of the boy’s mother when drink has removed her conventional inhibitions. “Why,” she says, less bitterly than in a spirit of real inquiry, “is life like this?” “‘A born leader of men’. But leading them to what?” It is all to the good that the picture-going public should be encouraged to ask such questions. The film does not answer them, but the Catholic Church does. To raise the questions instead of being content to drift unquestioning is the first step towards finding the answer.

I strongly recommend reflective adults to see this film, perhaps more than once.

Q.
Deborah Kerr, Spencer Tracy and Ian Hunter give memorable performances.
THE HISTORY OF MR. POLLY.


A major tragedy for English literature was the degree of B.Sc. which H. G. Wells gained in London. He ceased to produce the novels which gave his early days as a writer such extraordinary promise. His pseudo-scientific output smothered the delightfully human characters like Kipps and Polly, and Wells became the Arch-prophet of doom, gloomily foretelling how preoccupation with science and politics would lead to man's ultimate extinction.

However, we still have Mr. Polly with us and John Mills could have made no better choice for his initial incursion into the perilous fields of production. The early characters of H. G. Wells are a pleasing mixture of Dickensian whimsicality and the pagan middle-class materialism now made classic by J. B. Priestley.

The story of the little draper's assistant, a romantic dreamer with a fondness for phrases that sum up the situations in which he finds himself, a modern and masculine Mrs. Malaprop, is vintage Wells. After a series of lugubrious escapades, including "funereal ostentation" and "amatory oscillation," he undergoes "matrimoniacal incarceration," runs away to seek "pasticional quietude in the pursuit of the piscatorial," but has to bring himself to seek "pugnatorial episodes with a surgacious ex-convict" before he finds the happiness he seeks away from and outside that urbanisation which is the blight contributed to civilisation by the class he represents.

The production is uneven. The photography is excellent; the art-direction a perfect piece of period reconstruction; the editing curiously jumpy at times; the supporting characters rather stagey and uneasy (with the exception of Finlay Currie, who, as Uncle Jim, is superb; repeating his triumph as Magwitch in Great Expectations). There are several welcome doses of slapstick, a comical fire scene played in the best Mack Sennett tradition and an entrancing sequence with John Mills, as Mr. Polly, clad in a long nightshirt frantically running across the morning fields from the crazy Uncle Jim. A few scenes played in mime are a welcome relief from the otherwise noisy, incessant, and not very distinguished musical background (by
not expressed. Although all the principal characters with any degree of sanity in this film are self seeking double crossers, it is hard to imagine anyone admiring their motives, their acts or even their smooth smartness.

Once again we are in those American 'eighties, this time in Bowden, Alabama. Marcus Hubbard (Fredric March) is a prosperous storekeeper who reads Greek and plays the violin, having built his prosperity on "fiddling" with salt in the days of the blockading Civil War. The memory of this makes him very unpopular with his fellow townsmen who live very close to the memory of those days, still keeping up the yearly memorial of the Bowden men who were betrayed to their death in mysterious circumstances when Federal soldiers surprised them in their secret camp. He dominates his unpleasant family and has reduced his wife (Florence Eldridge), a good, religious woman to a condition very near insanity. Of the family, the two sons (Edmond O'Brien and Dan Duryea) are out for their own individual ends and the daughter (Ann Blyth) is more than a minx. Each exploits some situation on the other members of the family to the detriment of the rest. In the end the mother, near demented by her husband's expulsion of the sons, reveals to the more business-like and less unsympathetic son, Ben (Edmond O'Brien), the secret of her overburdened heart. This has been the conflict all these years between her vowed loyalty to her husband and her horror at what she knew he had done: he it was who had been the Judas who had caused the death of the local Confederate boys.

This gives Ben his chance. He is not horrified but elated. With the threat of public exposure and probable public lynching he forces his father to hand over ownership and control of everything to him—a sad scene of unfilial ruthlessness. He imposes his will on the brother and sister who are sickeningly quick to see on what side their bread is buttered. His mother, to whom he had always been effortlessly kind, is now horrified at what she discovers in her children. She upbraids them with dignity and, in their very moment of their exultation, strikes a discordant note by saying she loves them no more, but only pities them and will live no more with them.

Mr. Polly meets the plump woman (Mегs Jenkins)

William Alwyn) which follows almost every line of dialogue.

John Mills is at his best, reminding us that his early stage experience was in comedy. His make-up is erratic. His middle period, in which he resembles (probably deliberately) H. G. Wells himself, is the most in character. At other times he is the youthful romantic of twenty, the bearded man of thirty-fivish, or the hirsute fisherman, looking remarkably like Captain Scott and very unlike the simple Mr. Polly.

Mегs Jenkins as the Plump Woman and Sally Ann Howes as an inquisitive schoolgirl are adequate to their parts. Betty Ann Davies' nagging wife may be mentioned for her willingness to be dowdy in aid of authenticity.

A film which most lovers of Wells and all who like a bit of whimsical humour will enjoy.

V.


The first point to make clear is that the clinical study of disease does not imply approval, even if disapproval is
It is an unpleasant film, even though
—I think—a good one. It shows very
vividly the ugliness of avarice and
exposes the void left in nature both by
parental tyranny and filial callousness.
I don’t think filmgoers will experience
unaccustomed preachings in this film,
but their instinctive reactions should
be an easy test for their Christian
reflexes.

Fredric March is magnificent as the
father, the credits for the three chil-
ren are all well earned; but for me the
performance of the film was that of
Florence Eldridge, although she is only
sub-starred with the subsidiary “with”.
That opinion may of course be due to
the amateur’s concern with the symp-
thetic character—and hers is the only
sympathetic character in the whole film.

X.

UNFAITHFULLY YOURS. Starring:
Rex Harrison, Linda Darnell,
Rudy Vallee and Barbara
Lawrence. Written, directed and
produced by Preston Sturges.
Distributors: 20th Century-Fox.
Certificate: A. Category: A.
Running time: 96 minutes.

Rex Harrison’s dashing performance
as a temperamental conductor whose
wit and confidence carry all before him,
and cause a good deal of trouble after
him—some good stretches of fun—and
some fine orchestral playing—all these
things only just about manage to
salvage this otherwise futile film.
Some people will say they don’t.

GOUPI MAINS ROUGES. Certificate:
A. Category: A.

The French are not afraid of using
the cruder realities of life as subjects
for screen treatment. Farrebique dealt
with the earth, the change of the
seasons, the nearness of man to the soil.
In Goupi Mains Rouges, we have
another side of the peasant environ-
ment: this time, not the soil or the
work in the fields but the effect on
character of nearness to the earth.
Things rather than money, real
property rather than bearer-bonds
represent for them true wealth.

We meet a family who seem to live
together in patriarchal style; loving,
working, poaching; engaged in con-
stant nagging with each other making
plans for keeping property within the
family by marrying available members
of the family off to each other.
Violence, murder, theft. These things
come to the family and must be solved
by the family. The treasure which the
patriarch has kept hidden still remains
hidden, but the secret of its where-
abouts is passed on to the young
who is to marry and who must pass it
on to his son when the time comes.
It is real and it is there. It represents
real security against future crisis.

The film is beautifully pictured and
acted and is one of the eventful French
films; one that is worth several visits
to savour the skill and the artistry
that goes to the making of a true
cinema.
JOURNEY TO VENICE—Conclusion

By John A. V. Burke

Orson Welles was generous in the time he gave to those who wished to interview him. Father Morlion arranged a special reception for himself and one or two others, including Father Declan and myself. He explained his views on art, music, literature, films, religion, with equal enthusiasm and conviction. His conception of the relative rôles of the cinema and the stage, particularly with regard to the players' attitude to the audience was revealing. The theatre, he asserted, was an extension of the idea of a temple. The audience, like the congregation, played an important part with the actor in helping the interpretation of the author's words. The audience could stimulate the actor; the actor had continually to remember that he was reacting upon the audience as upon an instrument, or like a preacher on a congregation. To underline this notion, he said that he never allowed all the house lights in a theatre to be extinguished when he was on the stage. The slight glimmer of light still remaining served to emphasise the unity of actor and audience in a common, quasi-liturgical experience. On the screen, on the other hand, Welles declared that the actor was playing always on the individual. The camera took the actor right into the mind of the individual member of the audience, therefore his approach and his technique as a screen player had to be quite different to that of the stage actor. On the stage the actor could afford to look over the heads of the audience; on the screen he has to look into their eyes.

There were several receptions given by the Producers of America and Great Britain to the members of the Press. That arranged by the Americans was stereotyped, taking place in a great modern hotel, with dance floor and band and glamour laid on with the champagne. The British reception was different. It took place in the Palazzo Dario, to which the guests were taken by gondola. The old palace with its little enclosed garden leading down to the water, musicians singing, in the Italian style, in a gondola, the ancient rooms, each on a different floor, thronged with a crowd that moved from one to the other—it was "different"... and quite British!

One of the most pleasant memories I have of Venice is of the long conversations I had with Mrs. James Looram, the President of the film department of the Federation of Catholic Alumnae, which lists the films for the Legion of Decency. I was asked to look after Mrs. Looram in my capacity as English-speaking member of the Comité Directeur: a union of Anglo-Saxon forces, so to say! It was the first time for many years that O.C.I.C. had had the pleasure of actual participation by the Legion of Decency in its councils. Mrs. Looram broke her journey in Europe especially to be able to be present at the General Council. She was a mine of information as to the methods and motives of the Legion and gave me much light on the working of that Office. She showed herself completely au fait with the problems that beset a Catholic Film Office. Her broad and cultivated sympathies were entirely in keeping with the best and most Catholic aspects we have learned to expect from American life.

I was the guest of Mrs. Looram at Rome and there had the added pleasure of meeting Bishop Gerald O'Hara of Kansas, Missouri, as well as Father Edward Peters, the Paulist Father who is rector of the Church of St. Susanina, the name-church of the late Cardinal Hinsley. I said Mass in this church and took the opportunity to offer the public Mass which I said on the Sunday for the intentions of the American Legion of Decency. It was rather suitable that I should be able to do so in the name-church of the Cardinal who gave the Catholic Film Society its characteristic line of approach to the problems of film appreciation.

Mrs. Looram was very complimentary about the achievements of Focus. She said that it was proposed to set up in the U.S.A. an Institute of Critical Cinematographical analysis "to do work in America similar to that being done by Focus". It has always to be remembered, in this connection, that the main strength of the American Legion of
Decency consists in the very large numbers of people for whom it claims to speak and also because it restricts itself to the one sole object of moral classification.

While in Rome I visited the elaborate offices of the Centro Cinematographico Catolico, the Italian National Reviewing Office. They are so well appointed that they make our little room look rather cheap. All things considered, however, I think that the amount of work which we manage to do from our meagre premises compares very favourably with what comes out of the swagger set up on the Continent! The chief advantage of international reunions such as the Venice Festival, apart from the work which is done, is to emphasise still more the necessity of Catholic Film Action as well as to show it in operation. It is also useful to watch other countries at work at the same task and, although, as Pope Pius XI said, "Circumstances, usages and forms vary from country to country, so that it does not seem practical to have a single list for all the world," one always learns something of value from such meetings. The next meeting of the General Council of O.C.I.C. is to take place in London this year. It is to be hoped that the delegates will have as full and interesting a time in London as we have had in the Continental capitals. One thing is certain: people from other countries look with considerable respect to British endeavours and we shall have to look to our laurels in the field of Catholic Film Action for there is a vast amount of interesting and useful work being done from many angles of the cinema problem in other countries besides our own.

CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY NOTES

The Honorary Secretary has had a busy month. In addition to the conferences and lectures which have taken place in various places, it was necessary to go to Luxembourg for an Executive Committee of the International Catholic Cinema Office. This reunion also partook of the functions of an Editorial Board Meeting for the "International Film Review" as well as an occasion for the Gala Presentation of the O.C.I.C. Special Award to the film The Search, which took place in Luxembourg in the presence of the Grand Ducal Court and a very distinguished audience. Dr. Charles Reinert, of Zurich, chairman of the jury which made the award at Venice, gave an address after which he handed the Diploma to the representative of the "Praesens Company", producers of the film. It is a very moving story of the lost children of Europe and how U.N.R.R.A. dealt with them. It will certainly be seen in this country and as it was made by the group which did The Last Chance, it should be sure of a great welcome.

The "International Film Review" is at last available. It is the first review of its kind; printed in three entirely separate editions. One realised with some surprise that there is no international agreement among printers as to the significance of proof and correction signs. The result is that the first number, excellent though it is from the point of view of content, is a mass of irritating inconsistencies. However, we agreed with the Luxembourgoise printer that each national editor would, in future, provide a list of the signs and their meanings as used in his own country.

Summer Film Conference
The provisional dates are Thursday, September 8th, to Sunday, September
Regional Branches of C.F.S.

In this connection we are glad to say that through the initiative of some energetic people in Salisbury, we are able to announce the first regional affiliation with the National C.F.S. The Salisbury Catholic Film Society has embarked on an ambitious programme of films to be shown during the season. It has drawn up a Constitution incorporating the main objects of the C.F.S., viz., the formation of groups for the study of film and the presentation of worthwhile films of Catholic interest.

Barbara White, the talented actress wife of Kieron Moore, has recently undertaken two serious responsibilities. She has become a mother and she has become a Catholic. It is always a special pleasure to members of the household of the Faith to learn that others have joined the Church. This is something that, perhaps, non-Catholics do not quite appreciate. We are not proud because our numbers are increasing but, knowing what we possess, we are glad that others share it and that the Divine will for complete unity in the Body of Christ is thus a step nearer realisation.

Kieron Moore and Barbara White are, with their little daughter, Therese Mary, one of those families which, because of their careers, are inevitably in the public eye, but are also, because of their charm and lack of the prima-donna temperament, beloved as well. We wish them every joy and blessing.

We shall be pleased to hear of other groups following this example and we shall be glad to help in any way possible. Incidentally, we ought to have a share in capitation fees! What do members think? We are trying to draw up indices and lists of suitable films for such enterprises. We shall be glad to have the views of members and readers on this and other problems.

Talking of regional activities; we are very glad indeed to welcome another kind of affiliation. We have for a long time been urging the necessity for a group of Catholic Teachers to discuss and provide Visual Aids suitable to our needs. Now comes the good news of the formation of the London Catholic Visual Education Guild. It has an ambitious programme and we expect great things from it. It had an inaugural exhibition in London last month and achieved a great success. Its Hon. Secretary is J. J. Bateman Esq., B.A., St. Stephen's School, Rylett Road, London, W.12, from whom all information can be obtained.

Barbara White Received Into the Church

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Cardinal Mindszenty Film

In a statement on his plan to film “The Trial of Cardinal Mindszenty”, based on the story of the Budapest proceedings, executive producer Jack L. Warner of Warner Bros. Pictures declares that his studio intend to make the picture “in the interests of democracy, freedom and religion and the fundamental rights of human dignity”.

Col. Warner states: “Our aim will be to reach every possible corner of the world with this major news story of oppression and injustice. Our plan is to produce this picture as quickly as a screenplay can be prepared. It will be based on the record and the sentence and will voice the world’s indignation.”

Anthony Veiller is to write and produce the film, for which top priority has been ordered at the Burbank Studios.
FILM APPRECIATION

BY OUR EDUCATIONAL PANEL

These columns are usually devoted to the discussion of educational films. However, the reaction of our young boys and girls to the entertainment films which form so large a part of their cinema experience is a matter which must concern us as educationalists. Readers may therefore be interested in an attempt made recently to measure the reaction of a small section of our youth. Older girls in a number of convent schools were invited to write accounts of any film which they particularly liked or disliked. Liberty was left them in both choice of film and treatment, and precautions were taken to facilitate sincerity and freedom of expression as the scripts were read by outsiders. We present below the results of a general survey of the essays written.

The first fact to emerge clearly from the accumulation of evidence is the outstanding popularity of the British films based on the English classics—Oliver Twist, Great Expectations and Nicholas Nickleby, Hamlet and Henry V. Oliver Twist is given first place in order of preference at least twice as often as any film not of this group; Great Expectations and Hamlet follow it closely. Appreciation of these films rings true; the girls write with confidence of the points they find to admire and criticise frankly when they find cause. Minor criticisms include the incongruity of Oliver’s clean hands and standard speech, an over-fondess for stone staircases in the setting of Hamlet and the caricature of Osric. But opinions are fully in agreement on the greater qualities which all these films have in common. The varied and apt characterisation, with the opportunity given for fine, sincere acting, is repeatedly emphasised. A quality of balance and restraint is appreciated, and its occasional absence quickly perceived and exposed. “The scene in which incidents follow hectically one after another,” one girl writes of Oliver Twist, “is perhaps rather overdone. The picture of Oliver escaping from the huge figure of Bill Sykes on the roof just before the latter crashed to his doom is all too reminiscent of the close shaves in modern gangster films.” Sensationalism is not required: these films seem universally satisfying because they combine a good story with plenty of incident, striking situations and rich and varied characterisation. The excellent production of these films is praised and details are singled out, such as the deliberate playing for effect and atmosphere in the opening scenes of Great Expectations, or the superb photography which creates so perfectly the eeriness of Satis House in the same film.

In contrast to this spontaneous and unanimous approval of films of this type, appreciation of the serious, modern film with its emphasis on the psychological and its tendency to deal with isolated problems rather than with life “in the round” is much more hesitant and uncertain. Of the “psychological” films The Seventh Veil is a great favourite, but more on account of the quality of the acting than from any appreciation of the psychological problem, the point of which generally seems to have been missed. To some the musical accompaniment is the main attraction. The same judgments are made of The Fallen Idol; though several girls mention it as “good” their reasons are confused, and the realisation of the fact that the film is really a study of events seen through the eyes of a child perhaps requires more detachment and maturity than these girls have yet attained. Broken Journey seems to have produced even more confusion and hesitancy. It would seem that for these young people no concentration on single problems can replace the interest of a vigorous story,
The view generally prevails that cinema audiences are attracted by the opportunity afforded them of escaping through the glamour of the film world from the humdrum surroundings of their daily lives. It is therefore perhaps surprising to find that another very salient feature of the scripts under review is the marked preference for films of English home life, in which setting and incident approximate to the “normal”. I Remember Mamma is commended as “full of those things which make real life”. “I like this film,” writes one, “because it is so natural and a contrast to most. The children are amazingly normal. Unlike most children portrayed in films they neither drip sentiment nor are they frightful tomboys nor selfish, silly young creatures trying to behave as though they were twice their age.” An enthusiastic and highly approving critic of Mrs. Miniver writes feelingly of the appeal of this picture of an ordinary English family suffering the hardships and strain of war. Even the nineteenth century is accepted as in Life with Father for its truth and characteristic humour, or in An Ideal Husband for its Victorian picturesque-ness and joy of life. The popularity of The Winslow Boy too seems partly due to the feeling for life and reality: “the actual setting of the film was perfectly natural, while its story was based on a situation which might occur in any modern household”. Here Come the Huggetts was loved for the same reasons; the sense of intimacy with an ordinary middle-class English family seems to have earned for this film the first place among comedies.

As a contrast there is unanimous condemnation of the over-spectacular, the exaggerated and the unreal, both in plot and in characterisation. One young critic detects and condemns this even in Here Come the Huggetts. She speaks of “amazing catastrophes which even more amazingly right themselves just in time for the happy ending”, and after warm commendation of, the homely humour of the “telephone installation” scene, she comments: “What a pity that such excellent material was not made more of and the spectacular and extraordinary by-passed!” Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill was censured on the ground that “the environment was not true to life”, and Don Bosco “did not lay sufficient stress on the outstanding characteristics of the Saint, (while) on the other hand, I think too much stress was laid on the ‘extraordinary’.” The remark that the portrayal of life on the film needs to be less embroidered was applied to serious films and comedies alike. Characterisation is not to degenerate into caricature; Osrac is described as entertaining in Shakespeare’s Hamlet but merely ridiculous on the screen, while in Pride and Prejudice, “Mr. Collins was incredible in the film both in his appearance and manner, while Jane Austen’s version of him was possible”.

This demand for sobriety and reality in the film-world seems partly responsible for the bias in favour of British as against American films. Those American films which avoid the pitfall of sensationalism are keenly appreciated. The Best Years of Our Lives was a great favourite, winning even more commendation than Nicholas Nickleby; and it is in this direction that it seems particularly to have won applause. “This was a very moving film, and more especially because there was truth behind it.” “The Best Years of Our Lives is just an ordinary story and for that reason I enjoyed it so much.” Of American crime films, Naked City is distinguished for the same reason. “So many of the stories are often quite impossible and the films are made into romantic thrillers, but Naked City shows us the real New York, and though the ending is characteristically spectacular, yet the film as a whole concentrates on the everyday life of the city.” National bias cannot be the only reason for this sparing approval of American productions, for British films come in for their share of criticism on other grounds. “The scenery and setting of British films are usually exceptionally good,” writes one, “but sometimes the story or casting of the picture is not up to the standard required. Very often the different scenes are too abrupt, and are not woven together well.” “Britain cannot make very good funny or lighter films. They are usually very silly or very sentimental. America beats England easily in the production of funny films.” One young critic condescends to assert that “Hollywood can do it if it bothers and concentrates
more on the story than on the star”. Until Hollywood “bothers”, however, it seems that our girls will continue to prefer British films and to do so partly on the ground that “British films are more original and more true to life”.

The demand for reality, however, while excluding the unreal, does not exclude the fantastic. The comedy of *Miranda* is keenly enjoyed and the Walt Disney creations are highly appreciated. The artistic qualities in films of music and dancing are commended. Comments on *The Red Shoes* are interesting. Though the gruesome ending seems to have been accepted with more equanimity by these girls than by many adult critics, yet the film as a whole is sometimes severely criticised. A frequent comment was that there was not enough ballet, while the story is again and again described as “terrible”, “bad”, “very weak”, “ruining the beauty of the film”. Poverty of plot is an accusation frequently brought against the musical films too: “The Chopin and Schumann films,” writes one, “were excellent because of their music, which made up for the rather stupid tales that accompanied them. *Concerto* gave us classical pieces galore, and they were exquisite, but there was no tale at all.” It would appear that artistic appeal is no more capable than is psychological interest of satisfying completely in the absence of a good story.

In a large number of the scripts under review a hearty dislike of sentimentality is apparent, and it is linked perhaps to the general appreciation of restraint. A number of films are approved because the producer has avoided the danger to which his theme exposed him. Such are *The Best Years of Our Lives*, *I Remember Mamma, Bambi* and *A Quiet Week-end* to choose widely differentiated examples. One girl finds that “screen love is rather sickening, and I never go to a film where there is likely to be much”, while another sums up the situation with a certain discrimination and humour: “A certain amount of love interest,” she writes, “is, I think, welcome by the cinema-goer, but nothing is more damning to both stars and film than the sighs or even laughter of a bored audience while the hero and heroine prepare for the umpteenth embrace”. But such mild censure is nothing compared with the downright and unequivocal condemnation of *So Evil My Love, They Made Me a Fugitive* and other films of the same type, which are all castigated as “c h e a p melodrama”, “squalid”, “brutal”, “sordid, revolting and immoral”.

The general impression gained by the whole survey is an encouraging one. Apart from a trace of self-righteousness natural to and not unpleasing in youth, the scripts give evidence of a generally critical attitude and of sound taste, demanding entertainment free from the unreal and sordid, imbued with true artistic and moral values. Immaturity reveals itself in an occasional vulnerability to subtler attacks on moral values, which points to our duty as educators of cultivating still further judgment and discrimination. Of the many who wrote enthusiastically of *The Best Years of Our Lives*, only three girls discerned that in the final settlement “the matter of marriage is treated lightly in order to effect a happy ending”. The one girl who discussed *An Act of Murder* reveals the power of suggestion which a film can exert when she writes, “The film is extremely well acted and when we see Cathy suffering we cannot help but feel that it would be better to put an end to needless suffering”. Yet one aspect at least of the case against euthanasia is exposed by the doctor, but the hint is not taken by our young critic. Our girls can be educated beyond this, and as an encouragement to all those on whom the task devolves we give a quotation from one girl which will show where the danger lies. She is discussing *The Rake's Progress* and ends thus: “If a Catholic girl who has been brought up all her life to believe that divorce is wrong, that selfishness is to be despised, feels almost unconsciously that these actions are somewhat justified, what will the effect on those who have never been taught the truth about these matters and take their values from what they have seen on the screen? Thus though it is not actually sinful to see a film of this description, yet it can do a great deal to persuade people to accept lower moral values which are neither edifying nor Christian.”
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COVER PERSONALITY

DEBORAH KERR

When, one after another, the British leading ladies left for America and found their way to Hollywood, there was sadness and some recrimination because the home industry seemed unable either to produce or to preserve true star material. Peggy Cummins, Patricia Roc, Angela Lansbury, Phyllis Calvert; they all had what it takes to make a glamour girl; some of them had something more. But there was no great burst of heart-broken indignation—until they captured Deborah Kerr. Then the guns went into action and it was taken as a personal insult to British prestige if Miss Kerr did not get the part most suited to her abilities. Why the difference? Because Deborah Kerr is one of the few girls from the British studios who convince one that she is a really capable actress. She has all that Greer Garson has: beauty, poise, intelligence, and that little something extra that makes the outstanding screen and stage personality. So it was that the British film critics looked with particular intentness at the first film vehicle which Hollywood provided to carry Miss Kerr to glory. They were not much impressed. The Hucksters had Clark Gable, Sydney Greenstreet, Adolphe Menjou, Edward Arnold and Ava Gardner. It was a best-selling novel and was produced in the best Californian manner; but it lacked integrity and anybody else could have done what Deborah Kerr was asked to do. Now, in Edward My Son, with Spencer Tracy, she is given an opportunity to show America that she can really act as well as look attractive.

Like so many of the best screen players, Deborah Kerr was on the stage before the screen claimed her. In addition she trained for ballet, which, doubtless, accounts for her elegance and certainty in movement and repose. In 1940 she played with Wendy Hillier and Robert Newton in Pascal’s production of Major Barbara. It was her work in Love On The Dole (1941) that first made the public realise that a new and first-class actress had appeared on the native screen. This was followed by Penn Of Pennsylvania, Hatter’s Castle, and The Day Will Dawn. Her first outstanding success was in Life and Death of Colonel Blimp (1943) in which she played three separate parts and managed to make each of them different. One of her great assets is this power of seeming to be a different personality in each different film. Perfect Strangers (1945) with Robert Donat added to her repertoire of characters as the drab little wife whom life in the Wrens brightens up beyond her husband’s imaginings. Perhaps her most endearing part was that of the turbulent Irish girl in I See A Dark Stranger, one of the rare successful attempts at comedy, of which the British screen is today woefully short. In this, her accent and her whole personality became radiantly Celtic. Her next film was the ill-starred Black Narcissus, that stupid but beautifully coloured attempt to give Anglican Sisters a turn on the screen. Deborah Kerr really achieved something as Sister Superior. She transmitted a tranquil and spiritual quality which stood out all the more because of the film’s other evident shortcomings.

It is something that she shares with Greer Garson that is Deborah Kerr’s most valuable attraction. She adds an air of distinction to any film she appears in. There is a note of aristocracy about her that not all the lushness and comparison of Hollywood can quite eclipse. Towards the end of her first American film she says (to Clark Gable): “I suppose I ought to pretend that I came to California because I had an urgent business appointment. I hadn’t.” That is her cue for coming home. The British studios, when they have recovered their balance (bank and artistic) will need all the talent they can muster. They are not so well off in useful actresses that they can afford to let the best material for years remain static in Culver City.
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By Freda Bruce Lockhart. A Reprint of The Tablet article. Price 1d.

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FOCUS—No. 5

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WANTED:

PRAY-ERS - Payers - PLAYERS

The announcement in our last issue that Very Rev. Fr. Hilary Carpenter, O.P. (Chairman of The Catholic Film Society) is preparing a preliminary treatment for a script for a film about St. Thomas More, has caused a lot of people to sit up and take notice. A number of our friends desire to give a helping hand.

To make this film worthy of its subject we shall need: Pray-ers, Payers . . . Players. To find the players (only the best will be good enough for such a film) will be the business of the Producer and Director. To secure pray-ers and payers will be the concern of The Catholic Film Society and the concern, of course, of this magazine which is the servant of the Catholic Film Society.

In this issue we make an appeal for pray-ers and payers. If one-fourth of the Catholics in the British Isles became payers (paid a penny a day for 240 days) we should be well away. Every time that we hear the film: Monsieur Vincent being praised we should recall that it was made from the pennies of the French Catholics. If every English-speaking Catholic said a prayer every day for the success of this film, miracles would happen.

To dig I am able. To beg I am not ashamed. I am not ashamed to beg because as I grow older, balder, wiser, I realise that there are more people in the world who are willing to give than are unwilling to give.

Experience has taught me that the world hates a cadger but loves a beggar, and that’s as it should be, for what is a beggar but a poet who reveals the truth that the easiest way to get money is to give it away—to a good cause!

At first this sounds silly, just as at first, when we are young, poetry sounds silly, even sissy; but later on we realise that the poet is the fellow who knows a thing or two.

I know people who regard it as a blessing to be saluted by a beggar.

Editor.
FILM GLOSSARY
No. 4—A MIXING MIX-UP

By ANDREW BUCHANAN

(Who will be pleased to receive suggestions for this feature)

That war slogan, "Careless talk costs lives", always makes me think of the other kind of careless talking called slang, best described as speaking in shorthand, and the technical jargon bandied about in filmdom takes a high place among the incomprehensible langages of the age. To make things just a wee bit more difficult, some terms stand for more than one thing. For instance, Mixes and Mixing. You probably know that Mixing is the skilful task of the recorder who, by the manipulation of dials, each controlling the volume of a different sound track, actually mixes the various sounds together, either blending them all, or introducing some whilst eliminating others. This is common, of course, both to film recording and broadcasting. In the latter sphere, sounds, music and voices are merged to create a whole, even though each may be coming from a different microphone. That is Mixing.

Would it not be natural, then, to assume that the other film term, Mix, is a close relation of Mixing?

The answer is yes, but it isn't. Whereas Mixing is the manipulation of sound, the Mix is used in the manipulation of visuals, and stands for that optical effect which results in one scene becoming superimposed over another and then disappearing, leaving only the latter on the screen.

Dissolve is a better word than Mix—one scene dissolving into another. In the days of silent films, when cameras were handcranked, one used to make Dissolves within the camera, by filming a scene normally and then slowly winding back the exposed negative for a certain number of feet, after which one would film the next scene, which would naturally begin by being "on top" of the first one for as long as the negative had been wound back. The result was a very smooth Dissolve. As a matter of fact, it's all rather like the mistake the photographer makes when he forgets to wind his film up, or change his plate, so that two photos become dreadfully mixed up on the same negative. By its ability to move, film first creates this pictorial confusion and then extricates the muddle in a seemingly very clever way, whereas all that happens is that the first scene disappears as it ceases to overlap the second one. Nowadays, all Mixes are made mechanically and chemically in the optical department of the film laboratory.

But what is the purpose of mixing scenes? You would be astonished at the lack of smooth continuity in a film which contained no Mixes, nor any of their first cousins, called Fades. Briefly a Mix accounts for a lapse of time. It has a number of uses, but that is its fundamental purpose out of which others grow.

Imagine a lengthy process has to be filmed, say, the making of a vase on a potter's wheel, from start to finish. It might take the potter several hours to shape the lump of clay into recognisable form and no film could ever record and present the work in its entirety. Instead, only the essential stages are filmed, and each one mixes into the next. The audience will not be conscious of any gaps in the action, but will see an abbreviated version of what occurred which will seem quite complete, for each scene which has emerged out of the last will have shown the process carried a stage further.

Whether it be a process, or a dramatic situation, or a journey, Mixes enable lengthy scenes to be telescoped into a smooth flowing sequence. When however a scene fades in or fades out, one knows an entirely new sequence is beginning, or that the current one is ending. Thus, Mixes create smoothness and cover passages of time within a given sequence; Fades divide one sequence from another.
A Q-RIOUS NIGHTMARE

One evening after a very late supper I thought it would be better not to go to sleep immediately. So I read the January number of Focus in bed. But I had not got very far in Fr. Connell's lecture on *Religion in Films* when I fell fast asleep. And I dreamed that I was going to the press show of a techicolor super-musical called *Reverend Mother Wore Tights*.

As I went to my seat, I passed the closed buffet with its notice "Don't feed the brutes. J. A. R." and the cloak-room with another notice "All hatchets must be deposited here. A. K." The critics arrived. (C. A. Lejeune and Dilys Powell were both wearing lawn sleeves.)

The lights went down and the credits appeared, with Gounod's *Ave Maria* as background music. A chorus of nuns sang the opening number, the last verse of which ran like this:

> "We've done with boys
> And all such joys;
> We'll never have another.
> We're awful sad
> And one's gone mad.
> Look, here comes Reverend Mother."

Enter Reverend Mother (Betty Grable). She is called "the hammer of the heretics" because at the annual boxing match with the Black Narcissus (C. of E.) team she knocked out her opponent in the first round. Every seat has been booked for her impending contest with the Reverend Mother of St. Mary's ("Champ" Bergman). She is dressed like the other nuns, except that her skirt is transparent, showing that she is wearing tights underneath. (The syllabus explained that if Miss Grable were to appear in any film without showing her legs the public would wreck the box office. But the ingenious compromise from which the picture takes its title was only reached after

---

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**AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW**

with

**C. A. LEJEUNE**

who discusses religion and the commercial cinema (and, incidentally, says what she thinks about Focus)

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some films reviewed

NOTE. Inclusion in this list does not connote positive recommendation. Films that are positively harmful are not included here. Readers are reminded to refer to the full reviews when assessing a film.

Category A, indicates adults only; B, adults and adolescents; C, family audiences; D, particularly for children.

reviewed in "Focus" (Vol. II, Nos. 2, 3 and 4)

All Over The Town (C) (97)
Another Part of the Forest (A) (104)
Arch of Triumph (A) (105)
Blood on My Hands (A) (90)
Blue Lagoon, The (B) (98)
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Small Back Room, The (B) (59)
Small Voice, The (B) (40)
Sorry Wrong Number (A) (66)
Treasure of Sierra Madre (B) (93)
Un Americano in Vacanze (C) (91)
Unfaithfully Yours (A) (105)
Vote for Hugget (C) (91)
Whispering City (B) (64)
Whispering Smith (B) (97)

we recommend

An Act of Murder (B) (283)
Fallen Idol, The (A) (252)
Hamlet (B) (130)
I Remember Mama (C) (200)
Johnny Belinda (A) (42)
London Belongs to Me (A) (228)
Monsieur Vincent (B) (230)
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Winslow Boy, The (B) (248)
Scott of the Antarctic (B) (14)
Rachel and the Stranger (B) (70)
FILM REVIEWS

By Our Panel of Priests


When I read the title and the actors’ names I thought first of Barchester and then of Widdicombe Fair. But Canon ought to have a squiggly thing over the first n and be pronounced “canyon”. It is where the Colorado State Penitentiary is situated. The film starts in the style of a documentary about the prison and develops into an exact reproduction on the spot of the escape of twelve convicts on December 30th, 1947. The governor appears himself and convicts are used for “extras”. The principle parts are taken by actors not yet considered stars.

This departure from the star system and the recognition that sheer historical truth can be as dramatic as fiction are interesting tendencies. I should not have imagined that the story was more than a screen play unless I had been warned in advance. The presentation, like John Masefield’s “Reynard the Fox”, attempts to give the point of view of both hunters and hunted.

The commentator in the earlier part says that carefully selected films are shown to the prisoners every week. I was most disappointed that there was no indication of the sort of films shown.

The acting honours go to Mabel Paige as Mrs. Oliver, an elderly woman who cracks the most objectionable of the convicts over the head with a hammer designed for coping with lobster claws. Twelve men escaped; after three days, two were killed, four were wounded and all were brought back. As time marches on, crime doesn’t pay.

Q.


Dr. Wilma Tuttle (Loretta Young), an attractive young associate professor of psychology at California College for boys and girls was asking for trouble when she recommended her pupils to psycho-analyse one another and even left them free to psycho-analyse their “profs”. She told them that the greatest study of man is man which is all very well if done by mature minds; but you cannot allow every Tom, Dick and Polly in a mixed school to pry into each other’s subconscious minds, and register and weigh up their inner motives. It’s not healthy! Dr. Wilma’s invitation to every boy and girl to be his or her own psycho-analyst had disastrous results.

Bill Perry (Douglas Dick) the bright, conceited boy of the class, analysed his teacher in such a way that she became alarmed and determined to “talk to him”. Poor Wilma Tuttle! . . . She would have done better for herself if she had gone on the stage or into films; she hadn’t the temperament for a psycho-analyst (how few people have?); she knew that Bill was inwardly all worked up about her yet she let him drive her to a lonely cliff over Malibu Beach where he attempts to make love to her; she attempts to drive him off but Bill becomes violent so she ups with a spanner (or something in that weight)
and cracks his skull and from this moment she herself becomes almost cracked with fear, for you can't keep a dead man down and contrary to the popular belief dead men do tell tales.

When Wilma realised that she had accidentally killed Bill she pushed him over a cliff and it looked as though she were going to get away with it for when the body was found a verdict of accidental death was passed. However, detective lieutenant Ted Doran of the Homicide Bureau suspected murder and he set out to prove it. En route he falls in love with Wilma and to still complicate matters, so does Warren Ford who is Bill's guardian and a lawyer. Briefly, that is the plot. Not a very clever plot perhaps; but the story is sustained right to the end and I found it intriguing. The acting by the stars and the starlets is very good indeed and the whole story hangs together and is made credible.

The moral which I got from this film is that the greatest of all fears is the fear of public opinion. Dr. Wilma Tuttle seemed more concerned about her reputation than about the death of her pupil!

E.


What does one expect of a film like this? It depends on what the producers have promised us. When one reads of the amount of time and money taken to secure authenticity in period, dress and settings; when the chief character is a well-known historical figure and when the producers themselves proudly proclaim the "contributions to the screen-play made by Terence Young, Anthony Thorne, Peter Quennel, Laurence Hitchin, Paul Holt and, of course, Lord Byron himself", we have been given the right to expect very much more both in content and form, than we get here.

Byron is a baffling personality at best. His poetry, his love affairs and his intervention in Greek revolutionary warfare have all alike, it would seem, been exaggerated. At his death, many critics placed his reputation as a poet higher than names now obviously his superiors. His exploits won him fame on the Continent as the champion of the oppressed while his own country continued to regard him as a vicious debauchee.

There is much genuine beauty in his verses but his weakness is that of the romantic school to which he belonged. His arrival at Missolonghi, on January 2nd, 1824, to take part in the Greek rising was an occasion of excitement but the measure of his interest may be gauged by the fact that he designed for himself a Classical Helmet to be worn when landing on Greek soil. In the event he was persuaded to remove it. His love affairs were, perhaps, no more and no less outrageous than others at a time when "to be drunk as a lord" was considered to be a compliment to aristocratic birth.

What of the film? Its title prejudices one against it. It reminds one too much of The Wicked Lady. The sets are magnificent but do not dispose one to accept them as more than expensive frames to an elaborate fancy-dress ball. Why is it that English and American players seem unable to wear period costume convincingly whereas any Frenchman or Irishman does it as to the manner born? The Venetian scenes are, of course, delightful, but seem to have been included mainly for effect than for any contributory value as far as the story is concerned. After an opening on the battlefield we are taken to Byron's death-bed where the dying man sees his life brought before him as in a Court of Justice. The "deep and dark blue ocean" rolls around his bed and there appears a celestial Tribunal with Bench, Dock and Witness-stand set in airy space, upon which, while stars twinkle and voices boom, the various women in Byron's life accuse him of being either "bad, mad or dangerous to know", or all three together. The Judge leaves the audience to make up their own minds as to the verdict.

The acting is uneven. Dennis Price plays Byron as a hammy Lyceum romantic. Perhaps he was. Joan Greenwood, Linden Travers and Mai
Zetterling try hard to convince us that they are themselves convinced of the credibility of the characters which the galaxy of screen-writers have given them. The dialogue is a mélange of most period idioms from Sheridan to Shaw.

The morality of the film is conscientiously moulded to suit the demands of the British Board of Film Censors. The result is that it is implicitly more outrageous than if we had been told the story of Byron's philanderings (supposing it were necessary) without any varnishing. It is always more false to twist historical fact to suit philistine convention than to let truth speak for itself.

The film may awaken an instinct for research among the more serious members of its audience but I shall be surprised if this is not one more of the costly failures of the British studios. Only this time it will not have the excuse of being a "prestige picture".

V.


You may remember, that in the film I Remember Mama, Katrin Geddes received the tip from a successful novelist that the best stories are on our own doorsteps, which is true.

The life of Charles Peace contains a ready-made story which is much better than most "cooked up" stories; it was but to be expected then that someone some day would film this Jekyll and Hyde fellow. This film biography is interesting enough, sometimes it is enlightening for it is always interesting to understand the motives which lead a man to take up a life of crime. But I felt that the film was not as good as it might have been. Peace had a grouse against life which I am not going to reveal since it might spoil the story for you. Michael Martin-Harvey gives a really splendid study of this complex, all-mixed-up character. He is so good that I got the impression that this film was a psycho-analytical study of Peace rather than his story. I must say, however, that some of the re-creations of the "goings-on" of this un-Peace-ful man, for example when he breaks away from his guards and jumps from the train, looked to me like "comic-cut" stuff. If this sort of film makes us believe that crime doesn't pay and that man without the grace of God is but a cork tossed about in the sea of his own violent passions it will serve some purpose. Judged just as a film thriller it is not, I think, a very exciting one.

This film, of course, is not right for juveniles.

E.


Cary Grant and Myrna Loy, posing as Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Blandings of New York City, take just over an hour and a half to build their ideal house. There is little enough to the plot; it is light and unsubstantial as floating fluff. Yet, at the end of it all—and when you could have seen from the beginning what the end was bound to be—you have the feeling that the ninety-three minutes were not wasted.

The plot is simple. The Blandings—particularly Mr. J. H. B.—have had just about enough of their New York apartment, cribbed, cabined and confined. They see the notice of a country house to be sold in Connecticut and off they are to view it. A shrewd estate agent meets them and sizes them up. "A sucker is born every minute" runs an old adage. Two suckers spent part of that day in Connecticut. The Blandings buy the house, which has to be pulled down; they get thirty-one acres instead of the fifty mentioned in the advertisement. In other words, from every side—and by contractors, agents, decorators and adapters—they are fleeced and flomensied, frustrated and befooled. Yet,
in the end, after hitches and hindrances they do have their house at last and think it thoroughly worthwhile.

The plot is simple; the plot is thin, thin almost to transparency. Yet the picture is worth seeing. And this because of the excellent dialogue and the smart, yet still quite human, wisecracks. The direction of detail is admirable. The picture is good because it eschews the sentimental. Melvyn Douglas, the "best friend" of the Blandings, is never allowed to become the third point of a triangle, though Mr. J. H. B.'s suspicions are permitted now and then to peep through the surface. A director, less cute and restrained, would surely have fallen for this temptation. Cary Grant and Myrna Loy are "old hands" and pleasant personalities, to whom Melvyn Douglas is a suitable foil. The remainder of the cast is little more than background. Just why it was deemed necessary to provide such personable parents as Mr. and Mrs. J. H. B. with dreadful daughters like Joan and Betsy, I cannot imagine; they are a frightful advertisement for a certain kind of American school, with "progress and psychology" written over its portals and a tiresome emphasis on the "social significance" of events and life. Fortunately, we see them rarely and then generally at the breakfast table; it would have been better had they had their breakfast in bed. Nor can I quite see why the film has a Certificate "A". Unless I missed something or am a bit dense, the picture is as "U" as any I have seen for months.

K.


There is an obvious mistake in the title of this film. It should be the Lusts of Carmen. As lust is an unlovely thing I see no point in giving unnecessary space to this piece by writing any more about it.

E.


Here is a film about Texas in the 1860s. It is a western just like any other western only more so: that is to say, it is all according to type, with no other distinguishing feature than a higher percentage of shootings per two minutes. The tough guys are real tough and real guys—but they are not real people; whereas the women are real people all right—very real film stars straight from long sessions in the beauty parlour. This panorama of glorious technicolour, although it pleased the eye, neither moved the emotions nor provided the least interest to the mind. (N.B. Running time, 102 long minutes.)

G.


The distinguishing mark of this film is in my opinion ARTIFICIALITY. Ida Lupino croons and moons around after the manner of a spinster recuperating from 'flu. There's lots of booze and jealousy and lies and double crossing and a murder thrown in and Cornel Wilde looks crafty and wicked and Richard Widmark runs away with his girl and Wilde gets wild (the real animal stuff) and works a frame-up and Widmark is accused of theft, after which you get more cunning and sadism . . . and shooting. It may pay to advertise; but it doesn't pay (in the long run, anyway) to advertise low standards of moral living.

E.

What is it that the Italian film makers have that America and Britain lack?

Certainly not material resources, for their films, at least the early post-war ones, are made in the streets and byways with deteriorating stock and players who are innocent of studio glamour and enchantment. Nor are the stories they use possessed of any striking originality. Maybe it has something to do with the fact that, as Luigi Zampa, the director, expressed it at the London Premiere of this excellent film, they make use of
ordinary people like Angelina and Pasquale as if they really were (as indeed they are) the most important people in the world. In other words, there is a sense of reality about these Italian characters; one is not asked to accept them as real and credible; one knows they are, they exist and have flesh and blood like the important but overlooked people who inhabit our own slums. There is about these characters an air of humility, a humour, a pathos, a bitterness, a note of patient endurance in adversity, a tenderness often concealed by a rough exterior which all priests who have worked in the decaying quarters of our big cities will recognise. When America puts them on the screen it is to patronise them; when Britain uses them it is too often to make fun of them. Only the Italians seem to be able to combine humour with justice and charity when taking a camera among the poor and their miserable dwellings.

There is also a sense of vitality and bustling movement about this film which is quite infectious. Every character lives. The frame of the screen is filled with shifting patterns of Roman life that leave one almost breathless.

Angelina is a Roman housewife living in the slums at Pieterlata. She is fed up with food shortage and black-marketeering, with bureaucracy and graft and form-filling. Her direct-action methods result in a freeing of the wheels of distribution. But she and her kind still live in a district inundated by winter floods. She leads a march on a neighbouring block of flats and takes possession. Her reputation grows. They want to make her an M.P. She sets about forming a party. Meantime her husband and family begin to suffer neglect. The local landlord tries to buy her off; her cronies misunderstand her motives and she is nearly lynched by a crowd which thinks she has betrayed them. She withstands the police, is taken to prison and released after a few weeks and decides to leave her parliamentary ambitions to others. She has enough to do to look after her husband and family and, in any case, can still do a bit of shouting for the cause when it is necessary.

There is satire, humour and mordant wit in this film which may, in some sensitive circles, be regarded as left-wing propaganda. But this can only be by those who are in the habit of interpreting any expression of concern or discontent with social inequality or any effort to adjust the balance as a sign of the sickle and hammer. A Catholic cannot but rejoice at the turn which brings the film to an end with an argument in favour of the primary place of the family in the scheme of things.

The acting of Anna Magnani must be ranked with the greatest performances of the best actresses. She is without obvious or easy beauty but she has a tremendous glowering power which is transmitted across the screen and captures the imagination and sympathy of the audience. A word must also be said for the large cast of Italian women who support her. This is a woman's film, maybe, but it is a powerful piece of cinema preaching with much to say to all who care to think on the potentiality of the screen in the formation of ideas.


The main theme of this picture is the descent of a team of representatives of New York's "Home Life" into the Indiana home of the Brinker family, with a view to featuring a wedding in the June issue, and generally modernising the establishment so as to educate the magazine's readers. And there is a by-play in the form of a romance and/or campaign in the sex war between journalist (Robert Montgomery) and editor (Bette Davis).

The script is good, if a little leisurely and the general level of acting is high. (Betty Lynn as "Boo" Brinker, aged 17, is an acquisition.)

I like satires on American journalism. Though the provincialism of the Brinker family is inevitably exploited in contrast to the sophistication of the New Yorkers, there is a lack of brutality, indeed an occasional touch of almost tender sympathy in this which injects an unusual humanity into farce. And the fun has its origin in intelligence.
Easter Parade


Here is a film to please those who like a light-hearted musical without any pretensions. The story is the old one about the small-time girl who is picked up by a jilted lover to spite his former partner. Fred Astaire dances in a manner that reveals all the poetry of motion, albeit the rhythm is negroid. The songs are Irving Berlin's and the period is 1912. This enables Judy Garland to wear some comical hats and dresses that are fashionable. She also dances, amusingly if not with inspiration. She also repeats the comic clowning she first showed us in The Pirate with Gene Kelly.

The title has something to do with a fashion parade which, one gathers, takes place on Easter Sunday in New York. It is, of course, asking far too much that the name should have any other more Christian signification.

Cardboard Cavalier


The Press Show was unusually crowded; not all critics by any means; hence the laughter that greeted Sid Field whenever he used any of his droll expressions or grimaces, may not have come from the best quarters. Nevertheless, it is a sufficiently rare thing in a British cinema nowadays to have dialogue drowned by bursts of hearty laughter, to make one think that perhaps it was deserved.

For my part, I was sorry that Sid Field was not allowed more time and space in which to play out his routines. Just as one was beginning to enjoy him the camera whisked us off to something else. Perhaps films are not the best medium for funny men. 'They are too serious to be satisfactorily stopped in mid air, so to say, when the director says "Cut"'. But as the director in this
case was Walter Forde, himself a well-known comedian in the old silent days, it is a pity that he was not able to give Sid a better break.

The story gives Margaret Lockwood and Sid Field the chance to don Jacobean costume, he lugubriously, she like a Wicked Lady in a blond wig. As Nell Gwynn and Sidcup Buttermeadow, they thwart Oliver Cromwell's plot to liquidate Richard Lovelace and help to restore the Merry Monarch. History is, naturally, not to be taken seriously in a farce of this description, but it is at least unexpected, and to an Irishman satisfactory, to have Cromwell relegated to the rôle of big bad dictator with his Roundheads doing duty as Gestapo.

Quite the most hilarious moments in a film which is unusually generous in this matter are the sequences in which Irene Handl, as a most engaging ghost, proves her credentials by removing her head every now and then. Jerry Desmonde makes an unexpectedly suitable Lovelace and Claude Hulbert has an all too brief moment as a panic-stricken dancing master. Why do not our producers make greater use of the Hulberts and the Robertson Hares and the Sid Fields? We need laughter on our screen and we have the material; apparently the film-makers have not the necessary imagination.

V.


After a run of tawdry and trivial films it is a great pleasure to be able to welcome one from the native studios about which no apology is necessary. Taking things in order of importance, the story, from Pushkin's novel, is of sufficient interest to hold attention without compelling acceptance. The direction is efficient and imaginative. Acting is consistently high grade with outstanding performances from Edith Evans (her first film) and Anton Walbrook and a very satisfactory début by Yvonne Mitchell. The film has that indefinable quality called atmosphere which, in this case, is a tribute as much to the settings of Oliver Messel as to that combination of acting ability, deference to the director and picturesque characters which makes the successful picture.

The story, a variation of the Faust theme, is of a Russian officer's plot to obtain the card secret whereby an elderly countess, who had sold her soul to the devil, won a fortune at faro. It is a macabre film and contrives to hold the attention in spite of one's natural incredulity at a fanciful tale. One must not ask too much in the way of theological accuracy in a film of this kind but it is curious how muddled some authors can be once they touch on the borders of the preternatural. One smiles tolerantly at the idea of a woman who spends the rest of her life after her initial bargain with the devil, making acts of contrition for her fault without ever hoping for forgiveness. It is the automatic element in sin and punishment which the non-Catholic takes for granted without pausing to consider whether it is reasonable. I suppose that no Catholic is likely to believe that a man is irrevocably damned while still in this life. Pushkin got into trouble with the authorities of his early-nineteenth-century Russia because of his
unorthodox views about religion. If Queen of Spades is an example, he was ignorant rather than obdurate.

The dominating personality of the piece is Edith Evans. Her acting and make-up as the countess are astonishingly effective. There is a moment when, dead, her eyes stare glassily in a really terrifying manner, and the way they suddenly pop open grips one in the same way as the appearance of Magwitch in Great Expectations. Anton Walbrook conveys the megalomaniacal introspection of the Russian officer with just that touch of staginess which Pushkin’s character demands. The surprise of the film is the appearance of Yvonne Mitchell, the first “discovery” for a long time really capable of persuading one that she has talent. She has not beauty but possesses the far more valuable asset of a definite and controlled personality.

A film for those who like an old-fashioned “creepy story”.

V.


This is a modest film which, because of its simple approach to its subject, achieves a distinction of which pretentiousness would have deprived it. A Scottish farm lad has an urge to build ships and goes to the Clydeside where, after difficulties brought about by economic, educational and class differences, he fulfils his ambitions, designs a great ship and marries the boss’s daughter. A hackneyed ending, perhaps, but, I repeat, saved by its lack of affectation. There are a number of new faces and some evidence of talent among the cast. Rona Anderson, after her first part in Sleeping Car to Trieste, gives a warm and lively performance as the daughter; Jimmy Logan, Janet Brown and Elizabeth Sellars are three likeable and vivacious youngsters who show decided promise.

This is the second film to be made on the Independent Frame principle which means that much of its scenery was shot independently of the studio action and that the players acted in front of a rather restricted and skeletal set. This accounts, perhaps, for the somewhat theatrical movements and formalistic camerawork. The shipyard scenes were made by the courtesy of John Brown and Co. Ltd., Clydebank. One could have done with rather more than the meagre allowance of shipyard scenery.

V.


“Life,” sang the Grand Inquisitor, “is one complicated tangle—death is the only true unraveller.” So Smiley is shot and Mac is shot, and Mona goes to the chair and I suppose that’s O.K. by the Hays Office because Mona Stevens did ogle John Forbes; and John, bored to tears by being an “average” man, did so far forget his professional etiquette as an Insurance Investigator, not to mention his duties as husband and father, as to pay a couple of visits to Mona. If only he’d told his wife that he had been slugged unconscious by jealous Mac, they could have called the cops, John wouldn’t have shot Mona’s boy friend Smiley, and Mona wouldn’t have shot Mac, and the film could have come to an end. As it is the silly mug kept quiet and we had to sit out another forty minutes waiting for the obvious. But at long last, with Mac and Smiley on the slab and Mona stepping into the elevator to her fate, John leaves the District Attorney’s office with a flea in his ear to return to his waiting Sue, who grudgingly informs him she has decided not to divorce him after all. No doubt they live happily ever after.

Dick Powell, Lizabeth Scott and the cameraman all do their best with this sadistic, rather vicious tripe. The onions go to the music.

W.
The story of Joan of Arc affords many opportunities for tendentiousness. It can be made the vehicle for anti-religious, anti-Catholic, anti-clerical, anti-English, anti-royalist, or anti-medieval theses. This film avoids all these. It is only anti-evil, for which clearly it is not to be blamed.

There is no attempt—such as has been made elsewhere—to represent Joan as the type of conscience and individualism
up against authority, dogmatism and bigotry. (It is strange that the very people who are most apt to condemn priests for credulity are also the first to condemn them because they do not give immediate credence to an adolescent's voices and visions.) The trial appears as it was historically, not Joan the Christian against the Church, but Joan the Saint, together with the Holy See (to which she appealed but to which she was not allowed to have recourse and which later canonised her), against a lesser ecclesiastical tribunal, proceeding in defiance of Church law and dominated by nationalism and quislingism.

Ingrid Bergman is as effective in the trial scene as she is ineffective in the soliloquy before the altar. This illustrates the unevenness of the film. Avoiding major pitfalls it trips into obvious minor traps. It has sufficient taste and discipline to resist the tempta-
"Q." says: "Catholics should see and welcome this credible and creditable portrait of a real, individual and lovable saint."
tion to a fictitious love interest, however slight, but not enough to avoid the tearful close-up and the celestial choir. To expect Hollywood to exclude the inarticulate oo-ings and ah-ings of the latter from a film about St. Joan would, I suppose, be too much to ask. Speak gently of our sister’s fall.

When the dialogue is not authentic, it is not always fortunate and the story is sufficiently well told not to require the panegyric by Father Massieu towards the end. The battle scenes evoked some nostalgia for Henry V and the medieval blitzkrieg sometimes trembled on the brink of the comic.

More successful is the coronation of Charles VII, when the contemptible Dauphin acquires a certain transient dignity from hisunction and investiture. But if I had been the ecclesiastical adviser, I should have suggested that instead of everyone trapesing in so gaily during the first verse of the Veni Creator, there should have been a close-up of king, bishops and Joan kneeling for this and then rising for the anointing while the singing continued. Not only would this have been presumably better liturgy, but I believe it could have been made very effective cinema.

Personally I found the colour agreeable and unobtrusive. The real St. Joan had a slight flair for ceremonial dress, so I will not disparage the nice taste in armour she shows in the picture.

Francis L. Sullivan gives a good and interesting performance as Cauchon. It is yet another of his portrayals of unpleasant, fat men, but he does not overplay it; there is no melodrama or caricature, and there are subtle indications of bad conscience towards the end.

This is not, I submit, a really great film. For all its conscientious research and its admirable sympathy with spiritual and Catholic values it lacks the touch of true genius. But Catholics should see and welcome this credible and creditable portrait of a real, individual and lovable saint.

Q.


This new Bing Crosby film doesn’t exactly produce bangs of laughter but it is quite good light entertainment and even though the cracks are not exactly wise they are amusing. It is just a piece of good fooling. Mirthful is the adjective, perhaps, which best sums it up. Even now when I think of William Bendix as Sir Sagramore, when I see in my mind’s eye Bing Crosby, Sir Cedric Hardwicke and William Bendix singing and dancing as they wend along the country lanes I cannot help chuckling.

So if a chuckle a day keeps the doctor away there is no reason why you should not see this film.

E.

I have placed this film in the Family category in spite of the fact that its chief character is an old man who is seriously planning suicide. I think there is enough basic morality in the rest of the film to counterbalance any influence in favour of self-destruction and there is certainly more than enough middle-brow humour and fun to keep a normal family amused for an hour and a half.

Peggy is a very young wife with a very optimistic outlook on life and a strong desire for a large family and a happy husband. She has got the husband (not as happy as he could be) and she is expecting the family (by degrees). Unfortunately, she is one of the many modern wives who lack a home. She eventually descends upon a nice old university professor who has a large house and an idea that as his life work is finished he may as well cease to clutter up the scenery. Peggy invades his house and attacks his idea, pointing out, rather naively, that if one is not alive one changes nothing by committing suicide and that one is not alive if one has finished one's life work! Ergo! There are a number of pseudo-philosophical clichés thrown about in the film but we must not be too sarcastic about them. Most of the audiences who will enjoy this film will hear these notions put across for the first time. The fact that there is not a figment of conscious spirituality in the film is of some pity but it does not rob it of the merit of being a nice film about nice people. They are all materialists but nice materialists. We who know better will not be made worse by seeing and enjoying it.

Jeanne Crain is an infectious young wife with a reprehensible habit of lying about statistics. Her charm should not lead anyone to think that she is right in telling lies for a good purpose (that is an old one). Edmund Gwenn is a lovable old professor who is so wise and kind that he really ought to have known better than to think that suicide is a way out of anything, let alone life. But the fun takes the edge off the heresies and as it is all in glorious technicolor even the pink pills which should have killed the professor look less harmful than they might have done.


That ominous note in the handout—Happy-go-lucky—just about describes it. Melody Time lacks that happy blending of imaginativeness and simplicity which gave us a Snow White or a Bambi or even The Reluctant Dragon, and it nowhere approaches the artistry of Fantasia.

The battery of names might lead one to suppose that yet again we were to have the perilous mixture of live action and cartoon animation, but the names are mostly of people who play on things or sing tunes or give forth those incantations which seem to be part of the equipment of the narrator when telling a story in cinema. Live action is brought only in two of the seven sequences which make up Melody Time, and I don't think these sequences gain anything by it.

Now for a swift run through the sequences:

Wintertime with pretty ice scenes and pleasing music. A little harmless but
still unnecessary vulgarity now and then.

_Bumble-Boogie_, a faint reminder of the early, not over-sophisticated, Disney.

_John Appleseed_, a whimsey whimsey on a minor hero of local American history with a song, “The Lord is good to me”, which will be remembered. The vulgarised sentimentality of harp and wings and peach melba narrative will not be forgotten either.

_Little Toot_. The story, enchantingly sung by the Andrews Sisters, of a naughty little tugboat does, I think, deserve a place in the gallery of Disney at his best.

_Trees_ is based on and is just about equal to the song it illustrates.

_Blame it on the Samba_, involving Donald Duck and other cartoon favourites with Ethel Smith in action and visibly at the organ; has some errors of taste.

_Pecos Bill_, a mixture of live action and cartoon animation, rough stuff and whimsey.

What will remain in the memory? The song, “The Lord is good to me” and the sequence and singing of _Little Toot_. But on the whole it was a struggle to keep awake. Too happy-go-lucky to grip!

_Focus_.


Ladies, you will love this film, but bring your “hankies”—two, at least, and unshrinkable ones! For this is a film highly charged with sentiment, and there is some bit of crying to be done. However, it is none the worse for that, for its sentiment flows quite naturally from the gently moving and touching story which is charmingly conceived and splendidly performed.

_Gentlemen, maybe you will enjoy it too, for it is good entertainment, pleasant and wholesome._

One was left wondering, however, whether the story could not have been told better without the very frequent use of the “flash-back”. Perhaps not. Especially in this case, where the theme seems to have been that history repeats itself even in families from one generation to another. By tapping the memory of General Sir Roland Dane (David Niven), now an old man, the romantic story of the Dane family is gradually unfolded. You will like Niven as the venerable and somewhat soured old man and like him even better in his younger irresponsible years; you will certainly like Teresa Wright, his young sweet-heart who marries another; you will heartily detest Jayne Meadows (sorry Jayne!) but that is only because she plays the part of an imperious and domineering woman so very well. But the greatest praise goes to the junior team, to Gigi Perreau, to Sherlee Collier and to Peter Miles. (Sherlee, I hope you are not like that really; Peter I hope and think you are.) For their sakes, I am tempted to see the film again.

_G._
CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY NOTES

Arrangements are in hand for the General Council Meeting of the International Catholic Cinema Office which is to take place in London in July. It involves much organisation and as there will be between 50 and 60 delegates from 25 countries, we are anxious that all should go well. The centre for the meetings is to be the Newman International Centre at 31 Portman Square, London, W.1.

Plans for our Summer Conference are also developing. Again much organisation is involved and we are finding that our available helpers are already overburdened. The most difficult point to settle is a suitably central venue. There are many halls and other meeting places out of the centre of London but these are often inconvenient to provincial visitors.

The Walsingham film Crucifers to Walsingham, should be ready by the time these lines appear. There has been much delay over this film due not to dilatoriness but to overwork of all those concerned with its production. It will be shown, we hope, in company with the Mexican film Francis of Assisi which we are planning to bring over to this country for a premiere in aid of the Catholic Film Society. The Franciscan Friars Minor of Merchant's Quay, Dublin, have kindly promised to lend us the film for the occasion, but in view of the success achieved by Monsieur Vincent, it may well be that it will be possible to think of an extended distribution of this fine film in this country. It is a matter of finance. If there were some Catholic businessmen convinced of the need of making Catholic films available to the general public, they might emulate the success of Monsieur Vincent and start the distribution of worthwhile Catholic films, at the same time making a profit for themselves! It is exasperating to think that they might have been enjoying the financial success now accruing to the French film in this country if they had had more confidence in our judgment!

Incidentally, and pace some friends of ours who think to the contrary, it does take quite a lot of money to obtain copies of promising foreign films for showing in this country. But there is no reason why, now that Monsieur Vincent has shown the way, we should not be able to start a stream of sound foreign films. Think it over.

Monsieur Vincent has received another distinction. It has been voted the best foreign film to be shown in America during 1948. Another compliment to the judgment of O.C.I.C. and C.F.S. is the distinction given in America to The Search, the film which received the Special Award of O.C.I.C. It was voted an Oscar for the acting of Ivan Jandl, the little Czech boy whose playing of the principal character is so moving. It is gratifying to know that the verdict of the world press follows our own in these two cases.

The Catholic Film Society is planning to make a film of the Vatican City and Museums in preparation for the Holy Year. Mr. Arthur Leslie, our vice-chairman, is shortly to go to Rome on location and will undertake production on our behalf. Subscriptions by way of donations or on loan for this purpose will be gratefully received.

Consult the Catholic Film Society

We have heard recently of several religious organisations that have paid fantastic sums for poor or indifferently made films. In view of the fact that there is not too much money available for Catholic film making, it seems a pity that a competent Catholic organisation was not consulted in the first place. May we suggest that if any Catholic organisation is thinking of having a film, however long or short, made, they should consult the Catholic Film Society. We have access to expert technical advice on all subjects connected with film and it costs nothing to consult us.
The International Film Review

Specimen copies of the first issue of this warmly welcomed Catholic film review are available for those who wish to inspect it. Please send a postcard to International Film Review, Blue Cottage, Sumner Place Mews, London, S.W.7. The yearly subscription is £1, single copies 5/- It is well worthwhile for all those who take the cinema seriously to make a point of subscribing to this review.

May we ask for persons competent to translate from French into English articles dealing with the cinema and who are willing to help us in this matter to write to Reverend J. A. V. Burke, at 357 Beulah Hill, London, S.E.19. As each edition appears in three languages all the articles have to be rendered into two other languages. We are responsible for turning them into English. At the moment we are not able to offer very much by way of remuneration but as the publication grows we shall be able to remedy this state of things.

Non-theatrical Film Competition

It has been suggested that the C.F.S. inaugurate a prize for the best 16mm. film produced by a Catholic in Great Britain. It is an excellent idea and should stimulate interest and, we hope, skill in this important department of film endeavour. We have in mind a competent and representative jury to decide the winning film and we feel sure that members will agree that there ought to be a minimum standard of production below which films are not eligible. Will readers and members offer their views on this suggestion?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

Your correspondent, Patrick McCann (February Issue) speaks of “the incredibly low circulation of Focus”. It is, in fact, remarkably high, compared with similar publications from other sources; that is to say, film magazines devoted to serious discussion about the cinema. Fan magazines, of course, have astronomical circulations, but then, they contribute little or nothing to the betterment of the film as art. On the other hand, it is true that, since we are doing a work of apostolic importance, as directed by the Film Encyclical, we should be receiving the active support of many members of the Faith who at present ignore or who are ignorant of the overwhelming influence of the cinema. The clergy are not as helpful as they might be, but then, they have already too much to do. The laity are our main hope and necessary support. Anything your readers can do to bring our work to the knowledge of others is valuable in the extreme and deserves our warmest gratitude. Let not anyone say we are wasting our time in view of Pius XI’s statement that “there does not exist today a means of influencing the masses more potent than the cinema”. We need their help to keep that power under proper control.

Anthony Lloyd refers to the same subject. There could be much greater support if readers of the Catholic press would use their eyes and memories. We have had advertisements in all the weekly Catholic journals, but without noticeable difference. We are a lazy-minded lot! We shall bring the country to Communism because of our lethargy. People write and ask us how they can obtain copies of the Papal Encyclical on films. It has been on sale in C.T.S. shops for the past 15 years.

Yours faithfully,

John A. V. Burke,
Hon. Secretary,
Catholic Film Society.

TRIBUTE FROM NON-CATHOLIC

Sir,

Just a note to say how very much I have enjoyed Focus in the past year. As a former reader of the C. F. N. I think the format of Focus is a vast improvement. Also one can now look up a past film in a jiffy instead of ploughing through endless copies when
the film did not happen to be among those recommended.

Also a tribute from my father, a non-Catholic, who always says, "Let's see what 'your' paper says about it, it never let's us down," meaning when we follow Focus we don't waste time and money on rubbishy stuff.

I enclose with pleasure my subscription for next year,

Yours faithfully,
(Miss) R. PENROSE-MELSTED.

CONCISE AND TO THE POINT
St. John of God's Hospital,
Scorton,
Richmond,
Yorks.

Sir,

We have a weekly 16mm. show here and rely to a great extent on your Film Reviews. Therefore, the more there are the better we like it. Also we like them concise and to the point, so that we can quickly see if a certain film is suitable for our particular audience. We hope you will be able to devote a corner to 16mm. users later on.

Wishing you every success for 1949.

Sincerely,
BR. CHRISTOPHER,
Secretary.

Sir,

1948 was, to my mind, a vintage year of films inasmuch as it produced some specially great examples, particularly from France and from this country. The normal mass-produced type of picture was, unfortunately, no better, but probably no worse than in years before.

Although there have been many opinions tabulated by various critics as to the best films of the year, I, and I am sure many other readers, would be extremely interested and appreciative to find out what Focus considers were the, say, ten best pictures of 1948.

Yours faithfully,
PATRICK MCCANN.
(I shall be pleased to do this for you. Look out for next issue.—Ed.)

WORTH THE EXTRA COST
Sir,

I was one of those who viewed with a certain amount of apprehension the changeover from a penny monthly to a sixpenny one.

Focus is well worth the extra cost and the Editor has to be complimented on the very fine publication which is now available for Catholic film-goers.

Part of my stock in trade as a Juvenile Court Probation Officer is a rough knowledge of forthcoming films. With the aid of Focus, and the film notes which are published in the press I have little difficulty in persuading my "clients" which films to look out for when the various films mentioned in Focus come to my district.

Most Catholics go at least once a week to the cinema, and those who do not take Focus regularly do not know what they are missing.

With all good wishes,
Yours sincerely,
J. CONNELLY.

DEVELOPMENTS
Sir,

The Catholic Film Society is to be congratulated for the encouraging developments connected with its name. January's publications—Freda Bruce-Lockhart's article, Fr. Burke's annual report, Fr. Connell's lecture and the excellent reviews in Focus are all much heartening than December's edition of Focus.

Probably the main criticisms one could make of Focus is to regret dearth of good, general articles on the film. Dr. Knipping's articles were far the best of last year's output.

I wonder if you would be interested in an ordinary member's opinion of the best films seen during the last year? It is a highly individual list, because many of these films are reissues or film society choices. However, here, for what it is worth, is my list:

1. Hamlet.
2. Brief Encounter.
4. Grapes of Wrath.
5. Oliver Twist.
6. The Red Shoes.
7. Vivere in Pace.
8. Strange Incident.
9. This Happy Breed.

You will probably notice my predilection for the more experienced directors.

J. BRIAN RORKE.

(We are always interested in creative criticism.—Ed.)
SOME RECENT EDUCATIONAL FILMS

By Our Educational Panel

LIBRARIES:
G.B. Film Library, Aintree Road, Perivale, Middx
Dawn Trust Films, Aylesbury, Bucks.
Central Film Library, Imperial Institute, S.W.7.
Film Board of Canada, Canada House, Trafalgar Square, W.C.2.

I. FILMS FOR CHILDREN


A great deal of care was taken in the production of this film, which the results have justified. In order to give a true picture of monastic life in the Middle Ages the idea was conceived of filming the life in a great Benedictine Monastery of today and, thanks to the large-minded co-operation of the abbot and the community, a beautiful picture has been made. The "day in the life of a monk" which every history teacher endeavours to rehearse, springs to life: we see the monks at prayer and work; the kindly faces of the abbot and the other officers run remarkably true to type: and the past is so successfully re-created that the arrival of guests in twentieth century clothes is almost confusing—but when the mental adjustment has been made we realise that we have here no mere survival of the past, but a living tradition. The photography is excellent, except that some of the contrasts are rather too sharp.


Dans un magnifique décor, en plein pays canadien, nous parcourrons le cycle des saisons de l'année en compagnie d'une famille de canadiens français, très unie et paisiblement heureuse. L'automne voit l'engazonnement de la récolte plantureuse et la rentrée du combustible en vue des grands froids, la confection du savon à laquelle préside grand père "qui sait tout". L'hiver, tandis que le fermier répare ses outils, la fermière et grand'mère filent et tissent la laine, aidées de tante Nathalie venue en visite. Et le soir les voisins et amis, enveloppés chaudement, arrivent prendre part à la veillée: on danse, on joue aux cartes, on conte des histoires.

Le labour du printemps suit de près la fonte des neiges; les semaines sont précédées de la bénéédiction des premiers grains jetés en terre. Avant la fête de Pâques le jeune fermier trouve le moyen de rependre à neuf la maison d'habitation et, faisant trèves à ses travaux d'intérieur, sa femme vient admirer son œuvre et l'encourager d'un bon sourire. Les enfants prennent leur part de toutes ces activités et l'enfournement du pain, son désenfournement surtout, sont sujets de grande joie et de petits profits, car des galettes se trouvent cuites à point elles aussi.

Cette famille mène une vie laborieuse, rude par endroits, mais les gestes sont toujours pleins de délicatesse et de "gentillesse". C'est que cette vie est toute imprégnée de chrétienté authentique, et centrée sur le développement de l'année chrétienne et de ses grandes fêtes; l'on prie ensemble chaque jour. Celui "qui fait lever les blés et murir les moissons".

Chants Populaires. Sections A and B, 8 minutes each. Central Film Library. C 240, C 241.

Une série de dessins animés se déroule sous nos yeux, illustrant couplets et refrains exécutés par un choeur d'hommes. "Roule, roule, ma boule
..." “Quand trois Canards..." sont chantés avec entrain tandis que le point sur l'i s'anime, bondit et rebondit sur chaque lettre du titre—ou que l'écreuil saute ou pirouette—ou bien encore que les canards apparaissent : trois, puis six, puis cent.

A la reprise, nous sommes tous invités à nous joindre à la chanson et ce petit jeu destiné à notre délassement joyeux pourrait bien aussi contribuer à nous accoutumer à certains sons plus difficiles de la langue française et à nous faciliter la reproduction, joignant ainsi l'utile à l'agréable.

INSTRUMENTS OF THE ORCHESTRA. Central Film Library. UK 769, 20 minutes.

Instruments of the Orchestra would rank high in any company of educational films. It could be used in many ways : as part of an intensive “project” or as a preparation or “follow up” of a concert actually attended or heard over the wireless. Each “family” of instruments is carefully studied and its characteristic sound illustrated alone and with other instruments. Whether a school has its own orchestra or not this film is well worth showing to all who aim at intelligent interest in music. The “working together and playing together” which it brings out as so essential would emphasise the value of co-operation in every department of life, and the lesson of teamwork under the command of Sir Malcolm Sargent should also have a wide appeal.

DAME MYRA HESS. UK 739. C.F.L.
1 reel, 10 minutes.

So many people today—and among them many real music lovers—are limited to the hearing of wireless programmes, which, however excellent, lack something of reality, and this film with close-ups of the artist’s hands and of facial expression are interesting as an experiment in using one mechanical device to overcome the limitations of another. Here we see probably more than the concertgoer who cannot mount the platform and study the pianist at close range. The film can hold even a quite youthful audience perfectly silent for the eleven minutes which are occupied by the playing of the first movement of Beethoven’s “Sonata Appassionata”.

THE UNFAITHFUL SERVANT. Dawn Trust, DCF 18. Hiring charge, £1. 20 minutes.

This is the story built up from the parable told by Our Lord to impress us with the importance of forgiving others if we hope for forgiveness. The gospel narrative is so vivid and dramatic that the version here given seems to lose in intensity although it may gain in richness of detail. For some reason it is not quite successful in winning complete sympathy with the right, and there is a certain overcrowding of the stage with minor or unnecessary characters, which tends to confuse. Yet as a New Testament background film it is thoroughly successful. For the many young people who do not themselves read the actual text of the gospels there should be a clearer indication of the difference between events which took place and stories which Our Lord told to illustrate His teaching.

II. FILMS ABOUT CHILDREN

CHILDREN LEARNING BY EXPERIENCE. Central Film Library. UK 873. 32 minutes.

The purpose of this film appears to be to show that children are always learning, and that many of their activities which seem to grown-ups to be without significance, if not mischievous, are in fact valuable forms of experience.

In a series of delightful shots we see them deriving manifest satisfaction from the mastery of simple skills such as learning to plait their own hair, or to work a fretsaw; learning to understand the ways of nature from first-hand observation; and widening it by learning at second-hand from books and pictures. Here the power of the cinema over children is illustrated in a remarkable sequence (and incidentally it should give food for thought to those responsible for children and be a recommendation to keep an eye on their cinemagoing). Ways of learning through imaginative experience are next shown, such as play with dolls, dressing up and other forms of phantasy play; and the film concludes with suggestions for environmental studies at school.
FOCUS

CHILDREN GROWING UP WITH OTHER PEOPLE. UK 874. C.F.L. 23 minutes.

This film is designed to help teachers and others to see the problems of social relationships of children at different ages in relation to their general development.

The little ones are shown learning how to live together in the family, a process involving a certain amount of thwarting. Then we see their circle widening after five to include other children and grown-ups outside the family circle. The juniors are shown to be more independent and critical of adults, and more ready to make their own friends, with whom they enjoy friendly rivalry and learn to give and take. The problems of adolescence are extremely well done: its enthusiasms and daydreams, as well as its bouts of listlessness and clumsiness, are illustrated without being caricatured.

The great lack in this and the last otherwise excellent film is the almost complete absence of the spiritual: in fact we are left with an impression that children are charming young animals.

CHILDREN ON TRIAL. Central Film Library. UK 776. 61 minutes.

This powerful documentary film shows the work of the Juvenile Courts and the Approved School in reclaiming young offenders. It follows the careers of two typical juvenile delinquents, opening with vivid and exciting pictures of a gang of boys breaking into a warehouse and of a girl getting into bad company. One of the gang is arrested, and he and the girl come up, with other cases, before the juvenile courts, whose methods are illustrated. As both have a bad record, and neither has any help at home, the boy’s home being undesirable and the girl having got beyond her Mother’s control, both are committed to approved schools. We are given a good idea of the approved school system and its influence in effecting a gradual and, we hope, permanent change by means of training in healthy living and social responsibility at the hands of skilled and patient men and women.

The acting is excellent, especially that of the young gangster; and the interpretation, if idealised, is never sentimental.

FILMS REVIEWED IN 1948

(Sound unless otherwise indicated; number means page.)

- Sick Call Sil. Feb. 46
- Rite of Low Mass Sil. Jul. 167
- Changes in the Franchise Feb. 45
- Georgian Background May 117
- The Gothic Arch Sil. May 118
- Elizabethan Boy Sil. Oct. 238
- City of St. Albans Sil. Oct. 238
- Early Church Sil. Oct. 238
- Local Government Oct. 239
- Men of the Alps Feb. 44
- The Oasis Sil. Sep. 214
- Brazil Sil. Sep. 214
- Transportation on Great Lakes Sil. Dec. 288
- Life in Sahara Sil. Dec. 288
- Land of the Niles Sil. Dec. 289
- Irrigation and Agriculture in Egypt Sil. Dec. 289
- Life Cycle of a Plant Feb. 45
- Astacus Apr. 95
- Development of Rabbit Apr. 95
- Water Cycle Apr. 95
- Magnetism and Electricity Apr. 95
- Stairway to Heaven Apr. 95
- Nitrogen Cycle Sil. Sep. 213
- Amoeba Sep. 214
- Atmospheric Pressure Sil. Sep. 214
- Life Cycle of Maize Nov. 261
- Life Cycle of Pin Mould Nov. 261
- Convection, Conduction, Radiation Sil. Nov. 261
- Transfer of Power Nov. 261
- Tennis, How to Improve your play Sep. 213
- Tennis, Making the Ball Sep. 213
- Tennis, Making the Racket Sep. 213
- Find a Word No. 1 Sil. Feb. 46
- Penguins Sil. Feb. 46
- Husky Dogs May 120
- King Penguins May 120
BOOK REVIEWS

The Use of the Film, by Basil Wright. (Bodley Head, 1948; 3/6.)

Time and money are both scarce in these days. And so a book which says what it has to say—quite a lot—in 67 pages at the reasonable price of 3/6 is welcome. It is one in a series dealing with New Developments and including titles concerned with music, ballet, books and theatre.

The name of Basil Wright is particularly associated with documentary and this volume is dedicated to John Grierson. But the author’s purpose is not only or principally to deal with this department. It might be said of him that he sees the film steadily and sees it whole. He does not argue whether the cinema is an art or an industry; he takes the realistic view that it is both, and reminds us that film making, as an art, is most closely akin to architecture, owing to the necessary intervention of other people’s efforts between the plan and the realisation.

It is well that we should be reminded that Indians and Arabs are some of the world’s most assiduous film fans, and that they make films as well as see them. While alive to the distinctive function of the cinema, the creation of the illusion of movement, Mr. Wright is not among those who disparage sound accompaniment, and he points out that extraneous music was regarded as essential to the “silent” film.

The fostering, by British film critics, of a rather humourless anti-American campaign is a new one on me. And I seem to detect a little of that tendency to disparage past history, instead of recognising its relevance to the present and the future, which is so frequent a limitation of the outlook described as progressive.

But it is good to learn that it is no longer a sane policy to make movies on the assumption that people don’t want to think and are content with the superficial and the vapid, and also that the time has come for the film salesman to be superseded.

The book contains a substantial and valuable bibliography and a recommendation by the British Film Academy, which I should like to endorse.

All of us who are in any way mixed up with the films, will take comfort from the remark that “if most film people seem a little mad, it is no doubt due to the essentially unpredictable quality of the medium”.

Q.

Projectionist’s Fault Finding Chart. (Fountain Press, 46 Chancery Lane, W.C.2; 2/6.)

Projectionists of all kinds and especially the occasional user who resorts to ineffectual fiddling instead of systematic fault finding, will welcome this chart which lists 90 probable causes of projector faults. The tabular form makes fault-finding a matter of running the finger down the fault column until a dot is reached opposite the probable cause.

The list of causes of faults is the most complete we have yet seen, but we should like to see the continuous or intermittent vertical line on the screen included in future editions, since this is a point which worries the average film user little, but film libraries considerably.

The reverse of the chart carries a fool-proof drill for setting-up and maintenance, as well as a screen size table for different focal lengths and distances.

Enclosed in an oil-resisting cover, the chart should find a niche inside your projector case with advantage.

C. F. X.

The First Decade. Ten Years’ Work of the Medical Missionaries of Mary. (The Sign of The Three Candles; Dublin, 1948; 7/6.)

Though this is not primarily a book about films, it contains an essay by Andrew Buchanan, the maker of the film Visitation, entitled, “Seen through a Film Camera”, which sets the tone of all the other essays, namely, the story of a great achievement of charity as seen and reported by many persons who had something to do with it. Bishops, priests, students, doctors, nurses, all speak with gratitude of those things of which Visitation is the film record. We recommend this book as both entertaining and elevating.
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PENNY A DAY FOR 240 DAYS' FUND

IF one fourth of the Catholic population in England and Scotland contributed a penny a day for 240 days The Catholic Film Society in England would be able to set up a production unit.

It was the pennies of the Catholic population in France which made possible the making of the film Monsieur Vincent.

Kindly send a donation to:

Hon. Secretary,
Cover Personality

Ingrid Bergman

The rôle of Joan of Arc seems to hold a fascination for actresses. What Hamlet is to the actor, Joan, the Maid of Orleans, is to the actress. The stark drama and singlemindedness of this singular saint attracts like a magnet those whose profession it is "to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature". Few indeed have the requisite combination of histrionic skill and lucid, limpid personality necessary to play the part convincingly. I remember the silent film version of Joan The Maid, in which Geraldine Farrar essayed the rôle. Falconetti, a French stage star, tried it in the best of the film versions, The Passion of Joan of Arc, directed by Th: Carl Dreyer, who made Day of Wrath. I have seen stage versions, including Bernard Shaw's remarkable attempt to turn this most Catholic of saints into a Protestant. None of them has ever convinced me that the secret of the Maid has been captured and transmitted.

I wish I could say that I think the exception is Ingrid Bergman. If ever an actress deserved to succeed in a rôle, it is Ingrid Bergman in Joan of Arc. She has given a lifetime of thought and study to the part. She has herself written a screen play on this remarkable girl; she has captivated Broadway audiences in the play "Joan of Lorraine". I must not anticipate the review contributed by "Q." to this issue, but I may be permitted to say that sheer spectacle robbed the film of that development and expression of character which is called for in this story.

Yet one remembers with joy the charming, shy, assured performance Ingrid gave in her first film with Leslie Howard. Intermezzo, remade as Escape to Happiness gave a promise which has been generously fulfilled and that in spite of ingenuous parts such as those in Saratoga Trunk or Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. She won the Academy Award in 1944 for her part in the American version of Gaslight (renamed Murder in Thornton Square). Casablanca and For Whom the Bell Tolls were her contribution to the wartime story vogue. The latter was distinguished as much by her playing in it as by any other consideration. Spellbound and Notorious both found her at the top of her form, though the second film contained exaggerated intimacies of love-making which added nothing to her laurels as an interpreter but only to her devotion as an actress. Her part as Sister Superior in Bells of St. Mary's made this fatuous film seem worthwhile. She lifted it above the sentimental and imparted to it a sincerity which otherwise it would have lacked. Her remarks on the question of vocation in that film have always seemed to me to be the best thing in it, apart from the unique and unintended Nativity Play given extempore by the children.

A lowering of standards as well as a cheapening of her powers is marked by Arch of Triumph but her latest film, made in England under the direction of Alfred Hitchcock, Under Capricorn, promises to redeem her position as one of the few intelligent and consistent actresses on the screen. She has had a passion for the stage since her earliest days. She was a regular player with the Stockholm Royal Dramatic Theatre from her teens. Her first film parts were played for the Svensk Film Industry, Sweden's leading studio. For this company she made Intermezzo which attracted the attention of David O. Selznick.

Her special qualities as an actress include a tireless application to the part in hand, a forthright and sincere character, a humorous and sensitive approach to the problems of the scripts that are offered to her. Add to this a conscientious and skilful interpretation of the "soul" of the character and you have something of the rare essence of the art that is Ingrid Bergman's.

John Vincent.
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FOCUS: A FILM REVIEW

(Incorporating "Catholic Film News")
ORGAN OF THE CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY

Vol. II   JUNE 1949   No. 6

A BLESSING!

The Holy Father gives His Blessing to The Catholic Film Society

As we go to Press we have received news from Fr. H. A. C. Connell who has been in Rome for some weeks working with a team which is making the official film of Rome, in preparation for the Holy Year. In his letter Fr. Connell says: "During an audience, today, of about sixty people, I gave the Holy Father a brief résumé of my mission. The point I want to make is that as soon as I mentioned the Catholic Film Society, he said: 'A blessing,' and made the Sign of the Cross."

A Spiritual Micawber

For such a blessing the Catholic Film Society is very grateful; in the days to come it will need all the blessings it can secure; for despite its poverty it has launched out into the deep and undertaken big work; it has become a spiritual Micawber; it lives and grows by Faith, Hope and Charity and is always looking for something to turn up from heaven; a unique feature of the Society is that it has no money and is dependent utterly and entirely on Divine Providence who never fails. The Society has just made its first professional documentary film—Crucifers to Walsingham, a fine piece of film journalism which records for all time the epic journey of those gallant men who carried their crosses last summer to Our Lady's shrine at Walsingham.

The First of the Many

We are hoping that Crucifers to Walsingham will be the first of the many. Hollywood has long since learnt that the Catholic Church has the best stories; it takes, however, a Catholic to understand a Catholic which is one big reason why we should make our own films. The next film on the C.P.S. agenda is the Roman one; when that is completed it is hoped that fuller plans will be made concerning the Thomas More film, about which there is so much warm interest. Since the last issue of Focus, Very Rev. Fr. Hilary Carpenter, O.P., has submitted his preliminary treatment of the subject to one of Britain's most notable directors. We, of course, shall keep the public informed of the progress of this big idea. The growth and the success of this idea will depend upon the co-operation of the Catholic-speaking public. The French Catholics with their Monsieur Vincent have made a distinguished contribution to the library of films. What France has accomplished, England (surely) with the help of her English-speaking allies can accomplish!

Film of Fatima

The appearance of Our Lady at Fatima is one of the greatest events of the twentieth century. It is history which if properly told in film could move the world. If the money is forthcoming a film unit under the auspices of the Catholic Film Society will make, this summer, a full-length documentary film of this mighty event. Editor.
FILM GLOSSARY
No. 5—THE CLOSE-UP
By ANDREW BUCHANAN

(Who will be pleased to receive suggestions for this feature)

One does not have to be a technical genius to recognise a close-up, for it happens to be called exactly what it is, a close-up of somebody or something. Less is known, however, of its appropriate use, and its relation to preceding and subsequent scenes.

It is said that D. W. Griffith was the first man to introduce the close-up, and whether this be so or not, his was certainly the mind which recognised the possibilities of creating pictorial emphasis by changing camera positions. In a well-constructed film, the audience is not unduly conscious of changing angles, for each picture in a sequence fits, or should fit, exactly into the whole. It is surprising just how many different camera set-ups are introduced during the filming of a single incident, ranging from an establishing long shot, to medium shot, medium close-up, and so to close-up. A scene filmed in pre-Griffith days would probably be taken from one camera position embracing a whole scene, and the audience could never really get to know the characters on the screen, nor their surroundings. The close-up brings the person on the screen "face to face" with the person in the audience. The basic purpose of this particular shot is to force the concentration of the audience on to one face or object by excluding everything else from view.

Dramatic effects are created by cutting direct to a large close-up from a fairly distant shot—maybe of a startled countenance, a smoking revolver, creeping feet, watching eyes. In contrast is the scene which changes more or less imperceptibly from long or medium shot to close-up by a smoothly moving camera so timed that after showing, say, a complete person, it tracks forward until only the person's face can be seen.

In factual films, the close-up is of the greatest importance for purposes of analysis. Imagine you are watching a huge piece of mechanism, making cement, cigarettes, cotton, or chocolate. You see it as a whole and gain a general idea of its size and general movement, but you haven't the faintest idea how it makes whatever it is making. Only when you are shown close-ups of essential stages in the process—gear-wheels, mechanical fingers, revolving shuttles, or mixers, do you really understand exactly how it works.

In Nature films, the close-up has yet another purpose—to magnify the minute—small creatures filling the screen whilst we study them.

By microphotography and telephoto lens, the super-close-up is obtained. Ants appear as large as greyhounds, bacteria bigger than battleships. Without the close-up, films, both fictional and factual, would entirely fail to grip the audience. Everything would be seen and heard through the wrong end of the telescope, so to speak.

Nevertheless, there's a right moment for the inclusion of the close-up. When it appears at wrong moments it seems to get in the way of the film, and you somehow feel as if you are at the back of a crowd straining to see and failing. It can so easily disturb, and interfere with pictorial flow. Usually, it is rightly and skilfully used, and you will find it rather fascinating to observe how numerous short contrasting angles are assembled to illustrate one small piece of action, and how the close-up is the shot which arrests your attention and makes you remember a dramatic moment or mood essential to the unfolding of the story.
FILM REVIEWS

By Our Panel of Priests


Some of the ancient Greek philosophers maintained that fire was the basic element underlying all things: there is something mysterious and awe-inspiring about fire. Most people would admit that they are thrilled to the marrow at the sight of a really big fire. This film provides us with what must be one of the most spectacular fires ever seen; a fire which rages through an oil-field engulfing huge derricks and blowing up oil containers in a most stupendous display of fireworks.

Apart from this magnificent fire the film follows a well-beaten track. It tells the story of the old conflict between progress and conservatism, between money-making and tradition. Cherokee Lanoing (Susan Hayward) by accident becomes the owner of some oil leases in the heart of the rich Oklahoma cattle country. Three courses of action lie before her. She can refuse to develop the oil-field and so please the Indian farmer Jim Redbird (Pedro Armendariz); she can co-operate with Bruce Tanner (Lloyd Gough) in the ruthless destruction of the farm lands in order to extract the utmost profit from the oil; she can follow a middle course favoured by Brad Brady (Robert Preston) and develop the oil-field to a certain extent while at the same time preserving the traditional farming life. The story shows how after much vacillation she finally decides to marry Brad Brady and fall in with his plans with regard to the oil. But before this happens the whole field is set ablaze by a match thrown into an oil-polluted stream by Jim Redbird.

There is not much scope for acting in this field. In those days in Oklahoma emotions were expressed by a crack on the jaw or a slap of the cheek rather than in more subtle ways, hence the emphasis is on action rather than dialogue. There is an interesting close-up view of the mysteries of that intriguing American pastime called "crap-shooting". But the real strength of the film lies in the spectacular fire scenes which should excite even the most sophisticated.

Mc.


A tale of a man and a dog. I fear to shock the ears of our townsmen by giving Lassie "her" proper description! The colour is kinder to the animals than it is to the humans and as the story is but a vehicle for Lassie, who looks lovely, we need not waste hyphens over film appreciation. A Scottish doctor in a remote glen rides to his patients, trains a dog as guide, performs operations in bath tubs, teaches the young idea how to be a doctor against the will of the parents, dies and is buried in an odour of Calvinism what time Lassie does all the tricks she is asked to do.

It is a rare pleasure to be able to put a film in Category D, for children: though I fear the little wretches may wriggle at some of the sentimentality.

The film has the year 1928 for background. Had it been produced at that time it would have excited more interest; it might even have contained some sort of lesson. But in this year of grace it is but an inconsiderable trifle stirring neither mind nor emotions and doomed to be forgotten within a week. In other words modern problems cannot afford to be slightly stale.

Alan Ladd, we learn through flashbacks, has been encouraged to accept the philosophy of life which says that everything can be bought and thus happiness lies in the acquisition of money by fair means or foul. Having through bootlegging obtained great wealth he attempts to regain Betty Field with whom many years previously he had been in love but who has since married. He is in the end disillusioned and determines to make a new and better start. He is then shot in the back by a man who is under the mistaken impression that Alan Ladd had killed his wife in a road accident.

Alan Ladd is as convincing as ever and Barry Sullivan is very good, but the acting of the rest of the cast is indifferent.


Rossellini conceives himself to be called to comment by means of his camera on the contemporary scene. Inevitably, in war-scarred, post-war Europe, he is going to show us some horrible pictures, unless he allows himself to be modified by considerations of delicacy. But that would be to be false to his self-appointed task. Hence, one must not be surprised if, having surveyed the Italian scene in Roma Città Aperta and Paisa, he shows us pictures even more terrible when he turns his camera on Germany. To the obvious query, "But does he need to picture such ghastly subjects?" the answer is that you do not have to see the film. He is not thinking of box-office but only of things as they are, and if they are horrible, that is the fault of the war and those who brought it about.

It may be that such films help to lessen the likelihood of war in the future by showing the horrors that follow in its wake; if so, then they are well worth while, but they can by no twisting of terminology be called entertaining.

We follow the workings of a child's mind disordered by the suffering which war and its after math induce: a father who is always sick, a brother who is hiding from the military police, a sister who has to help to find money for food by cadging cigarettes in night clubs. The boy tries honest and dishonest ways of supplementing the income of his troglodyte family. Acting on the suggestion of a thoughtless adult's comment that sick people are best dead, added to the father's oft expressed wish to be released from his ignominious sufferings, the boy gives poison to his parent and eventually falls to his own death from one of Berlin's ruined mansions.

The actual backgrounds and the natural, documentary approach to his subject, have enabled Rossellini to present a film that by its very austerity grips the imagination and stirs one's sense of pity for the plight of all such victims of war. There is not the slightest inducement to admire the conduct of the unfortunate characters, though one may reasonably excuse their conduct in view of the lack of Christian ethics which is only one of the results of totalitarianism.

The players are mostly amateurs, but the work of the boy, Edmund Meschke, is outstanding.
FOCUS


This is one of the increasing number of films that are not shown to the Press. One can understand the hesitancy of the distributors to court the sharp judgments which such productions merit, though, on the other hand, there have been one or two films slipped into the London circuits which have deserved all the praise which the critics would certainly have accorded. The Window, an American version of the theme of The Fallen Idol, is a case in point. It seems to indicate that the critics are beginning to make their weight felt. There is evidence that the cinema-goer who allows himself to be guided by a reliable critic is ceasing to be the solitary and somewhat cranky individual the exhibitors once thought him.

The story of Fighting Father Dunne is, apparently, based on fact, and tells of a St. Louis priest who, in the early years of this century, made himself responsible for bettering the moral and social conditions of the newspaper boys. Such a story has obvious possibilities but in this case they have been thrown away for the sake of the customary sentimental bad-boy-meets-priest-reforms-sings-in-the-choir formula that has spoilt so many other promising stories. It is true these things happen but not in this sloppy manner. The priest, played by Pat O’Brien, comes near to dishonesty and duplicity in his method of obtaining the food and clothing he needs for his boys. It is also difficult to decide, apart from the fact that he talks to a properly attired Archbishop, whether he is a Presbyterian or a priest, for he is innocent of the use of the Sign of the Cross when praying and uses a chapel, appointed in the normal Catholic fashion, in which it is not necessary to pay reverence to the Real Presence, nor as far as one can see does he use a Breviary. Instead he has an English version of the Bible, and when he attends a condemned boy in prison he talks in a very Protestant way about “having Faith”.

There are entertaining moments in this film but they are mainly unintended and will come to the Catholic who knows his Faith and practice.

V.


The matrimonial ethics of filmland are very complicated. There seems to be an idea prevalent that the vow “for better, for worse” may be broken if another attractive person loves in sight but only for better. The Bribe is the second film this month which presents us with a wife about to leave her unpleasant husband until she discovers that he is ill, whereupon she appears to reason thus: “I am now no longer free to break my vow since my husband needs me”—a curious conception of fidelity! But half a loaf is better than no bread and apparently we have to be grateful to have pity even if we cannot also have chastity.

The story follows a well-worn formula: police agent sent to track down criminals falls in love with girl who may be a crook. Is she? Is she not? The stock situations are played out with wearying inevitability. There is nothing original here: dialogue, characters, setting. As one watches the screen one mentally puts the trite phrase or the obvious move into the mouth and movements of the players. There was an audible sigh of patient resignation at the Press Show when after about a hundred feet of film, Robert Taylor, looking into a mirror, murmurs, “How well I remember that day...” and the mirror pictures the girl and we are away on the coils of the week’s third flash-back in succession.

Charles Laughton now gives us extracts from his repertory. A wink, a grimace, a leer, a shuffle, and that’s his latest character that was. How
Hollywood has desiccated this great actor! Robert Taylor, now middle-aged, has greater humanity but still lacks soul. Ava Gardner is both lovely to look at and appears to have acting ability. Vincent Price and John Hodiak are extravagantly thrown away, in this ritual piece of flummery. Only their modes of death are a little unusual. The latter is suffocated with a pillow by the former who is then shot in the stomach in a firework display.

V.


Running time: 90 minutes.

It is a great pity that the Island of Capri should exercise such a fascination over film producers. For this we have to thank the box-office appeal of the Emperor Tiberius and the exotic characters of some of the novels of Mr. Compton MacKenzie. In this case what could have been an excellent and entertaining comedy has been ruined by the introduction of the lush beauties, in every sense of the term, and rather suggestive nature of the scenes which take place on the island.

The story is rather improbable which can, however, be forgiven as it is simply the vehicle to introduce amusing situations rather in the style of the novels of P. G. Wodehouse. Patricia Chandler (Phyllis Calvert), schoolmistress and ex-Wren, inherits an Italian villa and becomes a countess. She finds the local peasantry in despair because, as explained by the parish priest Don Vincenzo (Aldo Silvani), a two-years' drought has ruined their crops, a drought caused, in the opinion of the people, by the disappearance of a picture, “The Golden Madonna,” from their church. The ex-Wren, with typically English traditions of standing by her people, determines to recover the picture with the help of Mike Christie (Michael Rennie), ex-parachute officer, English Johnnie (David Greene), late of the British Army and now an English gentleman, i.e. “spiv”, of Naples, and a host of urchins of that delectable town. The picture has been camouflaged by having a bad reproduction of the “Laughing Cavalier” painted over it, and after passing through the hands of the junk merchant Esposito (Franco Coop), finally comes into the possession of Signor Migone (Tullio Carminati), a wealthy connoisseur. For no apparent reason the picture is eventually carried off to Capri, of all places, by Migone. Patricia, Mike, Johnnie and his army of small boys all follow and finally the picture is stolen by Johnnie, given to Patricia and returned to the village church; the rain falls and everybody is happy.

Though one is bound to question the taste which makes a comedy revolve round a religious picture, which after all is something sacred to these people and therefore to be regarded with reverence, yet when the religious side comes in, which is rarely, it is treated with a certain respect. The priest, for example, is allowed to explain that if a miracle does happen it will arise not from any virtue in the picture as such but from the faith of the people. In spite of being the typical “English miss”, Phyllis Calvert does make a real heroine, though the amount of running about she does is phenomenal. But when the scene changes to Capri she is as much at home as one of Jane Austen's young women would be. The whole Capri incident could well be omitted: it is all so blatant; Migone is charmed by Patricia and will give her anything, even the picture: but of course she must come for it and inevitably it is in his bedroom. We are spared the obvious conclusion by the fact that Johnnie arrives first in the bedroom and steals the picture. Michael Rennie never fits into the background of Naples, but perhaps that is as it should be. David Greene makes an attractive character of Johnnie. The Italian characters are good especially Pippo.

In spite of all the dashing about there is a lack of slickness in the production: with the omission of Capri and a little tightening up all round this could have been a very good comedy.

Mc.
The Last Days of Dolwyn


Emlyn Williams was very annoyed with me at the Press Show of his film. It is a beautiful piece of work, well moulded, logically developed, simply and movingly narrated, superbly acted by all the members of its Welsh cast (with an outstandingly superlative performance by Edith Evans) and photographed with a tender care for detail that is a tribute to the poetic skill of director and cameraman.

Yet the last ten minutes of the film are so banal, so contrived, so false to the character of the chief person of the story that one might have supposed that another prentice hand had been

As director Emlyn Williams proves to be a discovery

Edith Evans gives an outstanding performance as Merri
given the task of finishing the film in place of Emlyn Williams, one of the most practised and assured of our contemporary dramatists.

This phenomenon so puzzled me that I discussed it with one of our most eminent critics who placed me in front of the author himself with the words: "Now tell him what you told me." Gallantry coupled with honesty impelled me to this ill-timed expression of my views. Not unnaturally, Mr. Williams was pained and distressed at my brutal remarks. I fear I failed to get him to realise that my attitude was born of my admiration for an otherwise deeply moving, beautiful piece of work. I cannot believe that so finely created a character as Merri, the widow of Dolwyn, with her simple, lovely, innocent faith could have perpetrated the melodramatic act that released the waters to drown her village when all her life and its ways went clean contrary to such a deed. An ending made all the more artificial by the fact that a strong man had previously failed to turn the mechanism and that, warned by a siren that the waters were to descend on the valley, the two truant guards stayed, open-mouthed, on the hillside, instead of running at once to their posts.

Mr. Williams rebuked me as a priest for my lack of consideration for his feelings to say such things at such a moment when the professional Press were dissecting his brain-child. But it is because a Catholic priest has much knowledge and experience of the ways of the minds of people that one readily recognises the artificial twist to the story.

Having said so much adversely let me at once assert that The Last Days of Dolwyn is the only film I have seen this year which is, in my opinion, worthy of the honours of the Festival. If the ending could be, even at this moment, changed, I have no doubt but that it would capture the Grand Prix. As it is, it will win admiration for its filmic qualities and its poetic beauty as well as for the acting of Edith Evans as Merri. She stands head and shoulders above all other actresses on the British screen (which is not, perhaps, very high praise: let me add, then, that she more than equals the best that France and Italy can show in this genre). Only to consider her use of her voice and facial expression, her gestures, the way she goes about her tasks as Merri, the manner in which she dominates the scene whenever she is in the picture—not by reason of any histrionic display but because she is so essentially right in her characterisation—is to receive an education in the art of acting.

As director, Emlyn Williams proves to be a discovery. He has the camera and the actors under control and knows precisely the effect he wishes to convey. He also acts in the film but, I imagine deliberately, underplays his part (save for the final disastrous reel) and so resists the major temptation of the actor-director to upset its balance.

The cast is almost uniformly excellent. Richard Burton, as Gareth, is another discovery. Good-looking and with evident ability, he should prove a great asset to the British cinema. Andrea Lea, in a somewhat lame part as the niece of Lady Dolwyn (Barbara Cooper), has the same cold quality of beauty as Michele Morgan. Among the other parts, Roddy Hughes as the innkeeper, Hugh Griffiths as the minister, Kenneth Evans as a lay-preacher, and Alan Aynesworth as Lord Lancashire, stand out for first-class performances.

The story: Rob, a renegade Welshman, seeking to be revenged on the village which excommunicated him as a dishonest lad, comes back determined to destroy the village by planning to flood it in pursuance of a scheme to bring water from Wales to Lancashire. The single-minded simplicity of the widow, Merri, does not avert the decision but the discovery of an old document proving that she owns her cottage and cannot be forced out, does. However, the thwarted Rob, in a fit of insane anger, unable to move the mechanism which will let loose the destroying waters, seeks to burn Merri's cottage but perishes himself by fire after a fight with Gareth. In order to conceal the body and save her son from what she thinks will be a charge of murder, she releases the waters upon Dolwyn.

If you have any appreciation of delicacy and beauty in the use of film, go and see The Last Days of Dolwyn.

The Inquisition, both the Roman and the Spanish version, have been having a film holiday of late. After the colourful Joan of Arc with its treacherous Pierre Cauchon refusing his victim leave to appeal to the Pope, the following day gave us Diego De Silva, a layman, taking upon himself all the guilt of the Spanish Inquisition and denouncing the priest who wishes to show mercy. Such an approach to the apologetical difficulties of the period, it seems to me, does rather less than justice to intelligence to say nothing of history. Charity demands that we repudiate the methods sanctioned by the Inquisition as totally offensive to true Christian sentiment. Truth demands, not that we deny the excesses of the Inquisition but that we have the honesty to assess them by contemporary standards of social justice and not by those of the twentieth century. In a day which has seen and still sees the horrors of totalitarian "persuasion" a selective reprehension towards Elizabeth or Catherine de Medici or Ferdinand and Isabella seems a little lacking in proportion. In any case, it is well to remember that the very fact that the Church could call upon the civil power to repress rebellion against her teaching proves that the men of that day considered the Church's teaching necessary to the well-being of society. To many non-Christians today religion is a matter of opinion; they have ceased to regard truth as something objective; they no longer believe in a divine revelation; they do not regard religion as something worth dying for and therefore worth living for.

Captain From Castile is a colourful account of the expedition of Hernando Cortes against the Aztec chief, Montezuma. Tyrone Power plays the part of Pedro de Vargas, a young Spanish grandee who joins Cortes because he is on the run from the Spanish Inquisition which has sequestrated his family and property. Lee J. Cobb and Alan Mowbray are a couple of more or less comic supports, Sancho to his Panza so to say. There is also a Franciscan Friar, Father Bartolome, who wears an astonishingly decorated habit and has curious ideas about theology. In fact they all have odd ideas in this connection. Lee J. Cobb announces that he has spent quite a lot of money on candles without, presumably, much result. They talk about having Faith, which from the context one supposes should be Hope. It is curious that a Franciscan should be tainted with the Protestant heresy which confines Faith with Hope. One might suppose that was the reason they were all afraid of the Inquisition!

There is much entertaining spectacle and so there is no reason why you should not find the film colourful enough for an evening out. But one wearies, rather, of the pseudo-democratic talk from the Franciscan about the glorious future awaiting the settlers in the New World. Much blood was to fall and much injustice be endured before that rosy picture would come true. It all sounds so false, and, like that picture, so highly coloured.
C. Spiller (Philip Staiton) walks over to speak to Bert, the postman (Charles Hawtrey) who is putting up the shutters.

Margaret Rutherford as Professor Hatton-Jones

Barbara Murray as Shirley Pemberton

PASSPORT TO PIMLICO


When the last unexploded bomb in London transformed itself into a crater, the results for the inhabitants of Pimlico were remarkable. For there was revealed, besides buried treasure, a Royal Charter decreeing, as Professor Margaret Rutherford established, that the neighbourhood was extra-territorial, in fact Burgundian soil. No more English law, no more rationing, no more "permitted hours". What a headache for Whitehall, represented by Basil Radford and Naunton Wayne. The Duke of Burgundy arrived in person. But it cut both ways. Frontiers, passports, diplomatic interchanges; then the closing of frontiers, a state of siege and finally a negotiated agreement and cheers all round.

At the very beginning I was a little disappointed. As each member of the strong comedy cast appeared, my reaction was "I have seen you in better form". But as the film warmed up, I enjoyed it more and more. Such touches as the hawking of "genuine stolen nylons" and, above all, a superb parody of a Gaumont-British newsreel are brilliant fun.

This picture, agreeably rich in detail, should certainly be seen. It oscillates between burlesque and satire, but what of that? Besides being a thoroughly wholesome romp, it displays a shrewd observation of contemporary manners and politics, with a welcome dash of acidity.
A helicopter lands on a bomb site in Burgundy, bringing milk to the beleaguered inhabitants.

As the clock strikes, Pimlico once more becomes British and the whole company raise their glasses in celebration.
For Them That Trespass


This film is, in my opinion, well worth seeing, if only for the acting of Richard Todd. It is fair enough to single out this young man for praise since (as far as I know) he is a newcomer to the screen. There is nothing raw about him; he does not play at acting; he acts; he is no director’s robot; his study of a man who is unjustly condemned to death (a difficult part to play, in the sense that he is called upon to register so many states of mind: love, fear, hate, hope, that hunted feeling, bitterness, disappointment, etc.) is presented with

Richard Todd in prison

Herb (Richard Todd) says good-bye to his girl
realism and restraint. This young man should climb the heights. It seems to me that many of the critics have not given this film its fair share of praise. I am not saying that it is a masterpiece, but I do say that it is well directed and edited, and that the photography is very good and sometimes distinguished and that the story, though turgid, has a point and a plot. It is about a parson's son who goes out to see life in order to become a better writer; he hangs around mean streets and visits pubs (with his nose in the air!) and forms a weird friendship with Frankie, a young Cockney girl, excellently played by Rosalyn Boulter. Frankie has two other admirers: Herb Logan (Richard Todd) and Jim Heal (Michael Laurence). This sort of triple alliance leads to trouble; in fact it leads to the murder of Frankie. The parson's son, Christopher Drew (admirably played by Stephen Murray) becomes a better writer, but he does not become a better man; he writes poems and plays and becomes a celebrity and makes speeches and gives dinner-parties and writes high-toned stuff, but he allows an innocent man to waste away in prison; he knows that Herb Logan did not commit the murder, but he hasn't the courage to come out in the open and tell the truth... the truth would spoil his chances of becoming a great writer.

Perhaps it is true to say that artists more than the rest of men are prone to egotism. This story is a psychological study of an egotist, and we see that men are not always what they write.

E.

THREE GODFATHERS. Starring:
John Wayne, Pedro Armendariz,
Harvey Carey, Junior, Ward
Bond and Mae Marsh. An
M.-G.-M. Picture. Director:
John Ford. Certificate: U. Cate-
gory: B. Running time: 106
minutes.

A technicolor film directed by John Ford at once suggests vast desert vistas with blue mountains and scrub and figures of men and animals suitably relegated to their proper size and position in the scheme of things by the gigantic background. It also suggests a story of rugged simplicity with a theme based on the transcendental verities. Three Godfathers has these characteristic Ford elements but it is definitely not of the best Ford vintage.

Three desperados make their getaway from an Arizona robbery but are pursued by the Sheriff and his men. Their flight becomes a fight with the desert and death from thirst and the Officers of the Law. In their wanderings they become responsible for a baby whose mother has died in a derelict caravan. The film ends with the last man, at the end of his tether, bringing the baby to safety after incredible hazards, his two companions having perished. He is taken and goes away joyfully to serve his sentence prior to starting life as a reformed character.

The idea is now new; the needs of the new-born child bringing out the basic best in men; it has been done before on the screen. One is grateful for this alternative to the adulation of lust and the glorification of sadism which makes up 80% of our films; nevertheless, the film is disappointing. It is sentimental and it has its motives mixed and its theology (as one would expect) is topsy-turvy. It seems to me a pity to make fun of the idea of parenthood. It is a serious business. Further, I am unconverted that even the roughest and toughest of characters could be quite so stupid about the elementary needs of a new-born child. There is a natural instinct in these things, as witness the ways of gypsies. Then, too, a Mexican with enough Faith left to mutter Paters and Aves at moments of crisis would hardly despatch himself so expeditiously with a revolver, having broken his leg in saving the child in his arms from injury. And so on, and so on.

However, there is pleasure to be gained from seeing this film, and were it not for the shooting and death scenes, I would be inclined to regard this film as suitable for the more serious family expedition. The acting and direction is competent and it is pleasant to see again for a short while Mac Marsh, who enlivened so many of the early silent films of my youth.
The Catholic Film Society makes

Very Rev. Hilary Carpenter, O.P. (Chairman of the Society), look at the film through the Editola at

Crucifers to

The carrying of the fourteen crosses across England to the ruined shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham was organised by a few devoted and courageous men in the face of some disapproval and much gloomy prophecy of national resentment and ridicule. But as news trickled through of the progress of the crosses it was realised that the ordinary non-Catholic men and women of England were in almost every case deeply moved by what they saw and by an unrecognised nostalgia for a forgotten past when Our Lady of Walsingham meant England and the Faith. The Catholics themselves, too, were roused to new realisation of their ancient heritage, and to a desire to participate in this great act of witness to the teachings of Our Saviour.
The Catholic Film Society realised early on that an effort should be made to perpetuate this memorable pilgrimage in film so that its lesson might be available in picture and sound to the vast number of people who were prevented by circumstances from taking part in it or even witnessing it. The Committee knew, of course, that enthusiastic amateurs would record it, as indeed they did. But they knew also that this was an occasion which called for the finished artistry of the professional film such as was recommended so strongly in the Encyclical "Vigilanti cura".

As the days of the pilgrimage wore on the members of the C.F.S. Committee grew more and more anxious that this magnificent oppor-
A consultation at the cutting bench

tunity should not be lost. But why did they hesitate? They were very well aware that Mr. Andrew Buchanan, who had made the outstanding film *Visitation*, would readily undertake the work without thought of profit for himself. But even Mr. Buchanan, with all his generosity and selflessness, has to pay his expert cameraman; and sound-on-film is inevitably an expensive business in Wardour Street, and, not least of all, the Catholic Film Society was in its normal state of poverty. But eventually, only a day or two before the crosses were due at Walsingham, it was decided, with no small act of trust in Providence, to ask Mr. Buchanan to do what he could in the short time that remained.

The cameraman was at once despatched to Norfolk. Moreover, Mr. Christopher Radley, himself a professional film producer and a member of our Committee, also provided a filming unit. These secured some fine shots of the pilgrims on the march. At Walsingham itself they were reinforced by British Movietone, whose newsreel of the occasion was afterwards bought by the Union of Catholic Mothers.

The material thus obtained, admittedly not as comprehensive as more careful planning could have made it, was delivered over into the expert hands of Mr. Buchanan, and those who know anything of the history of documentary in this country will realise that the C.F.S. confidently expected something more than ordinarily good to emerge. Nor has it been disappointed. Under his artistic editing and with a build-up of animated maps and a chosen series of images of Our Lady, the shots have become a unity.
Margaret Moultrie (Manager of “Focus” and Assistant Secretary of the C.F.S.) records her opinion that “Crucifers to Walsingham” is an arresting and moving film.

and a very moving documentary has been fashioned. Background music, very aptly chosen by Fr. John A. V. Burke, the indefatigable General Secretary of the C.F.S., has been woven into the picture, and a most appropriate yet unobtrusive commentary, also mainly due to Fr. Burke, has been recorded on film by Fr. Hilary J. Carpenter, O.P., the Chairman.

The timing of the commentary and the balancing of the music, effected by Mr. Buchanan, is an artistic triumph and a remarkable unity has been achieved in the film as a whole. It is the first professional film entirely sponsored by the Catholic Film Society and we have good reason to be content with what will undoubtedly prove the forerunner of a series of first-class Catholic films. It is a veritable sermon in film, and a sermon that people are not only going to profit by but enjoy.

So it is done. But what of the costs? Fortunately a few devoted friends have rallied round and either given or lent without interest about half the cost. The Union of Catholic Mothers has generously contributed half the remainder. Perhaps now others who also appreciate the tremendous importance of making good religious films will come forward to supply the remaining quarter either by gift or by loan.

In any case it is a film that you will want to see. It will be available soon in both 35mm. and 16mm. See that it is put on in your area. That will be one effective means of helping to pay for it and also of laying the foundation of a fund for future productions.

Felix Faber.
WAKE OF THE RED WITCH.

This film is so silly that it is not fair to criticise it seriously. I shall therefore narrate the story and leave you to decide whether I ought to have put it in Category D, "particularly for children". This I would have done were it not for the fact that it has some objectionable slants on marriage and also that the children I know are rather particular.

Captain Balls (John Wayne) is fished out of a shark infested ocean in which he is floating about, tied to a plank, looking irritable, an expression which he carries for the rest of the film. His rescuer, Sidneye (Luther Adler), makes him captain of a ship, the "Red Witch", with which they are to spoil the natives of a Polynesian island of their rich hoard of treasure. They fall in love with the same girl (Gail Russell), who loves Balls and marries Sidneye (it's that kind of film). Balls convinces the natives that he is a god by diving and wresting from an octopus in an underwater cave the casket of pearls there hidden. He returns to the cave to kill the octopus. After this the girl's father is pushed (accidentally, of course) into the sacrificial fire which burns in a pit before the shrine of the island deity. In the meantime Sidneye is confined to his chair with a species of paralysis and the girl is on her deathbed. Balls walks into her room and with her husband present picks her up in his arms and takes her to a window to see the view, after which she dies. He then goes on another expedition and with the "Red Witch" loaded with treasure, scuttles her. Later still he agrees to undertake a hazardous diving feat to bring back the treasure. The "Red Witch" rolls over on the floor of the ocean and breaks the life-line. The last we see of Balls is through the glass front of the diving suit, looking still rather irritable but this time with a mixture of astonish-ment. The ghost of the "Red Witch" then sails away into the sunset with the ghosts of Balls and Sidneye's wife on board, to the accompaniment of a ghostly choir.

So now you know.


Mr. Sidney Box, for reasons best known to himself, has sent this film out without the customary Press Show. Which is a pity; for, though the film is not an outstanding one technically, it deserves to be widely supported as it is one of those rare things, a film to make you laugh. The situations may have been used before but this time we have a neat line in dialogue and gags which Basil Radford and Naunton Wayne exploit to the full, and there is a freshness about the script and the staging and camera work which makes one think that Mr. Box has laid his hands on a useful team and a set of characters worth further exploitation. Bernard McNabb and Lynn Lockwood should not be lost sight of. Their story of the two ex-intelligence officers who set up a private detective agency and unwittingly capture a Nazi big chief on the loose in this country involves Radford and Wayne in some very funny escapades, especially with a performing seal in a theatre; and Maurice Denham as the Nazi gives us another side of his versatile character. As Otto Fisch, the spy, he is hilarious. The film ends with a request from an Indian rajah that Bright and Early, the private detectives, look for his missing elephant. Please, Mr. Box, let us have another dose of the same mixture. The elephant should give you plenty of opportunities. This is a film which we can safely recommend to the family and we desperately need such films.

Two generations ago, no one was allowed to mention gastrology (their stomachs) or their income. Now we concentrate on psychology and money. This film has no money-complex and is quite free from erotics. It deals with a Mrs. Virginia Cunningham who, six months before marrying her fiancé, has a nervous crisis, disappears, reappears and marries him, and in a couple of days has another crisis, runs away, and (rather abruptly) is found in the Juniper Hill (State) Hospital. She has completely lost her memory and knows only that she "cannot love any man". Skillful treatment (pitted against the reverse) cures her. The title is explained only at the end, and too swiftly to carry conviction, by the statement that mad people used to be put into snake-pits, and the shock might suffice to restore their sanity. But, I think, a good many cuts must have been made before this film was "passed". An unusually long "preamble" assures us (a) that the film represents nothing English and (b) nothing normal. (And, indeed, we must accept the one or two incredibly foolish doctors and a bullying nurse or two as exceptional. That they are not impossible I know from brutality and stupidity I have come across—I insist, exceptionally—in prisons or asylums.) The film, then, wishes to be taken seriously, as a "message of hope", and also as a warning that there are far too few expert doctors, nurses and installations for "border-line cases". Dr. Kik is played with admirable restraint (Glenn Langan). By means of "shock treatment" (not unjustifiable but risky) he begins to take Virginia back towards her childhood—the six-year-old Virginia (Lora Lee Michel) is really marvellous. He further treats her by (I gathered) the "truth-drug" which, after unconsciousness, removes all inhibitions (but also induces extreme suggestibility, whence one of its dangers. A fairly recent juridical, medical and theological discussion in France ruled that its use was never justifiable.) Despite interference by unimaginative doctors and hard-bitten nurses, his treatment succeeds: the origins of her sickness are discovered: she goes home happy. No doubt we could enlarge on the imiquity of herding various sorts of "crazy" people together, all doing harm to one another (as in the previous war "shell-shock" cases, packed into one ward, did), but that may be part of the "shock" the film wants to administer to us. Scene effects are restricted (practically all in the hospital) but made the most of: we have to be reminded that the "inmates" are all actors and actresses (i.e. not really "mental", so pitifully excellent is their performance. Miss de Haviland has few chances of displaying her charm—she must nearly all the time be tragic.) The film could possibly do harm to people already on the "borderline" who might be tempted to imitation; but, thus "cut", perhaps the alarmist publicity it has had was not needed. It is based on the novel by Mary Jane Ward.

C. C. M.

WHIPLASH. Starring: Dane Clark, Alexis Smith, Zachary Scott, Eve Arden. Producer: Jack L. Warner. Director: Lew Seiler. Distributors: Warner Bros. Certificate: A. Category: B. I do not think anybody will cavil at the quality of the acting, the crispness of the dialogue or the technical skill of the direction and filming of this picture. The weakness is rather with the story which is "phony". Likewise the underlying philosophy of life in which, for instance, divorce and vengeance are treated as normal and justifiable rob it of true dramatic interest. Since however we are so familiar with this disintegrated moral standard, it is not likely to do harm. Indeed many will find the film quite a satisfactory evening's entertainment.

Briefly, the story is of an artist (Dane Clark) who falls in love with a girl (Alexis Smith). She deserts him but he finds her again in New York. He discovers that she is a night-club singer married to a professional fight promoter (Zachary Scott). Dane knocks out one of Zachary's thugs. This
impresses Zachary and so Dane becomes a professional boxer. In a very short time we find him fighting for the middle-weight championship of the world. This he wins but collapses immediately afterwards because his head had been seriously injured the night before. Zachary at this stage is conveniently killed so that when Dane recovers he and Alexis don't even have to worry about divorce. Incidentally the boxing scenes will appeal to those who like their boxing a la Hollywood.

T.

A LETTER TO THREE WIVES.

This film is an excellent piece of entertainment being both light and amusing and yet having an under edge of genuine stress and emotion. The setting is a small town in America with the usual large American comforts. The dominant personality that holds together three distinct threads of American married life is never seen but only heard (but what a sickly voice!). The three wives are on the point of embarking on a day's river trip when they learn that their common rival has left town with one of their husbands. The rest of the film is taken up with their pictured reflections and reactions. The interplay of character that this involves arouses in each case our suspicions as to the defaulting husband and our sympathy for all three wives. The problem of spotting the runaway remains until almost the end. Against this background of suspense a number of genuine and at times amusing domestic scenes, each in keeping with the character of the couples concerned, are presented to the audience. Incidentally and quite indirectly a number of excellent lessons on sound domestic relationships emerge. It seems such a terrible pity that one of these marriages is going to be wrecked—but there is no real need to worry—it ends like most American films with everyone living happily ever afterwards!

V.


Towards the end of this film, so near that most people in their frenzied rush to avoid standing still for the National Anthem will miss it, is a phrase that changes the whole tone of the picture. Richard Greene says, as he bids farewell to Myrna Loy: "God bless you!" How rarely does one hear this gracious greeting in this so-called Christian country! The story is a "triangle" affair, with complications that would have baffled Euclid. A middle-aged wife, driven by her husband's cold ambition and possessiveness to accept the attentions of his young partner, finds her love for her husband reawakening when she has to tend him in an illness in which he suffers temporary blindness. To escape the accusations of an anonymous letter to her husband, she declares that the young partner is in fact in love with her stepdaughter. Eventually after much maneuvering from all parties concerned, the partner does fall in love with the stepdaughter and the husband with his wife, and she conquers her attraction for the other man and all appear fit for a happy ending.

There is a foolish scene to end with; Myrna Loy running through London streets after a car to be reconciled with her stepdaughter. Roger Livesey overacts, due, doubtless, to an importunate director unaware of English character. Yes, withal, the film is pleasant and moving and has a moral tone despite its atmosphere of superior materialism. Husbands need to be courteous to their wives in order to retain their respect and keep their love. Love is a two-way traffic and marriages are not so likely to break up when this road is kept open.

Acting honours to Myrna Loy. Peggy Cummins has vitality but lacks poise. Wilfrid Hyde-White is a joy to watch in a small part as a barrister's clerk. The scenery, mostly Capri, is refreshing to see.
MISS TATLOCK’S MILLIONS.
Starring: John Lund, Wanda Hendrix, Barry Fitzgerald.
Director: Richard Haydn.
Producer: Charles Brackett.

“Will you, won’t you” like this film? That will depend on your taste in humour. Maybe you will not appreciate John Lund as a man masquerading as a madman. It raises such a serious problem (for the critic, at any rate). Is he funny or just plain silly? What is the difference, anyway, between funniness and silliness? What makes which? However, the speculations won’t get very far because we have Barry Fitzgerald with us (ah, sure! as weeked a man as ever I did see!), and you can’t do serious thinking when he’s about the place. He is as Oirish, witty, cunning, puckish and as drunk as ever. Is he funny? . . . Against? . . . Agreed, unanimously. But whether he’s funnier drunk (as he almost always is) or when he is sober (for once) and preaching temperance—that question I will leave you to debate on your way home from the cinema.

G.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Allan Avenue,
Dehiwala,
Colombo.
1/5/49.

Sir,

I have been a regular reader of Focus for some time and have been greatly struck by the masterly criticism of films. Some of them have been screened here in Colombo and I have hence been able to check up on Focus. I wish to take this opportunity to offer you my very best congratulations for the splendid get-up of Focus and best wishes in the future for the steady improvement I observe it making. I can say this with some experience and can fully appreciate the difficulties through which you have to wade. Hence, my bouquet—and not a brickbat.

Vernon Wallis.
41 Barton Road,
Cambridge.

Sir,

May I suggest through your correspondence columns that members of the C.F.S. should publicise the “Penny A Day Fund” when and if Monsieur Vincent visits their districts? Appeal notices in the church porches, etc., are possible methods.

Yours sincerely,

D. B. Wallace.

EDITOR’S POSTSCRIPT

We have received a few letters of protest concerning Q.’s article: A Q-rious Nightmare. Q. is well able to mind his own P’s and Q’s; there is no need for me to explain his satire. I am afraid that his critics have read too much into his article or not enough. In fairness to Q., I should say that many people have praised his article. When St. Thomas More published his “Utopia”, it was misunderstood and some people were shocked.
Machines for the projection of narrow-gauge cinema film are coming into schools in increasing numbers. They are precision instruments which need to be used skilfully and maintained with care if they are to give over a long period the faultless service of which they are capable. The following brief notes should help the inexperienced user to get the best from his projector.

In order to make projection in schools a simple, rapid and smooth process it is advisable to develop a definite routine which should be followed meticulously every time the machine is used. Here is the outline of a drill which has proved satisfactory for the handling of portable sound-film projectors.

When the films you have ordered arrive in the school, check them immediately. See that you have been sent the titles you ordered and that the films are correctly mounted on the spools. You will rarely find errors when the films come to you from a reputable library, but it is too late to discover them a moment or so before projection is due to begin. Films are generally mounted correctly on the spools when the emulsion side—the dull side—is outermost, but this is not an absolutely reliable test and it is much safer to apply the following optical check. Hold the spool of film at waist level, take off film from the front of the spool and raise it up to eye level. Against the light it should then be possible to read the first title—not the sundry markings on the leaders—right way up and right way round. If you cannot do so the film is wrongly mounted on the spool.

We must now pass on to the actual preparation for projection. Provide a substantial rigid stand for the projector and use a good thick mat of felt between the stand and the machine. The use of a table as a projector stand should be avoided, for the table-top often amplifies the mechanical noise of the projector which is undesirable in the classroom. The use of the mat is recommended as a further measure to reduce this unwanted noise.

Place your speaker in the best position you can find; this is usually in front of and above your audience. Walk back to the projector unwinding the cable from the speaker as you go and placing it, free from twists and kinks, out of the way where it cannot be tripped over nor trodden upon. Connect up to your projector and make such other connections to the instrument as may be necessary. Now check the voltage setting of the transformer or resistance and see that all switches on the projector are in the "off" position. When you are sure about these points—not before—connect with the mains outlet and switch on the current.

Next quickly test your machine. Switch on the amplifier and while the valves are warming up to their working temperature check that the motor and lamp are in working order and adjust your projector position so that the beam is nicely centred on the screen. When all this has been done—it only takes a few seconds—you can test for sound. To do this, switch on your exciter lamp, turn up the volume control and repeatedly interrupt the light ray from the exciter lamp with a strip of card or paper. Distinct "plops" should issue from the loud-speaker if all is in working order and you can now switch off again, except for the amplifier which should be left "live" to maintain the valves at operating temperature.

The next stage is the important one of cleaning the film channel. Sprockets, gate and sound-drum must be thoroughly cleaned with a stiff brush, giving special attention to the highly polished surfaces of the pressure plates in the gate. Failure to do this well can only lead to severe film damage and unsatisfactory projection. Dirt at the gate will be ground into the film causing scratching which no after-treatment can remove; it may also prevent the film from lying flat in the plane of projection and thereby
seriously affect the quality of the projected picture. Dirt in the sound-head may prevent the proper scanning of the sound-track and cause disappointing reproduction. The lens should also be cleaned at this stage. In schools gritty dust abounds and to make sure that none of this is rubbed into the polished surfaces of the soft optical glass it is a wise precaution first to brush the lens surfaces with a soft camel hair brush and then to polish them with a piece of soft linen. When you have cleaned the lens replace it as nearly as possible in the correct position for good screen definition by switching on the projector lamp and focussing the lens so that the edges of the picture area are perfectly sharp on the screen. You are now ready to prepare for lacing the projector. See that the speed control of your machine is set for the type of film you are going to project—sound or silent—and that the take-up tension is correctly adjusted for the size of spool to be used.

Lace the projector in accordance with the makers' instructions, making sure that there are adequate loops above and below the gate, that the perforations of the film are in proper engagement with the teeth of the sprocket wheels and the claws in the gate and that the end of the film is securely attached to the take-up spool and wound around the core in the correct direction. Check the lacing by giving the mechanism a few turns by hand and noting that the film is passing through the mechanism correctly and that the loops are functioning perfectly. When you are quite sure about this, set the volume control at a fairly low level—say one-third of the way round—and switch on the motor. When all of the leader, especially all of any synchronising leader, has passed through the gate switch on the lamp and put out the house lights. This action is to secure that the first thing your audience sees on the screen is the title of the film and not the succession of reversed numbers on the synchronising leader or any other indications carried on a lengthy leader. Short leaders can usually be inched through the gate during lacing and in such cases the switching on of the projector lamp follows immediately upon the switching on of the motor.

Lastly make precise adjustments to focussing, framing, volume and tone in that order.

During projection keep an eye on the loops and take up and make such adjustments as may become necessary. If a loop is lost the machine must be stopped and the gate relaced. You may learn of other ways of dealing with lost loops, ways familiar to projectionists of entertainment films. To these people the essential thing is to keep the show going. In educational use this is not quite so important but it is of the utmost importance to preserve in prime condition the inadequate stock of teaching films. Most of the suggestions for adjusting loops without stopping the projector are liable to cause slight damage to film and this the educational user must avoid.

As the film comes to an end you will have to think about switching off procedure. As soon as the sound ends turn down the volume control to zero. This is done first to avoid the unpleasant sounds which may come from the loudspeaker if markings on the trailer are scanned. Next switch off the lamp while "The End" title is still on the screen to make sure that the screen is not suddenly flooded with light as the film leaves the gate to give an unpleasant shock to the eyes of your audience. Finally, switch off the motor when the end of the film is quite clear of the mechanism.

So much for the actual routine of operating the projector; but here are one or two additional hints which will help you to perfect your performance. In educational use you will doubtless sometimes need to employ the still picture device and reverse switch with which most machines for teaching purposes are equipped. When you wish to show a still picture remember to switch off the sound first before you stop the film and there are two cautions to have in mind when you use the reverse switch. One of them is a mechanical one and the other an educational one. If you are going to reverse the direction of film movement stop the machine first, then put the reverse switch over and start again. To go straight from forward to reverse might not be accompanied with the same dire consequences in the case of the projector as it would in the case of a motor car but you would certainly set up stresses and strains in the mechanisms which ought to be avoided. The educational purpose of the reverse switch is to permit the
teacher to re-wind a section of film so that the class can see a sequence a second time and the educational caution about its use is this; cover the lens during the reversing process so that the backward movement is not seen on the screen. A class which has just seen—for example—a swimmer dive from a high board into the water will be highly amused to see him come back again to the board feet first and the essential calm of the lesson will be gone for good.

If, on some social occasion, you have to show a programme of films do not switch on the house lights between reels. Use the pilot light on the machine or provide yourself with a shaded reading lamp and train yourself to lace your projector with no more light than this. It is annoying to your audience to experience frequent alternations of darkness and bright light. At the end of your programme turn up the house lights gently. You will probably not be able to do it gradually as in the cinema theatres but you can avoid going to the switchboard and turning on all the switches at once. Put them on one by one, make an appreciable pause between each movement and bring on the lights furthest from the screen first.

When you have finished with the projector switch off the amplifier but let the motor run for a few minutes before you start to pack up. This will cool the lamp down and help to prolong its life. You can probably arrange to leave the motor running all the time while you are rolling up the speaker cable and packing it into the speaker case.

So far as the maintenance of projectors is concerned there is little for the teacher to do, but that little is very important. It is no part of a teacher's job to undertake the servicing of a projector but he ought to be prepared to take such care of his machine as it necessary to secure from it trouble-free service over a long period.

The attention which a projector needs from its operator includes regular lubrication of moving parts, regular cleaning, regular inspection for signs of wear and the occasional replacement of certain parts which are subject to natural deterioration. There is an emphasis on the word "regular" here, and that is quite intentional. It is suggested that certain essential maintenance tasks, none of which should take much time if regularly carried out, should be undertaken at these specific intervals:

(i) before each showing of film;
(ii) after each five hours of use, or, in a school where the machine is in considerable use, weekly;
(iii) after each twenty-five hours of use, or, in a school where use is considerable, monthly.

The tasks to be undertaken before each showing of film are the cleaning of the gate and film channel, cleaning of the sound optic and cleaning of the projection lens.

At the weekly intervals a thorough inspection and cleaning of the film channel is needed. This may involve the scraping off of any hard nodules of film emulsion which may be discovered on inspection and which are not removed by the normal brushing. For this task a wooden scraper is best. On no account should a metal tool be used since this is very liable to scratch the polished surfaces and this would lead to consequent film damage. A little carbon tetrachloride may be used to help the removal of really stubborn accumulations. At this time, too, a thorough lubrication of the machine should be undertaken. This must be done strictly in accordance with the maker's instructions, using the grade of oil he recommends and applying just the quantity stated in the manual of instructions. A third task to be undertaken now is a more thorough cleaning of the optical system—including wiping with soft linen the condenser lenses and the reflecting mirror behind the lamp.

The principal tasks to be undertaken at the monthly intervals are a thorough inspection of the machine and a general cleaning. Go over your machine thoroughly and check that the valves in the amplifier are firmly set in their sockets, that cables, especially the terminations of cables, are in good condition, that belts still have adequate tension, that oil levels in automatic systems (as in the Debrie machine) are maintained and that lubricating grease is sufficient where needed (as in the claw box of the G.B. L516). All these
matters can be attended to by the operator. In addition you will watch for signs of wear in bearings, brushes and so on. The operator is not expected to be able to put these right, but reporting signs of wear to the service engineer at an early stage may save time and money in the long run, and perhaps avoid a total breakdown of the mechanism.

The operator should maintain a small stock of replaceable components such as projector lamps, exciter lamps and driving belts, and know how to fit them. Photo-electric cells and amplifier valves which may need replacement from time to time should, however, be fitted by a serviceman. It is generally difficult for a layman to diagnose the exact nature of trouble with these components and even more difficult for him to locate the cause of such trouble. Although in time the electronic emission of cells and valves will decay to a point where replacement becomes necessary without there being any other fault in the instrument, it sometimes happens that the failure of these components is brought about by an electrical fault not apparent to the operator. To replace a cell or valve under such circumstances might lead to immediate destruction of the replacement and therefore it is recommended that these replacements should be made by someone who can make instrument tests and who can make any adjustments which such tests might show to be necessary.

The trouble with so many school projectors is that they are no particular person's responsibility and they suffer accordingly. It is a good thing therefore, at least for the projector, to place the school projector under the care of a member of the staff who can see to it that it receives the attention it requires. It is recommended that he prepare a log book to accompany the machine and insist that every period of use, every adjustment made to the machine, every maintenance task completed and every replacement made should be recorded in this book. Only by some such organised plan can you be sure that you are getting the service you should expect from your instrument (particularly from the lamps, valves and cell in it), and that the school projector is receiving that attention which as a piece of precision engineering it needs and as a valuable school tool it deserves.

### SOME FILMS REVIEWED

**NOTE.** Inclusion in this list does not connote positive recommendation. Films that are positively harmful are not included here. Readers are reminded to refer to the full reviews when assessing a film.

Category A, indicates adults only; B, adults and adolescents; C, family audiences; D, particularly for children.

**Reviewed in "FOCUS" (Vol. II, Nos. 4 and 5)**

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<td>Yankee in King Arthur's Court, A</td>
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**We Recommend**

- An Act of Murder                              | (B)    |
- Fallen Idol, The                               | (A)    |
- Hamlet                                        | (B)    |
- I Remember Mama                               | (C)    |
- Johnny Belinda                                | (A)    |
- London Belongs to Me                          | (A)    |
- Monsieur Vincent                              | (C)    |
- Oliver Twist                                  | (C)    |
- Rachel and the Stranger                       | (B)    |
- Scott of the Antarctic                        | (B)    |
- Visitation                                    | (B)    |
- Winslow Boy, The                              | (B)    |

**Ratings:**

- A: Adults only
- B: Adults and adolescents
- C: Family audiences
- D: Particularly for children
CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY NOTES

The O.C.I.C. General Council Meeting

We are pressing ahead with arrangements to house our visitors who will come from twenty-five countries to London in July. Through the kindness of His Lordship, Bishop Craven, Auxiliary of Westminster, we shall have the privilege of a Solemn Mass at St. James’ Church, Spanish Place, London. A special preacher will preach on the subject of the Film Apostolate.

Two receptions will be held at which the General Council of O.C.I.C. will have the opportunity of meeting prominent Catholic personalities and also members of the British film industry. As many of the delegates are well known in film circles in their own countries, there should be many interesting exchanges of ideas. This will be quite in keeping with the theme of the General Council Agenda which is mainly devoted to the question of our relations with the Cinema Industry.

Crucifers to Walsingham

The Walsingham film will have its première during the O.C.I.C. General Council Meeting. We plan to show it to our distinguished visitors and at the same time make an effort to interest the public in the work of the C.F.S. and also the aims of the Walsingham Pilgrimage. Prominent speakers, both ecclesiastical and lay, will be invited to talk on these subjects.

Unforeseen difficulties of a financial nature will prevent us having the privilege of showing the Mexican film about St. Francis of Assisi. When our Irish friends made the offer to let us have the film, they were overlooking the legal side of their contract with the owners of the film.

It would still be possible to bring the film into this country if sufficient people were financially interested. But the average man in the street has no idea of the commercial aspects of the film business, aspects often approximating to the sordid, but which have to be overcome if commercially produced films from foreign countries are to be given a chance in this country.

That is why we are still working, quietly and slowly, at the spade work necessary before we can hope to have a distributing group ready to handle foreign films of note for us. There is no doubt that, if business-minded folk were to come forward, we should be able to organise for them a circuit of cinemas which could take worthwhile foreign films and make it worth their while. But it has to be handled by people other than the C.F.S. We are the liaison officers, but the real work must be done by others.

In this connection it will be worth while reading in the second number of the International Film Review of the adventures of a chain of Family Cinemas in France which, from small beginnings, developed to proportions large enough to make it worth the distributors’ while to study their interests — which are primarily Christian. Something similar could be done in this country but it would require a great deal of constructive enthusiasm from the people who are fond of saying, “Why does not somebody do something?”

Summer Film Conference

It has been arranged to hold this Conference at the Toynbee Hall, London, E.1. The dates are Thursday, September 8th, till Sunday, September 11th, inclusive. Please make a note of these dates and keep them free.

It is too early to give the list of lecturers but we can promise an interesting group. If they are as good as last year’s team, they will be excellent. We are keeping in mind the practical side of film work and those who want to know how to work a projector or to learn something about a ciné-camera or how to set about writing a film script, will find these wants attended to.

Film Competition

In this connection, we shall discuss at the Summer Conference the best way of organising the Catholic Film Competition. The Amateur Cine World, the journal which caters for the amateur cinematographer, has just finished judging the entries sent in in connec-
tion with their own competition and we think that through the kind offices of Mr. Andrew Buchanan, who was one of the judges for the A.C.W., we shall be able to let our students see a selection of the ten prize-winning films.

International Film Review

We are grateful for the offers of help in connection with the translation necessary in bringing out the English edition of the *International Film Review*. We shall take advantage of these offers as time demands. The second issue of the *International Film Review* is now ready and deals mainly with the Cinema in France (which is one reason why there were so many French articles to be turned into English this time). The third number which we hope will be ready in time for the O.C.I.C. General Council in July is devoted mainly to the Cinema in Britain. An exceedingly interesting group of contributors has been secured, including C. A. Lejeune, Campbell Dixon, Flora Robson, Andrew Buchanan, John Boulting, Edward Carrick, Douglas Woodruff, Robert Speaight, Hilary Carpenter, O.P., Declan Flynn, O.F.M., Mary Field, and other distinguished writers.

We are sure that all our readers could do much to bring this invaluable Review to the notice of their friends and all who are interested in seeing the cinema take its rightful place as the most significant art-form of our times.

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**BOOK REVIEW**

*International Film Review*, published by the International Catholic Cinema Office, Brussels, 1949, 64 pp., 5/-.

This is the first number of a quarterly publication, edited in English, French and Spanish, covering the cultural and technical aspects of the film.

Though officially a Catholic venture, the Review contains nothing with which any Christian can disagree in its effort to promote the Christian viewpoint in the cinema and in stressing its wonderful power for religious propaganda.

The permanent editorial correspondents from over twenty different countries guarantee that the name International means what it says. News about film activities in many parts of the world is given in this first number.

Well illustrated with full-page plates and excellently printed and laid-out, the English version shows slight signs of foreign production. The continual form of quotation marks lends a slightly exotic flavour to the issue. This is a minor point which can be corrected in future numbers.

The contents include "The Thomist Philosophy Turns to the Cinema", by Fr. Felix Morlion, O.P.; "Techniques that may Revolutionise the Cinema"; "Orson Welles, Immaterialist," by Jean de Bougnie and an interesting account of how *Joan of Arc* was produced by Fr. Paul Donceur, S.J., religious technical adviser for the film.

The Review is cheap at five shillings per copy, or one pound sterling per year. It can be obtained from The Manager, *International Film Review*, 22 Ovington Square, London, S.W.3, and is really necessary to all who are interested in the religious power of the film or its international aspect.

Sebastian Lee, O.F.M.

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**PENNY A DAY FOR 240 DAYS’ FUND**

IF one fourth of the Catholic population in England and Scotland contributed a penny a day for 240 days The Catholic Film Society in England would be able to set up a production unit.

It was the pennies of the Catholic population in France which made possible the making of the film *Monsieur Vincent*.

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20 Ovington Square, London, S.W.3
An event of major importance to the British cinema has taken place. To an art which is notoriously lacking in true histrionic ability, so that one could count on one’s fingers the names of those who are skilled and stand out by reason of their skill, there has lately been attracted a personality capable of lifting it to superlative heights. Edith Evans has been acting on the stage since 1912. She has made a name for herself which will rank with the greatest in the theatre. Her title of honour which she shares with very few of her sex marks the Royal appreciation of her talents and the manner in which she has used them. Unfortunately for the screen, she has only lately discovered or been discovered by the cinema. To watch her in Last Days of Dolwyne is an exciting experience for those who are able to appreciate the art that has contributed to the part she plays.

Filmgoers can see her first two films almost in conjunction, for Queen of Spades, which was released last month, was actually made after Last Days of Dolwyn had been completed. There could hardly be a greater contrast in style and characterisation than there is between the old countess in the first film and the Welsh widow in the second. The critics were captivated by the way Dame Edith stole the picture when Anatole de Grunwald suddenly announced his film based on Pushkin’s story of old St. Petersburg. Her acting and her make-up were alike both terrifying and superb. The awful way in which her glassy stare followed Anton Walbrook about the room he has come to rob provides one of those rare and unforgettable moments in film which are purely cinematic. She contrived to transmit a sense of diabolical possession altogether different from the gentle, innocent self-assurance of the widow in Last Days of Dolwyn. To measure her powers one has only to contrast the way she walks in the Queen of Spades; weary, determined, painful, haunted steps that tell of her interior load; with the bright, confident, deferential, gentle gait of the woman in the Welsh valley who is at peace with God and man. Or her voice: the harsh, grating croak of the irritable, frightened old Russian aristocrat with the lilting prattle of the little woman in the hills who knows her station and keeps to it, but is not overawed by wealth or position: the gentle chatter of the tranquil soul, the mind at peace.

One of the most beautiful scenes in the Welsh film is where she goes to offer her few pounds to the lady of the manor in the hope that she may thus help to pay for the safety of her valley. Her demure black bonnet and dress contrast strangely with the rich brocades of Lady Dolwyn. Her fluttering gestures, her astonished inflection when she learns that rich people can be “poor”, her self-assurance born of her conviction that God has made all things well and only man produces disorder, are among the most memorable moments in the film. Her curious little shy, face-concealing movement when the villagers come to tell her that she is a heroine has a quality of pathos about it that tugs the heart strings.

Other actors and actresses came comparatively late in life to the gruelling medium of film. Sybil Thorndike, Marie Dressler, Seymour Hicks, Marie Tempest: in each case their stage training stood them in good stead. Dame Edith Evans, with a long stage career behind her, will certainly do no less than these other distinguished players to maintain the supremacy of the English theatre tradition. Born in London in 1888, she made her stage debut in “Troilus and Cressida” in 1912. Her particular gifts seem to have turned first to a mastery of artificial comedy in such plays as “The Way of the World”, in which she played Millamant, at the Lyric, Hammersmith, in 1924.

But a period with the Old Vic, dating from 1925, gave her an opportunity to show how extensive her powers were. Her parts in “Lady with the Lamp” (1931), in which she played Florence Nightingale, and the Welsh maid in “The Late Christopher Bean” (1933), finally proved that she is at home as much in modern comedy as she was in period pieces. Her present London play, “Daphne Laureola,” a comedy by James Bridie, shows that her vitality is not diminished by her cinema experience. We look forward with eagerness to the new things and awakened hope which she can bring to the screen.

John Vincent.
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FOCUS—May be obtained from: The Manager, “The Blue Cottage,”
LOUISIANA STORY

Once in a while we see a film which is so enchanting that we want to tell the world about it. Farrebique which was such a film attained its popularity, not from posters or publicity patter, but from the praises of discerning patrons of the cinema who acclaimed it: One of the best ever. I venture to suggest that Louisiana Story which has just come to town and which is a better film than Farrebique will receive its best publicity from the praises of those who know a good thing when they see it. Students of the cinema, repertory cinemas, film clubs and film societies which are in search of something really good should not miss this masterpiece.

The Flaherty Flavour

Louisiana Story which is Robert Flaherty’s latest, contains all the Flaherty flavour of strength, beauty, goodness and adventure; it is fundamentally a documentary, but there is more drama in it, it has more thrills than many films which set out to be dramas and thrillers. (A man from the B.B.C., to whom I was chatting after the show, confessed that the sequence in which the alligator chases the boy Joseph, terrified him.)

The story which is built around Joseph Boudreaux, a primitive boy who believes in werewolves and mermaids and who is a grand character, is simple enough! It is the way in which it is told in film language which makes it memorable, I will go so far as to say makes it momentous.

True Poet

Robert Flaherty is not the poetical type, he is the true poet with the gift to see beyond the surface of things, in this film he reveals to us the lucent beauties of the surroundings of the Petit Anse Bayou of Southern Louisiana; he reveals the beauty and the dignity of primitive people; he even reveals the beauty of the industrial machine which invades this tranquil land.

Above the level

In the current issue of The International Film Review Professor George Damas says: “In spite of half a century of incessant productivity, the cinema is still in its infancy . . . as far as the majority of cinemagoers are concerned it seldom rises above the level of a weekly pastime . . . it is an opiate rather than a stimulant.

“Louisiana Story” rises above the level of mere pastime. It is not an opiate. It is a stimulant.

EDITOR.
FILM GLOSSARY

No. 6—FILM EDITING (I)

By ANDREW BUCHANAN

Someone has asked how films are put together in view of the almost microscopic proportions of the pictures in the little frames, making the action practically invisible to the naked eye—and also how an editor sets about his job.

In addition to all the human technicians employed on a production, are several Robots, and these mechanical members of the staff are not only indispensable, but more or less govern the work of the mere humans. First, of course, comes that one-eyed monster, the camera, which sees and captures more details with its single eye than any pair of human eyes could ever do. Secondly, there's the magic ear of the recording apparatus, the microphone, so sensitive that it picks up the sound of breathing unless people are unusually careful, or stop breathing altogether, which might be a good thing in some cases, but rather awkward. Thirdly, bringing us to the editing department, is a member of the "Ola" family. In America, it's called a Movielola. In Britain, either an Editola, or an Acmiola. All are similar, and a cross between radio, television and gramophone, but far more costly. The Editola is the star of the cutting room. Without it, the sound film could not be assembled. One rarely hears of the work of the editor, and yet it is the core of the whole complicated business. His cutting room is far removed from the brilliantly lit studio, but the results of everyone's work converges on it, and undergoes astonishing surgical operations which often transform a poorly made film into a good one—and sometimes reverse the order and ruin, by clumsy editing, a well-made production. A cutting room is fitted with teak benches and doors—two of the latter in case of fire. Let into the benches are frosted glass panels lit from beneath by electric globes encased in heavy glass to prevent heat reaching the film. On each side of a panel are rewinders—circular metal discs turned by hand, upon which rolls of film are wound to and fro whilst the scenes are studied over the lit glass, probably with the aid of a magnifying glass. It is here the lengths of film, both picture and sound track are joined and rejoined with a transparent liquid called film cement which smells like pear drops and makes your eyes water. The two ends to be joined are gripped in a heavy clamp for a few moments. The editor works with positive only, leaving the negative in laboratory vaults until the positive version has been finally cut and approved. Then, and only then, is the negative cut to match the positive, so that an unlimited number of positive prints can be made from it.

The Editola is indispensable to an editor because it offers the only method of running a film either forwards or backwards, and of stopping it at any required frame. It shows a picture a few inches square, and reproduces the sound through a built-in speaker. By this means, action can be started and stopped at will, and exact points for cutting decided upon. An ordinary film projector cannot be stopped, of course. Throughout the making of a film, the picture film and its corresponding sound track are quite separate, and remain so until their respective negatives are merged for the making of combined prints, picture and track on the same film—the form which reaches the cinema. The reason they are separate becomes obvious when one learns they were taken by two entirely separate instruments—the picture camera, and the recording camera—both being driven from the same source of power at an identical speed, which explains how they synchronise, even though separate.

In the next article I will describe how the editor creates a unity out of hundreds of lengths of film, and also how, by skilful cutting, tempo is controlled, and, when necessary, completely changed.
FOCUS

FILM REVIEWS

By Our Panel of Priests


This is almost a "cautionary" film. It portrays with much skill the grip that gambling can have on a pleasant, though weak, woman. Her gambling breaks up a happy marriage and leads to degradation and despair. We make a resolution never to visit Las Vegas, but if business takes us there, well then, never to enter the gaming houses no matter how attractive they appear. It is not quite fair to say so, but it is faintly reminiscent of an incident in one of W. W. Jacob's stories, in which the vicar has been inconvenienced by a party of drunks on Saturday night and so the next morning preaches a mighty sermon on the horrors of drink to a lot of children "wot hadn't had none", and to women "wot couldn't get none". I feel sure, however, that his audience didn't feel that it was wasted time, and so too with this film.

Surely it was a mistake to give us in the beginning the last, or rather the penultimate, scene of the drama. The film would have been better, and this applies to many other films as well, if it had begun at the beginning and carried on from there. As it is we get a harrowing feeling of inevitability as we watch her "Eric, or little by little" progress. God does not give us a glimpse of our final state, why must films presume to know better? That is but a rhetorical question. It is quite evident, even in this film, that a film producer can always improve on life, both in his topsy turvey treatment of it and in its final outcome. Thus it was considered necessary to give the story some sort of happy ending, and so in an unaccountable way it is suggested that the lady's gambling is due to the possessive influence of an elder sister. With a realisation of this undesirable influence coming after a beating up, Barbara manages to snap out of her gambling habits; at least we presume so, because she watches the dawn break in the arms of her long suffering husband (Robert Preston). We all like happy endings, but would it not have been better to truer to life if this could have been achieved by a stern moral effort on the part of the lady herself—or failing this, as a beneficial effect of the beating up?

I do not want to appear harsh with this film for in many ways it is impressive. The trouble is that with a little more care it could have been so much more successful, even in its popular appeal. It is impressive not merely by reason of its acting and screenplay, but even more so by its realistic portrayal of a woman who, through frailty rather than malice, falls into vice whilst knowing quite clearly that in so doing she is causing unhappiness both for herself and for others.

Barbara Stanwyck is an attractive actress and she holds our sympathy throughout. Robert Preston, I thought, was inclined to over-act at times. Stephen McNally, in a prominent part as the owner of a gaming club, has great poise and acquitted himself admirably.

It is a clean, good picture, a little frightening at times but worth seeing.

T.
Sorrowful Jones. Starring:
Bob Hope and Lucille Ball and
introducing Mary Jane Saunders.
A Paramount Picture. A Damon
Runyon Story. Certificate: U.
Category: C. Running time:
88 minutes.

This comedy will not take London or
anywhere else by storm. No one will
say to you: "You really must see Bob
Hope in Sorrowful Jones!" But should
you happen to go, not hoping too much
from Hope, you will get enough amuse-
ment to justify the price of an
inexpensive seat.

Bob is a bookie. Not that there
is anything incompatible in that.
But Bob sorrowful! Yes, sorrowful by
name and nature, living for dough and
getting plenty of it by hook and by
crook (but mostly by crook), and
parting with not a dime of it, mouldy
mean to the marrow—that is the
incongruous rôle of Bob which promises
so well, but is marred in the end by
an over-dose of sentiment.

By force of strange circumstances he
has to take under his wing a wee
orphan girl of four (Mary Jane
Saunders), and that is the beginning
of his reformation—a humanising process
which is amusing to watch. See him
put the child to bed, conduct night
prayers, sing her to sleep. (Shed a
tear, for sticky sentiment is here.) See
him soften with Gladys (Lucille Ball),
who proves so helpful in dealing with
the child and induces Bob to generous
acts which go against his nature, even
to the extent of buying for thechild,
at a fabulous price, the race horse,
"Dreamy Joe", a dead-cert winner.
Could the end be so obvious that he
marries Gladys so that he and she may
be the foster parents of the child? It
could. Could it be that "Sorrowful
Jones" becomes in the end "Jenorous
Jones", the perfect husband and father?
'Tis so.

Those who hear Gladys sing will say
what Bob did, "You've been taking
singing lessons—but not enough!" and
will be glad she tries it only once. If
you are what Bob describes as a "High-
minded guy who thinks gambling is a
sport", you will learn that it is nothing
of the sort. If you are interested in
phonetics, Miss Saunders' accent is a
case, but anyway you will miss half of
what she says. But if you are interested
in the balancing of the budget, you will
ask how many, and why so many, or
any, American dollars should be spent
in bringing the film to this country.

G.

Maytime in Mayfair. Starring:
Anna Neagle, Michael Wilding.

I suppose it is true to say that, in a
certain sense, our minds follow the
rhythm of our bodies. There are
times when brother body needs a good
solid meal (when he sighs in vain, for
some chops and steaks); there are times
when he just wants to nibble, other
times when he is so jaded that all he
needs is something very light, and
mother philosophises and says: a little
bit of what you fancy will do you all
the good in the world, my boy.

I would say that Maytime in Mayfair
fits in with the (mental) a little bit of
what you fancy my boy mood. It is
light and bright and without substance,
and showy and colourful and Anna
Neagle looks superficially lovely in the
multitude of dresses she wears, and
Wilding gets into awkward positions
and makes you laugh, and he and Anna
dance admirably and some stale jokes
are cracked, but you don't mind a bit
for no one is trying to be clever, and
you even are tolerant to Tom Walls
who, God bless us and save us and save
ould Ireland, assumes a brogue which
doesn't come off and which sounds like a
man from Birmingham talking like a
Welshman; the whole thing is so
obviously meant to be gay and light-
hearted, a mental pick-me-up, that only
the sort of fellow who reads Plato
in his breakfast or fasts on feastdays would
complain that he didn't get his money's
worth.

Ice cream merchants and pastry
cooks add their quota to man's physical
well being; in the same way film
producers who provide light mental
refreshment are also friends of the
human race.

E.

P.S.—All the same, Maytime in
Mayfair is not a patch on Springtime
in Park Lane.
I am afraid I found this film quite revolting, and ever since I have been trying to find the reason. Theft, abduction, sadism and murder are elements that appear again and again in tragedies which move us to tears or pity rather than to disgust. Othello, Macbeth, Rigoletto or Tosca, to name only a few, do not make me angry as this thing has done.

That a man should do something which ends in catastrophe is not in itself tragic. The daily press is full of such deeds; and they move us, at least in the way that a tragedy moves us, not at all. For that, we must know the man behind the deed. Then the act takes on a new significance, and the catastrophe, linked now to the man, and not merely to the deed, begins to have an impact upon me. And the great tragedies have this capacity to move us because we are shown the strength and weakness of these people, and so can watch with terror and pity as they move towards the acts which bring them to their doom.

But this story has no more relation to tragedy than has a snippet in the sensational press. Those who made it have taken some types known as Gangsters and made them behave in the way that Gangsters are supposed to do. As if a Gangster were something inevitable, like a cauliflower or a bluebell and not a human person like you or me, who by some awful means has become misshapen and ugly. Hence the revolting things that these people do have been presented to us without rhyme or reason, save to awaken a sensation, for box office reasons.

According to the Press hand-out: "They played it . . . with BULLETS!" Well, let them if they must—but not, please, to the readers of Focus.

W.

Daydreaming, they say, is wasteful of time and harmful to one's character. In large measure this is true since it is an escape from reality and panders to self-conceit. In our imaginings we stop the runaway horse amid thunderous applause or we are triumphantly vindicated on a murder charge. But this much I think may be said in defence, that many worth-while stories and plays, not to mention more important events, have found their genesis in these idle dreams.

I have little doubt that the basic story of this film of some woman who was considering her ideal lover, and the means best by which she could catch him. The theme is manhandled and becomes that even the best of men may be weak enough to fall in love. But it remains a woman's film and will give the ladies much satisfaction. The men, identifying themselves with the victim, will consider themselves well represented by Cary Grant and will rejoice in his gallantry and acumen, even though the scales are weighted against him. Betsy Drake, a newcomer, does well as the determined young lady, and Franchot Tone makes quite an attractive wolf.

There is one false note in psychology which, though slight, I mention because it has been played so often before. Cary Grant, a doctor, is giving a lecture on babies to an audience of women who are evidently well pleased with what he has to say. He concludes by making the point that a baby is an individual as much as its parents and thus it is wrong either to be harsh with it or to pamper it, since this will destroy its power of initiative. He asks for questions and Betsy Drake makes a tirade about the unfairness of not allowing women to propose to men. A normal audience of women, or of anybody else for that matter, would not allow a questioner to carry on in that
way; still less would they so easily rise up in general support. The situation is too obviously artificial and thus offends, however mildly, against our sympathy. It is not a great film, but it can be commended as a pleasant and entertaining piece of daydreaming.

T.


Film production does not yet form part of the curriculum at any of our universities: perhaps when it does some bright student will write a Doctorate thesis on the choosing of titles. The title of this film might mean anything at all: in fact the film is one of the best comedies we have seen for a very long time. Sent out as a sort of second feature by Mr. Rank, and without a proper Press Show, with little or no ballyhoo and a very modest "blurb", it succeeds in making one laugh long and loudly, which, after all, is the raison d'etre of of this kind of film.

The story is simply an excuse for introducing the maximum number of ridiculous situations. A professor constructs a mechanical woman, "Olga", using as a model his pretty niece Penelope (Patricia Roc). To prove to his scientific colleagues that Olga is indistinguishable from a living woman, he engages Roger Cavendish (Nigel Patrick) to take her out. Roger, through the machinations of his valet Ramshead (Stanley Holloway), eventually finds himself having supper in the bridal suite of a West End hotel with what he imagines to be Olga, but which is really Penelope. Absurdity follows absurdity until finally a pin stuck into Olga by Roger's aunt causes her to short-circuit, and disappear in a cloud of smoke belching from all her joints.

The main burden of action falls on Nigel Patrick and Stanley Holloway. The former gives a good performance as the public-school type of silly-ass, while the latter is perfect as the valet who gets out of difficult situations by saying he is only the valet after all. Patricia Roc is attractive and amusing as the pretty girl pretending to be a robot. The supporting characters are all of a high standard, especially the professor (Miles Malleson), the hotel manager (Fred Berger) and the waiter (David Hurst).

Many of the situations could have been made thoroughly objectionable and it is to the credit of all concerned that it is not so: it is true that there are a few vulgarities, but these have the saving grace of being extremely funny. This is good entertainment and well worth seeing.

Mc.


I wouldn't call this film about the Borgias

Exactly gorgeous,
Even though Lucretia
Doesn't actually say, "Pleased to meet yer"

It is, in fact, an example of the unhappy mean. It is not good enough to take seriously, not bad enough to laugh out of court. There is too much epithalamic suggestion for me to give it a clean bill, yet, provided one bears in mind that the Borgias have never been regarded as a model family, it does not deserve to be described as an immoral picture.

What is most to its credit is that, considering the possibilities, it provoked so few guffaws. If the mouth opens involuntarily, this is more likely to be due to a yawn.

Q.
FOCUS


This is the sort of film that the Americans, from years of practice, do so well, with everything ship-shape and all the ends tucked away or cut off. But when you have said that, you have said everything. Yellow Sky is a typical Westerner, and the story unfolds exactly as we have been watching it for so many years. There are all the usual features: bad men, some of whom are good men in disguise, shooting, gold, Indians (they do not do anything, but you cannot have a Westerner without Indians), an old-timer with a charming grand-daughter. It ends by the good bad men shooting all the bad bad men, after which the head good bad man returns the proceeds of a bank robbery to the manager, and returns to the charming grand-daughter with the latest in ladies' hats. Actually she does not know what to do with it, because she was brought up among the Apache Indians and has therefore worn trousers from birth, but one is left with the impression that all live happily ever afterwards, making the best of a bad hat. It all suffers from a very slow tempo. Not a good film, but it would not harm a fly.

U.


Key Largo has nothing to do with Handel's well-known composition. It is the name of an island off Florida, a good hideout for an out-of-work gangster. The film is in fact a sort of hangover from the era of gangster films. It is competent enough in its way, but it takes a long time to say what wasn't really worth saying.

With Humphrey Bogart, Edward G. Robinson and a hurricane all in the same picture a certain starkness is to be expected. But what makes the film remarkable is Claire Trevor's portrayal of a drink-sodden slut, so excellent that it provokes Christian compassion.

Q.

THE INTERNATIONAL FILM REVIEW

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MAN ON THE RUN. Starring: Derek Farr and Joan Hopkins. Director: Lawrence Huntingdon. Distributors: Associated British-Pathé Ltd.

Certificate: A. Category: B.

Running time, 80 minutes.

This is a serious film, attempting with considerable success to dramatise the conditions of life of a deserter from the Army in post-war England. Peter Burdon, refused an extension of compassionate leave when his home and family are destroyed by a flying bomb, decides he has given his country enough and deserts. He works as a barman in a Cornish inn until a former corporal tries to blackmail him. Hiding in London he offers a service revolver for sale and is caught in an armed hold-up in a jeweller's shop as a result of which a policeman is killed. He is assumed to be one of the gang, and the police, obtaining his description from the jeweller, trace him to Soho. He just escapes into the flat of Jean Adams, a war-widow working as a shop-assistant. She believes his story and decides to help him. When the police are on their tracks, they take refuge in a Sussex village, when the inevitable occurs and they fall in love. Back to London, they discover the whereabouts of the gunmen who alone can clear Burdon of the murder charge. The last desperate attempt by the gunmen to elude the police takes the story to Wapping, where they are finally trapped. Burdon is taken and faces a court-martial by which, according to the official summary of the film, he is sentenced to complete his service in Germany. My impression was that he received twelve months in the "glass-house", which makes rather a difference to the point of the story and is far less encouraging to any deserters who may see the film.

Apart from that final obscurity and the difficulty of understanding how a shop girl could afford to live in a very comfortable West End flat, this is an excellent film, containing some fine photography of familiar London scenes and some good acting by Derek Farr. Joan Hopkins is always a little hard, but in this case it was an advantage in avoiding the ever-present danger of sentimentality. The part of Chief Inspector Mitchell (Edward Chapman) was well played and we are fortunately spared the spectacle of the "foolish policeman". But do all policemen walk about people's houses with their hats on, even though they are armed with a search-warrant?

There is nothing in the least objectionable about this film, and altogether it maintains the high standard we now expect from the British Film Studios.

CAUGHT. Starring: James Mason, Barbara Bel Geddes, Robert Ryan, Frank Ferguson, Curt Bois.


My joy at seeing James Mason again was turned to sorrow. Not even his vitality and considerable talent, or for that matter the quite creditable acting of the others, could save this film from futility. Even making allowance for its false view of marriage, the production was constantly at fault, emphasising unimportant details and neglecting subtleties of behaviour that alone could render the story credible.

Barbara Bel Geddes is a poor girl who marries a millionaire (Robert Ryan). But the millionaire is cruel to her, so she leaves him to take up a position as receptionist for a doctor (James Mason). The doctor alludes to her inefficiency, so we find her back with the millionaire. She finds that he is still cruel, so she returns to the doctor. She then finds that she is going to have a baby by the millionaire so she goes back to him—but why continue? In the end she is free to divorce the millionaire and marry the doctor.

The moral which I gather Hollywood wishes to stress is that money is not everything. But in case this should mislead anybody, it is careful to point out a little always helps.
THAT WONDERFUL URGE. Star-
rming: Tyrone Power, Gene
Tierney, with Reginald Gardiner
and Arleen Wheeler. Producer:
Fred Kohlmar. Director: Robert
G. Sinclair. Distributors: 20th
Century-Fox. Certificate: A.
Category: A. Running time:
82 minutes.

By a trick, Tyrone Power, playing a
journalist, gets a scoop on the real life
of a much publicised heiress (Gene
Tierney), about whose private life he
had previously written a series of
scathing articles. In revenge, she makes
him the laughing-stock of his colleagues
by pretending that he has married her.

It is a pity that this farce should play
so fast and loose with the Sacrament of
Matrimony, for it is gay, often amusing
and very well done.

There are some fine shots of mountain
scenery; and I found the background of
American life, particularly a delightful
sequence in a grocery store, most
interesting. There is a really funny
court scene, with a lovely sketch of the
Judge by Gene Lockhart; but some of
the bedroom scenes are in doubtful
taste. It is a pity to have to carp at a
film which is otherwise so entertaining.

A BOY, A GIRL AND A BIKE. Star-
rming: Honor Blackman, John
McCallum, Patrick Holt, Diana
Dors, Thora Hird, Megs Jenkins,
Leslie Dwyer, Anthony Newley,
Maurice Denham. Director: Ralph
Smart. A Gainsborough Picture.
Certificate: A. Category: C.
Running time: 91 minutes.

A well-known firm of refrigerator
manufacturers have declared that the
sales resistance of the British public to
their wares in this not-so-calorific
climate was broken down largely
owing to the screen’s power of
persuasion. The number of cozy
American households, situated for the
most part in a sub-tropical climate
which boasted these artificial freezers,
convinced the British housewife that
she, too, must similarly equip her
corridors. If this example of film
influence is repeated, we shall not be
surprised to find a rash of cycling clubs
breaking out all over the country as a
result of A Boy, A Girl and A Bike. I
must admit that after sitting through
the press show I came away feeling
distinctly saddle-sore! A pleasant,
ambling (or should I say wheeling)
story about a cycling club in the York-
shire dales and the hundred little events
that make up its season, from a script
by the Communist, Unity Theatre
writer, Ted Willis, makes a welcome
break from the complicated, sexified
films that are our customary diet.

Characters are not too well developed
or expressed, but there is some satisfac-
tory work from a number of players,
among whom I would especially
mention Megs Jenkins, Maurice
Denham, Patrick Holt, Anthony Newley
and Diana Dors. Honor Blackman, in
spite of her starring position, fails to
establish herself. John McCallum,
likewise, hardly justifies his leading
position. We have further evidence in
this film of the talent available to
British producers if only the right
scripts were forthcoming. Maurice
Denham and Megs Jenkins both have
what it needs to become first-class
comedy players.

W.

This is a funny film. But more peculiar than ha-ha. The peculiar, or at least unusual thing, is that Basil Radford and Naunton Wayne appear together in five different parts, disguised in a choice variety of moustaches and beards.

In some families there are "bleeders". Jennifer Peters has inherited another affliction; all machinery (e.g., clocks, cars, trains, aircraft, film projectors, printing presses) comes to a standstill after a quarter of an hour of her presence. The idea has possibilities, but it is worked out in a way which is obvious, laboured and unsuitable.

As a priest, I must commend the picture for its unimpeachable ethical tone. As a film critic I can only say that (apart from a gloriously preposterous scene in a train, which I really enjoyed) if there had been someone at the press show who stopped machinery after fifteen minutes, I shouldn't have minded all that much.

Q.


This film was rejected by the West End Cinemas. The Academy, the best-known of the specialist cinemas, has given it the benefit of a Press Show and a London run and I shall be surprised if the critics do not hail it as one of the outstanding films of the year. That does not mean to say that it will be popular with the general public. It is too poetic to be assimilated by audiences who are unwilling or unable to contribute to its mood.

To say it is a gangster story is not to describe it. True, its characters live and die by violent robbery, but the theme which motivates it is of the power of true love to overcome ugliness and selfishness. It has an "unhappy" ending, but it is a beautiful picture. It is one of those films which a priest finds difficult to assess critically. One's knowledge of human nature and the infinite hope of the power of grace render one unable to accept the "inevitable" badness of the characters. One is aware of so many cases where the grace of God has redeemed just such persons. "You are being asked to feel sorry for crooks and gangsters," said a critic friend of mine at the Press Show. That is true, but not because they are crooks and gangsters, but because they are human beings and it is the merit of the film that it suggests the underlying goodness which can shrink in distaste from the materialistic marriage office, where everything is "laid on", for 30 dollars, from the chiming doorbell to the hired ring: which can rejoice in the household trimmings of Christmas even while the true significance of the feast is hidden from their eyes; which can suggest the beastliness of vicious life even though it seems unable, apparently, to disentangle itself from the coils.

The tenderness of the young lovers, so innocent, in spite of their criminal surroundings, is touching. The poetic qualities of their love is beautifully suggested. Both Cathy O'Donnell and Farley Granger display great powers of tragic acting. The camera interprets the tense mood of the earlier scenes with fine point. Little touches here and there remind one of Odd Man Out, which had a similar theme. The anxiety of the young boy for security indicated by his desire to have the watch he has given the girl tell the true time: his shy present making; his disgust at the venal surroundings of the marriage office; these and a dozen others leave one with the feeling of pity and, though the story is what it is, a certain exaltation at the power which human nature has to rise superior to what is sordid, given the incentive of selflessness.

V.
Cathy O'Donnell and Farley Granger display great powers of tragic acting...


A Seminary student recently asked why there are not more films designed to provoke thought than to satisfy escapist desire. This week we have had two such films. Snake Pit was hardly entertaining, and Now Barabbas is not for those who "like a good picture". Though brilliantly produced and acted, it is too serious to be called entertainment. It is intended for those who care to consider a human problem without the satisfaction of a neat and facile resolution. Its author, William Douglas Home, served a prison sentence as a result of his refusal, during the latter stages of the war, to bomb a region of France which he knew to be invested with allied troops. He draws on his experiences to paint a picture that is surprisingly lacking in cynicism or bitterness. Indeed, beneath the austere and rigid surface of the prison discipline, he shows the underlying strata of humanity.

We meet varying types of prison inmates: thief, shoplifter, bigamist, race-track trickster, a Negro smuggler, a disgraced medical man, an Irish saboteur. There is also a man awaiting sentence of death, but building up hopes of a reprieve. There is the prison Chaplain, a pleasant and earnest Welsh Methodist parson.

If the film has any propaganda point, it is conveyed in the words with which the Cockney bigamist protests against the carrying out of the death sentence: "It ain't natural and wot ain't natural ain't right!"

The atmosphere is cleverly suggested by the careful camera work and the sombre tone of the deliberate underplaying of most of the characters. Music is used sparingly and with great effect, though I felt that, as a preliminary to the hanging (so cautiously suggested) dead silence would have been a better and more telling prelude to the prisoners' frantic tattoo, when the prison clocks begin to strike the hour for execution.

A series of superb characterisations limits praise to mere mention. William Hartnell as a tough warder; Richard Burton as the Irishman; Alec Clunes as a class-conscious warder; Leslie Dwyer as the Cockney parson. Kathleen Harrison, Beatrice Campbell and Betty Ann Davies as a trio of women of differing types, with Kathleen Harrison simply dominating the screen for the short sequence in which she appears. Cedric Hardwicke's Prison Governor is perfect. Stephen Murray as the Chaplain presents a warm, likeable parson but, unlike Hardwicke who has learned to diminish his tones and gestures to the dimensions acceptable to the camera, tends to declaim his lines and mould his gestures as if on a stage. Incidentally, a Catholic priest cannot but notice the desperate individualism of the parson when called upon to minister to a man near death. The Catholic priest depends not on himself but has Something to bring and to give which actually signifies the comfort it conveys. The man-made camaraderie of the Methodist seems so empty in comparison.

V.

It was some time before my mind established contact with this film. At first, I thought that it was going to be a phoney. I was pleased and interested when I realised that it was saying something fundamental. Whether this initial slow motion was a trick of the director to create suspense, I cannot say; if so I do not think that it was a good one, it might have caused people to walk out, which would have been a pity, for this is a film with salutary if not comfortable ideas.

Let me say at once that it is not on the side of the angels. It is about the devil and all his ugly works and romps: once it gets going properly the story is unfolded in such a direct, straightforward way that there is no doubt about its message. It reveals the objective truth that the devil is no mere figure of speech, but really does exist and that he goes around seeking whom he may devour, not always as a roaring lion, but in all sorts of disguises: here we see him as Nick Beal, the contact man, who is dressed in such fashion that I thought of the advert you see in the district railway trains, about Austin Reeds of Regent Street. He is after the soul of Joseph Foster, a district attorney who has a fine record for honesty and integrity and who runs in his spare time a club for delinquent boys. Nick Beal, alias the contact man, alias Satan, has great power and knowledge (this is theologically correct for he is a fallen angel), he knows Foster's weaknesses for women and power and sets out to get him down; he leads him up unto a high, psychological mountain and shows him all the kingdoms of political power; he estranges him from his wife and with the help of Donna Allen, Foster goes in for political intrigue and gets places, but he loses his happiness and peace of mind ... The contact man knocks Foster down, but he doesn't knock him out. Foster has a clue. He gets out of the contact man's clutches by making an open confession.

Some critics have referred to this film as being a fantasy (fantasy my foot!); others have spilled some nonsense about "it keeping alive the old worn out superstition about the existence of a devil". (The man who doesn't believe in the existence of hell and the devil is in a bad way.) I would suggest that this film would have had greater power if it had been more subtle. Do you agree that it lacks the art which conceals art? Don't you think that it was a weakness and quite silly to drag in that Salvation Army sequence? Discussion groups should find in this film food for thought. There are, as far as I can remember, no laughs in this film, but then the existence of the devil is no laughing matter.

This is a sort of modern morality film, but it is in no sense of the word a morose or morbid film. I recommend it.

E.
Fr. Perez pleads for Columbus

A "shot" of Frederic March (Christopher Columbus) outside the friary
Christopher Columbus


After the Press Show, I ran into ‘V’ who not unnaturally asked me what I thought of the film; when I said I thought it was just so-so, he passed the oft-repeated merry quip about the curate’s egg and then we got down to a discussion which ran something like this . . .

Me: It wouldn’t be just to give this film great praise and it wouldn’t be just to give it too hostile a criticism. It has its points. Something great could have been (should have been) made from such a great subject, but in my opinion it never rises out of the rut of the mediocre. It lacks inspiration . . .

V.: What don’t you like about it?

Me: Perhaps it would be fairer to say, first, what I do like about it. I think it has good pictorial value . . . the re-creation of the “Santa Maria”, the “Pinta” and the “Nina” sailing in search of the unknown is well done . . . it has its moments of pageantry . . . there is a nice rhythm about it and staginess has been avoided . . . it presents much scenic beauty, the San Salvador shots are charming.

V.: In what way would you say the film fell down?

Me: I seem to be doing all the talking.

V.: That’s as it should be, for you were assigned to review this film. I may not agree with you, but I’m interested in your point of view.

Me: That’s nice of you. It is my opinion that the creators of this film did not live long enough, spiritually and psychologically, with Columbus.

V.: I thought Frederic March gave quite a good study of Columbus . . .

Me: I would say a fair study . . . Columbus was a man of great depth of mind and soul. Frederic March’s portrayal has little semblance of authenticity. Mind you, I do say that any actor would have found it difficult to portray so great and complex a character:
navigator, explorer, scholar, poet, mystic and what not. Of course the fourth standard elementary school script didn’t help him.

V.: Surely you must admit that March portrays Columbus as a man of deep faith in God and the supernatural?

Me: I do admit that; and for that we should be grateful, particularly as Madariaga makes him out to be a Jew who was chiefly interested in power and wealth. But why did they make him die such a pagan sort of death?

V.: Why, O why, O why. What a bathos!

Me: Those fellows hanging around his death-bed looked as though they were in a vapour bath making up political pep-speeches.

V.: The sequences in the Friary . . . ?

Me: Quite good, but I didn’t see the point of sticking those whacking great wine barrels on the table; a Franciscan refectory is not laid out like a pub.

V.: That’s a very trivial point.

Me: I wonder. You know, I sometimes wonder if a multitude
of such inaccuracies give the wrong people wrong ideas about the religious life. It was the juxtaposition of things that jarred.

V.: What do you mean by the juxtaposition?
Me: The Friars regaling themselves with the good things of the table and then bringing a cup of cold water and a bit of dry bread to Columbus who was begging at the door! I doubt whether any Spaniard would offer any man water to drink. There was another juxtaposition that I didn’t like... the film says that the crew planned to mutiny after the singing of the Salve Regina. To hear those tough guys singing to Our Lady was moving. To make this lovely hymn the signal for mutiny was (to me) jarring. Anyway there wasn’t a mutiny.

V.: That’s a point of view.
Me: I think it’s the wrong point of view. There are other historical errors. It was after his second journey when he was a free man that Columbus landed in Spain wearing the Franciscan habit. Columbus was not denied a fourth voyage. The government
financed a fourth voyage for him.
V.: Pity, isn’t it, that the research department didn’t take more pains?
Me: I agree. I’d like to see some genius come along and make

a real first-class film of Christopher Columbus.
(‘V’ looks at his watch and says he must be off to keep an appointment.)
E.

As soon as Columbus landed in the New World he knelt down and thanked God.
DITTE—CHILD OF MAN

Director: Bjarne Henning-Jensen.

The Curzon, in Mayfair, is certainly London’s most comfortable cinema; which is just as well, for there one sees some of the most uncomfortable films. For the discriminating film-goer, of course, it is a matter for satisfaction that some distributors provide the possibility of seeing the outstanding foreign films. Nevertheless, some of the foreign films are so gloomy in subject and so harassing in development that only those concerned with cinema as art can be expected to appreciate them.

After Germany Zero Year, now Ditte—Child of Man. With it Denmark shows that she has not lost the art of film-making, an art of which she was once the supreme exponent. If one praises the beauty of the photography in the first place, it is not to belittle the direction or acting. There is, in fact, some strange quality of lucent magic about the Scandinavian atmosphere which enables a special depth and intimacy to be imparted to even the most commonplace exterior. It is very noticeable in this film, in which one can almost catch the tang of the salt air and the sound of the marsh reeds in the wind.

It is, however, a sad and, indeed, unpleasant story, to which only the sincerity and skill of the players imparts any joy or beauty. It is further evidence of the cold, hard, hypocritical thing that Scandinavia has made of the Reformed Religion, where, indeed, it survives at all. Ditte, an illegitimate child, who becomes Cinderella to her mother and step-brothers and sister, who serves them lovingly and tenderly, who longs for tenderness and beauty and someone to share and understand her rapture over the wonders of nature, and who, before she is herself quite out of her childhood, becomes the mother of a fatherless child. To state the story thus is to risk misinterpreting the film, which is, in fact, a detached commentary on and observation of “man’s inhumanity to man”, without the slightest suggestion that what one sees is admirable or to be imitated.

The acting of Tove Maes as Ditte is warm and charmingly innocent. The scenes with the small children are among the best child scenes I have yet witnessed on the screen. Karen Poulsen, as the old grandmother, is delightful in her dignity and assurance. There is some over-acting and theatrical mannerisms noticeable on the part of Karen Lykkehus, as the mother of Ditte, but in general, the supporting cast is magnificently sure of itself.

This film is only for adults with formed and disciplined artistic standards.

V.

A version of the "Daddy Longlegs" formula, this film moves gently forward according to plan. Evelyne Wallace (Jean Simmons) arrives at the home of Adam Black (Stewart Granger), believing him to be her father. Adam's "girl friend" (Helen Cherry) disillusioned her. After a period in a Swiss finishing school, Evelyne moves into action and displaces the "girl friend".

Stewart Granger wears a moustache for most of the film and is thus enabled to stage a come-back, as far as I am concerned, for I must admit that, for once, I found him tolerable as a screen personality, which has not been the case since Waterloo Road, his best film and worst part.

Jean Simmons remains a mystery. Can she act? I do not know. But she has charm, poise, a pleasant voice, youth, a curious kind of budding beauty and is obedient to her director. With these assets there is no knowing what she may achieve on the screen.

A supporting cast has some notable performances. William Hyde-White gives yet another of his perfectly observed vignettes. Helen Cherry, Edwin Styles and Joan Swin-stead all play convincingly and with assurance. The script is by Noel Langley.

V.

AUX YEUX DU SOUVENIR.


Good direction and photography have in this instance been wasted upon a very silly story about an Air Hostess, who prefers to throw herself away on an erotic good-for-nothing young pilot, in preference to marriage with a decent fellow who looks as if he could give her the happiness she so earnestly desires. And why? Because at the last moment she is briefed on a flight with her former lover, the plane catches fire, and they just manage to make a safe landing. So, of course, overcome by so emotional a flight, they fall into each others' arms, while the steady fellow walks sadly away. He has had a lucky escape indeed!

Well, aeroplanes in flight are lovely to look at; the heat of North Africa is very cleverly suggested, and there is plenty of excitement in the voyage of the burning plane. But such things do not redeem a story which is so silly that its only justification is its suggestive lubricity. A pity indeed, for the film began with a laugh. But the moment Michèle Morgan's face loomed up in the background, I felt we were in for something tragic. And how!

W.

"The scenes with the small children are among the best child scenes I have ever witnessed on the screen. Karen Poulser as the grandmother is delightful in her dignity"

What would you do if you thought the world was coming to an end on Tuesday next at Angelus time? The parish priest of the Irish village of Kilwarra finds that many of the parishioners he thought saintly have, like most of the sinners, something on their consciences when faced with the prospect of an early Day of Judgment. When this fails to materialise, the Canon sentences them all, himself included, to a bare-foot fast for 24 hours on the Pilgrim Mountain.

It is a comedy drama with all the usual trimmings one expects from a story about Irishmen in Ireland. Paul Vincent Carroll knows his Gaels and though he looks at them through eyes that are not always kindly, it cannot be said that he sees what is not there.

Kieron Moore is happier in this film than he was in Anna Karenina, but he does not act as well as in Man About The House. Sheila Manahan is a charmingly pretty Irish girl who shows that she can act and will doubtless excite interest in the Hollywood area. What a lot of talent there is in Ireland! If only they would make small Irish films by Irish writers and forget all about Maureen O’Hara. I am sure that just as the Abbey built up a tradition of Irish stage acting that was second to none, because they worked with Irishmen for Ireland, so Irishmen could build up a school of Irish film indigenous to the soil, which would prove acceptable to all the world where film is thought of as art.

Christine Norden is out of place in this film in more senses than one. Maire
O'Neill has one of her best parts for years. The rest of the cast sounds like a muster of the Irish Theatre. They are all pleased with themselves and rightly so. Michael Dolan as the Canon deserves a special mention for a splendid piece of character building.

_Saints and Sinners_ was not made for the West End, but it will please many who are tired of what is considered fit for the West End. I was particularly glad to hear Kieron Moore, say, after a tempting time in a hut with Christine Norden: "I like you too much and love you too little for it to be good for me". He gets out, I hope that the lesson sinks home.

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**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

Sir,
To reassure those readers of _A Q-rious Nightmare_ who have drawn embarrassing psycho-analytical conclusions, or thought that I ought to take a cup of Ovaltine before retiring, be careful not to sleep on my back, have a good holiday, etc., may I explain that the article was, of course, fiction? The points of the satire will have been less apparent to those who only go to the films rarely. But I am quite convinced that the rapier of ridicule is a more effective weapon against elements in the cinema which are open to criticism than is the heavy artillery of conventional clerical condemnation, which is apt to be disregarded by the profes-son as just so much parsons' talk.

One other thing. I really know quite well that "principle" is a noun and "principal" an adjective. I don't know how "principle parts" got into print over my initial. Perhaps it is just one of those things. Or perhaps I do need a holiday.

Yours faithfully,
Q.

_Sir,_
I have been getting your book, the Focus, for over a year now, and I think of all the film books there are at present, yours is certainly the best.

There is just one question I would like to ask you and it is: "At what age would you consider a boy or girl old enough to go to a film marked A and B"? I wonder if you would please give the age at which you would consider a girl old enough to go to a picture marked A.

Yours sincerely,
E. _McKROWN._

_Sir,_
Could you oblige me by sending the April copy of Focus? I receive copies monthly, but gave my April number to someone who showed interest as I was reading it on a bus.

I enjoy reading Focus and find it a good, reliable guide to film-choosing. I take my copies to school, where my pupils enjoy reading them and we regularly have discussions on films.

Yours sincerely,
(Miss) _K. A. Molloy._
FROM CLOISTER TO HOLLYWOOD

(Extracts from Abbot Upson's Diary)

It would appear to be a far cry from Movies to Monasteries, but my six months in the U.S.A. was spent largely with these two extremes. My close association with both extending over a period of many years, has convinced me that each in its own way has a vastly important work to do for the Catholic Church in this twentieth century. The association in my own case is accidental, but it is worthy of note that while my lectures on monasticism caused much interest in Movieland, in my visits to monasteries I often found it difficult to avoid discussions about the films.

* * *

All, except for the few who really know, think of Hollywood as an evil place made up of lapsed Catholics, of Jews and impossible people; with every marriage ending in the Divorce Courts, and film magnates, directors, producers and "stars" combining in a deliberate attempt to undermine the morals of the people. It is quite possible that some are for this end and probably if you look for this sort of thing you will surely find it. However, I have a philosophy of life that what you look for you will find. If you look for the evil in men, it is easy to find it; if you look for the good, seldom will you be disappointed in your search. I have tried to avoid the common fault of looking for evil, and it is of the good which I found in Hollywood of which I want to write, for it is known to so few.

* * *

My first impression of the Catholic Church in Los Angeles was at the Jesuit church of the Blessed Sacrament, where we said Mass for some days. There are large congregations at all the daily Masses, with an average of three thousand Communions a week. At the Paulists', a much smaller parish, I was told there were seventy thousand Communions a year. At the time of our visit about forty adults were attending an instruction class. The late archbishop, during the course of one year, blessed a Mission church every week—over fifty new centres of Catholic worship in twelve months. Many Catholics in the film world, "stars" and lesser lights, are daily communicants. This means going to a six o'clock Mass; a later one would make it impossible for them to be on the set in time, for work begins early at all the studios.

* * *

A Catholic, high up in the Twentieth Century Fox organisation, whose house we visited several times, has a charming household consisting of himself and his wife, an unmarried sister and an old mother. There were also two children, both adopted when babies, a boy and a girl of 12 and 13 years. Religion is the one thing that really matters in that home. While I was being shown round the house, I noticed on a boudoir table a beautiful statue of Our Blessed Lady. On the top of her head was a large red spot. I was curious to know why. Its owner had been on a variety stage since childhood. This statue had always stood on her dressing table, and her last act before going on to the stage each time had been to kiss the head of the statue and commit herself and her work to Our Lady. Lipstick had left its mark, to remain a constant reminder of that nightly dedication.

* * *

I met an old friend who was once a postulant at Caldey but who had come out to California on account of ill-health. For many years he has been pastor of an east-end parish. (Los Angeles has its "east end" like all great cities.) He is in charge of the Mexican section, with its poverty and
mean streets in such contrast to the rest of the city. At a recent census of his parish a thousand Catholic children were found in a small section of six blocks, completely out of touch with the Church and having no religious instruction whatever. He and his curate carry on their work in a spirit of great self-sacrifice, with their totally inadequate church and huge parish, and scarcely any contact with the life of the great city to which they belong.

In great contrast to this was the parish looked after by the Paulist Fathers where we found ourselves welcome guests for some days. Their beautiful house with its Spanish patio is the centre of much spiritual activity. A crowded church for the many Sunday Masses, and numerous cars (automobiles, of course, they are called) in the large parking ground. Film stars, and many others engaged in the work of the cinema, help to make up these large congregations. A most attractive school, built in the Spanish style, surrounds a central court ablaze with flowers and with a well in the centre.

* * *

When we visited "Warner Brothers", we had lunch with the two brothers, Harry and Jack, together with the heads of various departments who take their meal at a sort of Board of Directors table, separate from the studio restaurant.

Harry told me some interesting tales of his early life. He said he was a Polish Jew who had been brought to the U.S.A. when he was a lad of seven years. During his schooldays, he had been sent for short periods to various denominational schools, two months at a Catholic school, and to the Methodists, etc., in order that he might get some idea of the mentality produced by the different religions. He was eventually apprenticed to a shoemaker. He did not like his job, but his father kept him at it, telling him that it was in order that he should train himself to concentrate on work, so that he would always aim at and produce the best of which he was capable, regardless of the kind of work that would eventually come his way.

Jack tried to make out a case for the production of the gangster films for which they are famous. "By producing these films, and bringing the danger to the attention of the General public, the Government was compelled to act in the matter!"

* * *

We lunched with Sam Goldwyn in his private suite at the studio. A most attractive personality, surprisingly different from all that one had heard about him, and I much enjoyed our conversation during the long time he had kept free for our visit. He spoke of his love for England and of the debt he owes her on account of the friendly hospitality he received when he came to our country as a young man, before eventually going to the United States. During our talk he made a statement which many of my readers will find as hard to believe as I did at the time. "During the many years in which I have been producing films," he said, "I have never had to delete a single line of dialogue, or make a cut in any picture I have made, in order to satisfy the Production Code or the Legion of Decency. I have always aimed at producing films to which the family could go, and which should reach the highest standard of artistic merit attainable." The first part of this statement seemed to be so unusual in the film world that I afterwards made a point of getting it verified by several who were in a position to do so. I did this in order that I might be able to quote his words without fear of having misunderstood him.

His sense of artistic values is of a high order; of his business capacity it is unnecessary to speak. I was happy to find these so intimately associated in the person of Mr. Sam Goldwyn.

* * *

Mr. Allen, in association with Colonel William Gordon of Universal Studios, were able to arrange for the showing of my film in a large private cinema attached to and by the kindness of R.K.O. Studios. A long telegram of invitation was sent out, signed by Louella Parsons, Loretta Young, Ruth Hussey and Pat O'Brien, and I had an audience of about seventy for my lecture on the conversion of the monks of Caidey, and for the kodachrome film
of our community life. While the audience was assembling, I nearly panicked at the thought of my temerity in showing this amateur film to such an audience in the home of the films! But this soon passed away when I found extreme interest being shown by my audience. The film—"Abbey Builders of the XXth Century"—which shows a genuine picture of monastic life—a thing rather rare in Hollywood—received much praise, and afterwards my audience pried me with questions for about half an hour, instead of hurriedly dispersing as I had expected! I had also the experience of showing the film to a small group of specialists in the private cinema at the Fox Studios, when three producers were amongst my audience.

* * *

Just before leaving Los Angeles, Louella Parsons, the noted woman columnist of the U.S.A., arranged one of her famous tea parties in order that I might meet some of the Catholics of Hollywood. Irene Dunne was there, also Maureen O'Sullivan, Loretta Young, and their husbands. It was a very friendly meeting, the only disappointment being that Louella Parsons had expected me to show my film to her friends but it was discovered too late that her private cinema was fitted only for 35 mm. films, the professional size, and there was no 16 mm. projector available.

* * *

An unexpected meeting with Mr. J. Arthur Rank just before leaving England had opened up the way to this pilgrimage through Film-land. On arriving in New York I found awaiting me an invitation to call on Mr. Jock Laurence, the Vice-President of the Rank Organisation in the U.S.A. I cannot speak too highly of the courtesy and help which I received from him and from his staff while I was in New York. I was made to feel that I was really doing a kindness by asking advice and help with regard to my tour of the States. It was due chiefly to Jock Laurence's letters to Hollywood on my behalf that I received invitations from all the important studios there.

**SOME FILMS REVIEWED**

NOTE. Inclusion in this list does not connote positive recommendation. Films that are positively harmful are not included here. Readers are reminded to refer to the full reviews when assessing a film.

**Category A**, indicates adults only; B, adults and adolescents; C, family audiences; D, particularly for children.

**REVIEWED IN "FOCUS"** (Vol. II, Nos. 5 and 6)

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**WE RECOMMEND**

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<td>Visitation</td>
<td>(B) (134)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winslow Boy, The</td>
<td>(B) (248)</td>
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The O.C.I.C. General Council Meeting

A full programme is before the delegates of the General Council of the International Catholic Cinema Office, which meets in London in July. The venue is the Newman International Centre, 31 Portman Square, W.1.

The main subject to be discussed is the relationship which it is desired should exist between the O.C.I.C. and the Cinema Industry. In addition, it is hoped to formulate the details of a true Apostolate of the Cinema in which, by means of an association of prayer, we may be assured of the spiritual co-operation of all those who realise the power of the Cinema in the world of today. It is time that the art of film had a Patron Saint, to whose special interest the votaries of the Seventh Art may dedicate their prayers. Maybe the Holy Father will graciously nominate one of the Church Triumphant to be the Patron of those working for the betterment of films.

The Prémiere of "Crucifers to Walsingham"

Though the courtesy of J. Arthur Rank, Esq., Crucifers to Walsingham will have its premiere at the Tatler Theatre, Charing Cross Road, London, W.C.1., on Tuesday, July 19th, at 8 p.m. It will be presented to the General Council of the O.C.I.C. and other distinguished visitors. Members of the C.F.S. will be invited. The evening will be devoted to a propaganda effort on behalf of the Catholic Film Society and the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham. Admission will be by invitation only and as the Tatler Theatre is not a large one, it will not be possible to invite all those whom we would wish to see present. There will be other showings of the film, at which we hope for the enthusiastic support of all our friends.

Summer Film Conference

Plans are maturing for the Summer Film Conference, to be held at the Toynbee Hall, London, E.1, September 8th-11th inclusive. We shall publish details of the speakers and subjects in our next issue. Please keep the dates free.

International Film Review

The new quarterly organ of the International Catholic Cinema Office is receiving high praise from many different directions. Despite difficulties inherent in foreign publication and international editing, the current issue, dealing mainly with the French cinema, is well up to the high standard set by the first number. An Editorial by Cardinal Suhard (whose death is announced as we go to press: may he rest in peace) gives great encouragement to all those working for a better cinema and stresses the essentially constructive note of all proper Catholic film action. There are contributions from Pierre Fresnay, Pierre Blanchard, Georges Rollin (who plays the part of the Curé d'Arts, in Sorciere du Ciel), Maurice Cloche and a host of other well-known French writers interested in the cinema.

Members of the Catholic Film Society, who take the cinema seriously, cannot afford to be without the guidance and stimulation which the International Film Review provides.

Volunteers Forward

People sometimes ask: "How is the C.F.S. doing?" They mean, is it making lots of money. Those who carefully read the Editor's page in the June issue of Focus will realise that affluence is far from us. We are a voluntary organisation. Most Catholic Action groups are. But unlike some other groups, the most essential part of our service must be voluntary. There may come a time when Focus and the films we distribute are numerous enough to enable us to have a properly paid staff. In the meantime we have to depend on a number of valiant helpers for menial jobs like envelope addressing, filing, etc. These valiants move from the London district from time to time and we find our-
selves under the necessity of asking for further victims to sacrifice themselves. People willing to undertake the onerous and unrewarding task of indexing films, reviews, etc., would do us a tremendous service. We simply cannot afford the time from our day by day duties to see to this necessary business. One stalwart priest sends in a regular index of Focus reviews, but we need the whole of the back numbers of Catholic Film News to be indexed. What offers?

**Joan of Arc**

It is all to the good when serious reviews, such as The Month, devote space to considerations about the cinema. We are delighted to observe that the May issue has an article about Joan of Arc written by Father Paul Doncoeur, the French Jesuit, who undertook to help the production with his monumental research into the life of St. Joan of Arc. His article is entitled "Joan of Arc in Fact and Film", and though he does not spare criticism of the publicity methods customary with American film people, he concludes: "I think this great film will cause one of the most moving figures in all history to be known all round the world with respect and honour".

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**THE DIVINE TRAGEDY**

**The Prospects of an Outstanding Initiative**

For several years, now, there have been smatterings of news about the proposal to make a film on the Passion of Christ to be undertaken by an internationally-financed group, with the object of placing on the screen an authentic film of the Divine Tragedy, as a supreme gesture in the cause of world peace.

Recent comments on the project which have seen the light in the English Press, Catholic and daily, have not been altogether accurate.

It was, therefore, with something like a shock of gratification that I recognised the distinguished-looking figure of Abel Gance coming towards our little office a few weeks ago. Abel Gance is one of the names that would have to be mentioned if one were restricted to a list of the five most important names in the history of film. He it is who has initiated the project for a film on the Passion of Christ, to the study of which he has devoted many years, and which has become with him a major missionary effort. For he conceives that the film has a task commensurate with the building of the ancient cathedrals in bringing before the world the knowledge and need of the Saviour. "This film," he says, "has no other aim but to help the unhappy ones of earth to take, with eyes uplifted, the first steps along the way that leads up towards heaven".

In a further paragraph he adds: "It is our mission, the mission of transfiguration that pertains to our Art, to brandish, at the tragic cross-roads of world history in 1949, in the midst of the present tempest, the great Winding Sheet of Christ like an oriflame, as a religious standard on which must be inscribed in symbols of fire, His Passion and His Holocaust."

Such an enterprise, of course, involves a tremendous amount of preparation, both financial, documentary and commercial. The question of distribution, for example, presents an enormous problem. Then there is the problem of cast, of technicians, of locale. It is clear that the person to interpret the Figure of Christ must be selected with the utmost care and delicacy. There is also the difficulty, in such a country as ours, of securing the right kind of distribution. The commercial cinemas do not as a rule, allow the presentation of the Person of Christ on the screen. Yet unless the film can secure the widest possible commercial distribution, it could hardly hope to reimburse the very considerable expense which it must entail. As in the case of Monsieur Vincent, M. Georges de la Grandiere, President of
the Office Familial de Documentation Artistique, is making himself responsible for the organisation of the financial backing and subscriptions have been solicited and obtained from numerous countries other than France.

The approval of the various religious denominations outside the Catholic Church has been secured. The Chief Pastors of the Swiss, the French and other Protestant organisations have given their support to the project. Theologians of repute have examined the script and expressed satisfaction. The President of the O.C.I.C. has accorded the support of this influential body; Mgr. Prosperini, on behalf of the Pontifical Commission for Religious and Doctrinal Films has expressed the approval of this newly erected Vatican Commission.

It is hoped to secure the backing of all religious denominations which recognise the importance of the subject and the medium. A letter from the Secretary General of O.C.I.C. tells me that in America Mgr. Sheen has given his full support to the project, and that March of Time, Time and Life, all components of an influential organ of publicity, have promised their support.

Abel Gance told me of the latest plans for the film. It was at one time intended to choose a Greek priest to play the part of Christ. This has now been abandoned and a French university professor has been tested for the part. It is proposed that he should be completely anonymous, never again to be seen on the screen. I was shown some stills of the person in question and must admit that he manifested the most satisfactory characteristics for the part. He is a man of deep spiritual qualities and has spent three months in a monastery attempting to penetrate himself with the requisite spirit of prayer, in order to enable him to cope with the enormous responsibility he is being asked to accept. I have some pictures of him in my possession, but as Abel Gance and his colleagues do not wish to indulge in any of the ordinary methods of publicity for this film, they have asked me not to publish them. However, it will be an honour and a privilege for the Catholic Film Society to do anything in its power to forward this most ambitious and praiseworthy scheme and if anyone wishes to know more about it, we shall be pleased to provide what information we have.

To begin with, we have pleasure in offering to our readers the translation of a prayer which has been composed by Father Flippo, S.J., for the convenience of those who wish to aid the production of this film by their prayers.

"O God, Who willest that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the Truth, infuse with Thy Spirit, we beseech Thee, the hearts of all those who share in presenting to the world the life and death of Thy Divine Son by the medium of film in The Divine Tragedy.

"Grant them to be Thy faithful messengers and to spread by their work and gestures the authentic testimony of Thy Word—Thy Life.

"May Thy Divine Tragedy, through their instrumentality, be re-enacted before our eyes in this unhappy world, so sorely in need of Thy Light and Thy Peace; may their film reveal Thy love as the conqueror of every heart; by it may all peoples come to know how Thou art truly God and Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Whom Thou hast sent, Our Saviour."

J. A. V. B.

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**PENNY A DAY FOR 240 DAYS' FUND**

IF one fourth of the Catholic population in England and Scotland contributed a penny a day for 240 days The Catholic Film Society in England would be able to set up a production unit.

It was the pennies of the Catholic population in France which made possible the making of the film Monsieur Vincent.

Kindly send donation to:

MAKING INDIVIDUAL FILMSTRIPS

By M. Long, B.A., Lecturer in Geography, University of London
Institute of Education

The increasing use of filmstrip as a tool of teaching craft is evident recognition of the value of this relatively new visual aid. The material available in the commercial filmstrip, however, should not dominate the lesson any more than the content of the text-book should dominate the syllabus. Commercial filmstrip, often with excellent material in both pictures and teaching notes, is easy to obtain and almost dangerously easy to use. Teaching is a craft animated and inspired by originality; the master craftsman is not readily satisfied with the readymade.

A growing number of schools, colleges and other educational institutions is proving the advantages of filmstrip. Filmstrip projectors are comparatively cheap, exceptionally simple to work, with the minimum possibility of any technical hitch. Filmstrip itself is easy to store, to use and to keep. It does not get damaged as easily as pictures constantly pinned up or stored in overcrowded drawers or cupboards. The disadvantage of the commercial strip is that the material has been selected by someone other than the teacher who is to use it. The lazy or misunderstanding teacher is inclined to present the complete strip as it stands, perhaps even in one lesson. The strip then becomes a series of illustrations which serve only to confuse the child. The competent teacher will select the six to twelve frames which he feels he can most usefully adapt for his lesson. Even with thirty or forty frames to choose from he is in some sense restricted in his lesson material by the content of the strip. Selection also frequently involves "flicking back" or "turning past" which wastes valuable seconds and distracts the class.

The preparation of filmstrip from material the user has himself collected, arranged and planned is the satisfying solution. He can then use the data which gives him personally optimum teaching results. He will know each frame intimately, needing no notes. He can incorporate graphs, diagrams, maps to use when board space and time are limited, if available. The creation of original filmstrip designed according to the ideas of the user stimulates dynamic teaching and enthusiasm of approach.

Since most filmstrip is composed mainly of pictures, it follows that the selection of pictorial material is the vital part of filmstrip preparation. Pictures are not normally meant for use as illustrations, but as the essential material of teaching for use by the children themselves. It is essential, therefore, that the teacher should be able to use the picture for questioning. It should give evidence of at least one main point—more if possible—concentrating towards the solution of the problem which is the theme of the lesson in hand. It should stimulate the natural curiosity of the child. It is vital that the picture selected should be part of the lesson data with which the children work. Since the picture is to be studied by the pupils, it is likewise essential that it should be visible to them. The image, when projected, should be as recognisable by the back row as by the front. This means that the picture should be photographically impeccable. Not everyone is capable of judging perfect photographic technique, however. The aim, therefore, should be for clarity. Details needed must be seen; obscurity is frustrating to both teacher and child. Photographs taken from unusual angles normally confuse rather than clarify.

These points summarise the essentials of picture selection for any subject. It must also be stressed that it is generally held, and further scientific experiments are being conducted to prove, that children remember more easily what they have seen in pictures. If this is true we must be particularly careful to leave the child with the correct impression. Thus the picture should in general be of the normal and typical, the usual rather than the unique. This does not presuppose that it should be dull or uninteresting.

The collection of pictures fulfilling the necessary conditions is not difficult.
Most teachers already have large stocks accumulated from magazines, journals, pictorial sheets, educational publications, advertisements, pamphlets, postcards, newspaper reprints and private photographs. Some societies and associations publish lists of available material. The problem is frequently what to omit. Normally six or eight pictures are sufficient for any one lesson, but as some firms making filmstrip charge on a not-less-than-twelve basis it may be cheaper to put a series of lesson units on one strip, to be used as required. It should be noted that if copyright material is used, permission to incorporate it should be asked of the publishers unless the firm employed has copyright permissions that cover it.

The question of usefulness and clarity applies equally to diagrams and maps. The inclusion of these as an integral part of the strip has enormous potential value. Drawing an accurate map, diagram or graph on a blackboard is difficult. Large-scale drawing on paper is not always successful; writing is not always visible from any distance, and the size of the paper is itself a handicap, for storage is a problem and damage easy. On filmstrip such documents are easy to show. They can be switched on and off as desired to let the class reproduce essential points from memory, thus obviating the evils of blackboard copying. They are rapidly accessible for reference at any time with any group. Their production for inclusion in strip requires a smooth white surface; Bristol board and Indian ink are recommended. Bristol board has the advantage of greater rigidity for transit, especially as pure white paper is not readily procurable. Scraper board can be used for a white drawing on a black surface, but this requires considerable skill without offering great advantages. Do not overcrowd the diagram with detail. Lettering should be slightly larger than normal for the size of the diagram; it will then be clearer when reduced. Stencilling is recommended for this work.

When the desired material is completed and arranged, the strip can be made. The cost of making varies from sixpence to as much as two shillings per frame. A list of firms who make strip is appended; it is best to contact them individually as some require the fulfilment of various conditions as to size of picture, mounting, or quantity, while other firms stipulate little. Generally single frame strip can be produced easily from pictures and diagrams not smaller than three by two and a half inches, whilst twelve by fifteen inches is a general maximum size. Increased reduction or enlargement involves increased cost, as does colouring. Captions are not normally necessary on a personal strip. All material should be numbered carefully in the required order, and firmly backed.

It is equally possible to have filmslides made. Many projectors have an attachment for showing these two by two inch slides. The advantage of slides is that as separate units they may be placed in any order, a valuable asset especially when dealing with a generalised topic built up from a variety of specific examples. They are smaller and lighter than lantern slides, but their cost is relatively high. A filmstrip positive in a metal mount averages one shilling and ninepence, while a glass slide costs half a crown if made from a negative, and three shillings and sixpence if from a picture. It is possible, however, to produce your own slides. Filmstrip positives may be cut, masked and mounted in metal frames, or bound between glass plates. Such cover glasses cost as little as five shillings and sixpence for fifty. Ready cut, standard size masks can be bought, but plain black gummed paper can be cut to serve. Passe partout for binding is cheap and effective. Glass covers are specially recommended for natural colour film such as Kodachrome. Indeed, Kodachrome as normally processed forms ideal filmslide ready for use; if left uncut, it can be used equally successfully as filmstrip.

Economically, however, filmstrip has the advantage. It is possible to have improved new material inserted in the strip, or to cut commercial strip for inclusion. Use filmstrip as a means of recording work done by the children—a school visit, a project, a story interpreted in pictures, a local survey. Aim at a library of strips, commercial and personal, exchanging yours with those of others. But remember also that filmstrip is only one method of presenting visual material; variety of method is essential for successful teaching. Filmstrip is a successful tool
in the hands of a master; it must remain a flexible tool.

APPENDIX

**Firms making up filmstrips from material provided:**

Visual Information Service, 168a Battersea Bridge Road, S.W.11.
Newton and Co., Ltd., 72 Wigmore Street, W.1.
Blackheath Film Unit, 9 North Street, Leatherhead, Surrey.
Dufay Chromex, Rythe Works, Portsmouth Road, Thames Ditton, Surrey.
Kay, 72a Carlton Hill, St. John’s Wood, N.W.8.

**Firms making up slides from material provided:**

Flatters and Garnett, 309 Oxford Road, Manchester, 13.
Kodak, Ltd., Kingsway, W.C.2.
Newton and Co., Ltd., 72 Wigmore Street, W.1.
Blackheath Film Unit, 9 North Street, Leatherhead, Surrey.

N.B.—There will be no Educational Article in the August issue. The September number will contain reviews of films and strips for the teaching of languages.

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THE SACRIFICE WE OFFER

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COVER PERSONALITY

PAUL DUPUIS

For a film critic it is an interesting and instructive occupation to pick out and follow the career of one or other of the big names of the future. Paul Dupuis is one of those names. At least, if the principles of film art are allowed to prevail over the present regrettable tendency to cut films to a pattern designed in dollars, it can safely be predicted that Paul is marked out for fame. I make the qualifications because, from certain points of view, Paul is his own worst enemy: the reason?—he is a man of ideas and ideals, and one fears that such equipment is not much in vogue at the moment in the studios. It is a stimulating experience to talk to him. Usually with film stars one occupies oneself with somewhat sycophantic small-talk about the latest part and how much one admired it and with airy generalisations about the cinema. With Paul it is different. One starts off with an observation about films and before one knows where one is, one is being subjected to a very close and intelligent barrage of questions on a variety of subjects ranging from cinema, through religion, politics, social theology and all the way back again to the important part that film must play in shaping public opinions.

This is probably because Paul Dupuis spent much time with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation during the war and first came to England as a member of the C.B.C. attached to H.M. Forces. It was amusing, therefore, to hear him, a few weeks ago, during a B.B.C. programme, being interviewed by and in his turn, interviewing his radio colleague. He has very strong views on the subject of his native France and Canada, his country of adoption. His loyalties to this country are strong, but like every Frenchman, there is, at bottom, the attraction of La Belle France.

It was his French accent which secured for him his first British film part in Johnny Frenchman which, with Françoise Rosay, Tom Walls and Patricia Roc, he helped to make a great success. It was one of those films which introduce religious atmosphere unobtrusively and manage to convey some useful points of doctrine and practice. Perhaps you remember the part where Tom Walls, as the Sabbatarian but non-church-going Cornish fisherman remonstrates with Françoise Rosay because she is going fishing on Sunday. The Frenchwoman replies: "I was at Mass at 7 a.m. this morning, before you ever thought of getting up!"

After Johnny Frenchman there was a part in White Unicorn, followed by Against the Wind, in which he played the Belgian patriot who pretends to be a Nazi in order to help his country. It also provided him with an occasion to manifest another strong side of his character, his strong Catholic Faith; for the plot demanded the use of suicide pills by the characters in the story and Paul made many enquiries from the clergy before he would consent to play the part, for fear of giving a wrong impression to his audience.

After this came Sleeping Car to Trieste, a rather dull film but one which is taking more money at the Translux Cinema in New York than any film for 14 years, in which Dupuis had the part of the French detective who solves the mystery of the missing spy. Another film which is enjoying great popularity is Passport to Pimlico, which has broken a longstanding attendance record at the London Marble Arch Pavilion. In this, Paul Dupuis is the Duke of Burgundy, rightful lord of the street near Victoria, which has ceded from the British Empire. He has not a large part, but he plays it charmingly and with natural restraint and conviction. His next rôle is with Margaret Lockwood in Madness of Heart. If British producers are wise they will realise that they have in Paul Dupuis an actor equipped with charm, good looks, ability and that French accent which makes a Charles Boyer or a Fernand Gravey such an attraction.

But, of course, there is also needed a good story and intelligent production and that is why I fear that Paul Dupuis may be lost to the British film industry.

JOHN VINCENT.
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CATHOLICS AND THE CINEMA
By Freda Bruce Lockhart. A Reprint of The Tablet article. Price 1d.

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International Congress

The Catholic International Film Congress opened on Sunday, July 17th, with Solemn High Mass in the lovely church of St. James, Spanish Place, London, and concluded with a sherry party in the rooms of the Newman Institute, to which representatives (Catholic and non-Catholic) of all branches interested in the film industry were invited by the Catholic Film Institute of this country. One heard the music of many languages and one met producers, directors, script-writers, film critics and many friends of the Catholic Film Institute.

The Mass was sung in the presence of delegates from Luxembourg, France, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, Ireland, Chile, Italy, Malta, South America, Hungary, Egypt and Germany by Abbé Bernard of Luxembourg, President of the International Cinema Office (O.C.I.C.); Fr. Burke (General Secretary of the English Film Centre) acted as deacon, and Fr. Dewavran (General Secretary of the French Film Centre) was sub-deacon. (In passing it is interesting to record that Abbé Bernard was imprisoned in Dachau by the Nazis during the late war for making films for Christian purposes.)

The special sermon at the Mass was preached by Very Rev. Fr. Hilary Carpenter, O.P., Chairman of the Catholic Film Institute of England, who, with well carpentered sentences, traced the development of the cinema from a Christian standpoint and showed how God at sundry times has revealed Himself to the world through the medium of sight and sound. He said that to our age, God had given the mighty machine of the cinema to spread Truth, but that many of the laity were not yet aware of its possibilities and potentialities.

These Catholic International Film Congresses are necessary and useful because they discuss ways and means of using the cinema for positive purposes; because they help to co-ordinate and develop scattered ideas and because they open the gates of many friendships. As one who now has attended three such congresses I would confess that it was only after I had attended the Congress at Brussels that I really realised the power of the cinema and its intimate relation to life and religion. This Congress helped me to understand how very Catholic is the Catholic Church.

These lines are being written at the last split-second; there is just space to say: (a) The second number of the International Film Review, which will be reviewed in our next issue, is now on sale. (This dignified and interesting review should be taken by those who are interested in the work of O.C.I.C. and by those who want to know more about this organisation.) (b) Our Summer Film School will be held from September 8th until 11th in Toynbee Hall, London, and that application should be made immediately.

EDITOR.
At its simplest, the job of the film editor is to "put all the pieces together in the right order", for, as you know, scenes are filmed out of order so that all action in this or that set or location can be produced on consecutive days.

Sometimes, a film director may embrace everything needed in a particular scene by filming it with moving cameras which pick up all essential details as they glide around, leaving the editor nothing to add or take away from it. However, such "editing on the floor" as it is called, meaning that the director is mentally editing the film as he shoots is not the rule. Usually, an editor receives hundreds of takes of scenes, and varying camera angles within scenes, the majority of which are direct sound takes, with their corresponding dialogue or music tracks. In addition, he will receive a large number of incidental scenes, mostly mute, which he will insert into the aforementioned dialogue or sound scenes. For example, whenever a person is speaking, singing, or playing an instrument, others are looking and listening, and glimpses of these silent onlookers are invaluable if inserted whilst the dialogue or music is being heard, not only to bring variety to the scene, and to link us, the real audience, to the listeners on the screen, but also to take our eyes off the speaker or singer for a few moments whilst we study the reaction of the others.

Incidental scenes may also be of inanimate objects or of scenery—of anything forming the immediate environment in which the action is occurring. The insertion of such shots requires experience. By appearing a fraction too early or too late, or being a few inches too long or short, they can easily ruin the basic sound scene into which they are placed. When assembling scenes in story order the editor may find that the ends of some do not fit exactly on to the beginnings of others. Maybe there is a marked change in the position of the characters, or certain words or movements have terminated too abruptly, or take too long to commence. He needs to trim these scenes so that they merge into a whole, and frequently he has to introduce additional little scenes to cover action which does not really fit. If a scene is of a musical nature, say a pianist performing before a large audience, glimpses of the listeners have to be inserted so that the total effect is to knit together pianist, piano, listeners and ourselves, the real audience. All such editing and cutting must be timed to express the tempo and mood of the music so that there is a pictorial flow; otherwise, the frequently changing visuals would "fight the music" and destroy our enjoyment of the scene as a whole.

Dialogue or direct sound scenes, however well filmed, do tend to introduce a static result. Every possible and impossible method is adopted to overcome this fact—cameras are forever moving—countless symbolic scenes are cut into scenes, and so on, but after all it is the sound track which is the governing factor, for although one can extend or reduce visuals, dialogue and music refuse to be telescoped or lengthened like a piece of elastic.

Whilst the fictional feature film is invariably all direct sound, the factual or documentary subject is very frequently made without sound, this being added to the mute visuals later in the form of commentary and/or music. Consequently, the editor has greater freedom to create pictorial rhythm by the grouping of scenes. Whether the film deals with harvesting, fishing, printing newspapers, or surgical operations, the visuals, covering every essential process from a variety of angles, can be arranged and rearranged at will, there being no restrictions created by the sound track. This fundamental difference between direct and indirect sound is apparent on the screen to the perceptive eye. Action in the direct sound film is governed by the spoken word. In the latter type, the sound track is made to fit the action and, skilfully edited, such action can present movement in the true filmic sense of the word.
Impressions of the Belgian Film Festival

By Freda Bruce Lockhart

As a Catholic and a film critic, I found it not unreasonable to come away from ten days at Knocke-le-Zoute, with heightened hopes for a better cinema and a more Catholic cinema. Not that the films themselves provided much inspiration. Of the full-length features shown in the first week of the Festival, only the Italian Vittorio De Sica's *Ladri di Biciclette* (Bicycle Thieves) stood out. Presumably it will eventually reach this country and be reviewed in Focus. I can only say that it seemed to me as good a film as any I have seen. For story it has the immense human appeal of which the Italians apparently have the secret. Technically it could be shown as an example of what a virtuoso can do with a story of such primitive simplicity as "Man has bike stolen; tries to catch thief; steals another bike, gets caught and forgiven" and with the basic situation of the cinema: a chase. It is not my business here to try to plumb the depth of human tenderness and everyday suffering suggested by De Sica through his hero and the little son who accompanies him. But this film surely will become a classic.

Gems of the Week

For the rest, the sideshows were the most rewarding part of the Festival: the admirable discourses of Jean Gremillion and Charles Spaak in honour of the late Jacques Feyder, talks whose loyalty to Feyder's high artistic purpose lifted the film-lover's heart; the morning sessions of "Films on Art"—almost a misleading name for the valuable documentary development of short films devoted to screening great works of art, the originals of which would never be seen by more than a tiny fraction of the film public; documentary sessions; and session of "Retrospection"—revivals of ancient treasures of the cinema, with emphasis on the great masters who had lately died, Feyder, Eisenstein and Griffith.

At one of these sessions emerged the second gem of the week: another De Sica film, a comedy this time called *Un Garibaldien au Couvent*. Again he takes some of the most elementary situations or themes—a schoolgirl’s romance, the hiding of a wounded partisan, a tomboy’s ride to the rescue—and gives them the brilliance of a Mozart *Divertimento*. Although the convent background is treated frivolously, it is the affectionate frivolity of familiarity; like the scene in *Ladri di Biciclette*, where pursuit takes the hero into church, where some perhaps faintly pharisaical ladies are dispensing relief to the poor. My Italian, at least, is not adequate to detect any subtle undertones of anti-clericalism; especially in two films so admirably independent of dialogue. There was no mistaking the Catholic climate of the two Italian films or of a naive Mexican bandit romance which I found delightful. An awareness of Christian values, too, was perceptible in two Greek films, which further charmed me by their beautiful land or rather seascape and sunlit photography. No amount of studio polish can make up for naturally picturesque material.

Catholic Film Action

Off the screen one could not fail to be aware of the energy of Catholic Film Action. At every film session I attended priests were in evidence among the audience. On Sundays our typewritten
“Order of the Day” led off with details of the “Mass of the Cinema” at the Dominican church. Sitting in the Press Centre of the Festival, Fr. Leo Lunders, O.P., of the O.C.I.C., gave me details of the organisation of the Belgian Centre for Catholic Film Action, of which he is head, in three main sections: distribution, exploitation and Catholic Film Action proper. The distributing company is Filmavox, a co-operative society for exploitation embraces one hundred theatres; and the work of Catholic Action, assessing films, informing the Press and supervising educational films, is carried on by four subsidiaries: the Committee of Selection, D.O.C.I.P., C.E.D.O.C. and the Catholic Film League.

Nor could one fail to be aware of the divergence of opinion inside world Catholic Film Action, a divergence mentioned more than once in the second International Film Review, between those who believe in positive participation in the cinema and those, like the American Legion of Decency, who aim at merely negative or censorial function. My impressions from Knocke confirm the impression that in Europe as a whole, the positive attitude is favoured. As between the “positivists” who want to make Catholic films, and those who want Catholics to enter the industry proper, Fr. Lunders emphatically favoured the latter view. So I gathered did Fr. Loslever, O.P., and Fr. Paul Doncoeur, S.J., both of whom I heard preach on the cinema. Fr. Doncoeur, in a private interview, did express gratitude for the achievements of the Legion of Decency in their limited objective; but he did not repress his amusement over his own failure to persuade the Legion to waive their tabu on the word “bastard” in order to allow the Bastard of Orleans in Joan of Arc to be called by his right—and generally used—historical name. Fr. Loslever, moreover, did encourage his hearers, as part of the active interest in the cinema which he urged upon them, to boycott films listed as undesirable. But clearly that was intended only as one part of the action which both priests urged as the duty of all responsible Catholics; blaming either the public’s appetite or its apathy for what is rotten in the state of the cinema.

The Lost Sheep

Fr. Doncoeur, fresh from his advisory work in Hollywood on Joan of Arc, showed acute understanding of the filmmakers’ point of view. He even drew a touching picture of the directors and producers longing to film “great and beautiful subjects” if only the public—that is the box-office—would let them; though in private he admitted that it was a vicious circle of producer trying to feed public appetite, and appetite being whetted to demand more of the same kind of refuse.

Fr. Doncoeur’s sermon on the text of the lost sheep in the wilderness, seemed to have a particular application to the present-day films of violence and brutality; especially to those like The Set-up (or in a slightly different sense The Snake-Pit) which exploit the cruder kind of sensationalism while covering their tracks by an appearance of disapproval. Fr. Doncoeur made no protest against the films of violence and horror. On the contrary, he accepted the idea that the times were out of joint for rosy views and that artistic integrity compelled directors and writers to look upon the dark side of sin. He even appealed to them to do so; to plunge into sin, to paint sin and life as ugly as sin in truth is, provided they do so in the spirit of Christian charity toward sinners and not of exploiting and fostering false appetite for sin.

Converting the Cinema

Both priests referred in their sermons to the terrible power of the cinema as “the People’s Bible”—Fr. Loslever’s analysis of the efficacy of the image on the screen was fascinating—and urged upon Catholics the urgent duty of seeing that their Bible taught people some truth instead of lies.

Altogether I came home feeling that on the Continent the task of converting the cinema to Christianity has been begun, however late and little; and is being energetically pursued in the right understanding that no attempt to raise the moral and spiritual standard of films will be fully effective unless it accepts and uses the highest possible artistic standard.
FILM REVIEWS

By Our Panel of Priests


One presumes that Americans know their own country and that if the somewhat unattractive and harsh picture they draw in their films of the higher salary classes of the cities is accurate, so too is the very attractive version of small town life, which we sometimes see. In this film we have both, set in deliberate contrast to each other. The moral, if it is intended to be that, is rather spoilt by the fact that Walter Williams, alias Brian Donlevy, having escaped from the city and learned wisdom in the small town, returns to the old life with a small town wife-to-be. It is a rather involved story of marital infidelity leading to attempted murder. As the result of a car smash identities become mixed and the wife, well played by Helen Walker, is charged with a murder she thinks she has committed. When her husband, Walter Williams, turns up, having repented of seeking his revenge for his wife’s unfaithfulness by allowing her to be convicted of his murder, he finds himself charged with the murder of his wife’s lover, who was in fact accidentally killed in the car smash. Policeman Quincy (Charles Coburn), driven on by Marsha Peters (Ella Raines), finally solves the problem and Irene Williams is faced with a long term of imprisonment for conspiracy to murder her husband.

There is nothing unexpected about this story, as one knows that right will triumph, but it limps along badly in parts and would not suffer from a few severe cuts. The morality is modern, which means that the happy ending is achieved by divorce, so obvious and necessary in such cases that no one bothers to mention it. It is an undistinguished film with little scope for great acting, but it enjoys all the niceties of production at which the Americans excel.


Just another of those unusually humourless small-town-politics films, with political bosses who can be so ruthless however improbable the story. However, Sydney Greenstreet as the corrupt Sheriff gives a masterly performance. Vast reserves of power are well contained in his every word and act. One can’t imagine him giving an all out shrill badman performance. Poor Joan Crawford! To have made a come-back in so banal a film as this ill fulfils the promise of her “Flaming Youth”. She is a circus performer who can do her turn of a “Sultan’s favourite dancer”, a waitress and a well-groomed and well-behaved lady of prosperous Flamingo Road, without incongruity in any of her swiftly changing circumstances. Virginia Huston was convincing as the proprietor of a roadhouse.

In another medium this would be a novelette. But we don’t all read paperbacks for choice. So why should I summarise it? Seeing it is enough for anyone.

The number of films which depend on brutality for their effect is increasing again. We have had a series of boxing films of late and in each of them much has been made of the battered appearance of the "hero", and the audience has been spared little that the camera can provide in the way of close-range savagery. To one who has any knowledge of the art of boxing, such films would appear to be more a tribute to the make-up department than to the boxing coach.

Another curious aspect of such films is the de-banking fever that is now apparent. Whether it will help to decrease the amount of corruption known to exist in this and other "sports", I take leave to doubt. There is a cynical flavour about this story of a man who becomes a popular boxing idol on a false reputation for clean fighting. The theme: the man who climbs to fame on the shoulders of his friends and then abandons them, is treated in such a way that one has little admiration for any of the characters depicted and one is left with a sense of the futility of moral standards.

There is an odd little episode in which a father forces his daughter and the man she is friendly with to marry, almost at the revolver point. The "husband" then leaves his wife and later there is talk of divorce, without any hint that anybody realises that such a "marriage" would be null and void in law in any case, since it was clearly a case of force majeure. However, there is at least an attempt to safeguard the proprieties when the "husband's" brother tries to save the marriage. He accepts the "remedy" of divorce with alacrity when it is offered, but death intervenes to render this unnecessary.

Kirk Douglas gives a fiercely excellent portrayal of the champion. The rest of the cast are sufficiently new to British audiences to give the film a spice of novelty.


Possibly good for the boys, for there are technicolored splashes of adventure and excitement and LOTS of sword-play, which is so adroit and comes on so often that I wondered whether the film wasn't an excuse to display the skill and agility of Gene Kelly and Co. Between the sword-play and the horse play (a la Olympia) there hangs (loosely) a tale.


This is a pleasant film to watch; it is easy on the eye and easy on the brain; its story records, without heroics, the heroism of the men and women who worked "underground" after the fall of France. Monsieur Martin, Le Pere Tranquille, admirably played by Noel-Noel, is one of those tranquil men who love the simple and homely things of life, but reveal, when a principle is at stake, startling reserves of courage and strength. After the fall of France when the enemy occupied his land, Monsieur Martin remained (to all outward appearances) the same tranquil father: in fact, and unknown to his family, he was leading a section of the underground army and was in constant peril of death. For a long time he had to endure the contempt of his son, who believed that he had knuckled under to the Nazis.

All the people in this film (except the Nazis) are nice people to meet and they are authentic characters. The acting of Noel-Noel is something worth making an effort to see. And if you like a well-shaped piece of work, this film should please you.

This film was given the Gold Medal of the Italian Cinema Institute at Venice, 1948. It is not easy to see why. It is an attempt in the documentary style, to tell a story about the difficulties encountered in French North West Africa, both by the white administrators and the native populations. There are beautiful scenes and impressive gatherings of dusty warriors; there is a pastoral love affair between two young Africans. There is much riding and shunting and dancing, and the French are very eager to get ground-nuts grown. The photography is competent and in places enchanting but this country does this sort of thing so much better that one must be forgiven a little raising of the eyebrows.

V.


So much poetry was quoted at the Downy Pelican, the pub run by the rowing blue and poet, that as I contemplated James Robertson Justice, I found myself murmuring: “Surely that beard inveterate is real”.

But there is more than poetry afoot—the secret panel and the attempted theft of the historical relic, the mysterious visitor, the unusual housemaid, the village “in-aid-of” in the form of an Elizabethan masque. This last provides a welcome opportunity to see what some of us have hitherto enjoyed only on the radio, Joyce Grenfell as the ungraceful, semi-intellectual type of womanhood. Unfortunately the film does not sufficiently emancipate itself from the obvious. The characters and situations have for the most part a reach-me-down air.

Our reviewers are happy to experience, from time to time, the slightly bewildered friendliness of people involved in the making of pictures. If one of them were to say: “We turn out films which contain nothing whatever to offend your somewhat exacting standards of religion and ethics and still you are not satisfied; what more do you want?” I should reply: “With all kindness and goodwill, dear sir (or madam), we only ask that they should also be good cinema”.


It has been proved scientifically that the traditional prowess of the old-time cowboy of the Wild West, with his lightning draw and phenomenal accuracy with his six-shooter, is a complete misconception. The pistol barrel is too short and the kick too great to allow anything approaching accuracy. No such technical inhibitions restrain this film: men go down like nine-pins when Wes McQueen (Joel McCrea) goes into action.

This Western is like all others, full of action and excitement. Joel McCrea gives a good performance as the bad man McQueen and makes us almost like him, though we know that morally his actions are indefensible. It is a great pity that the traditional cleanliness of the Western has here been sullied by the introduction of a typical gangster’s moll, Colorado Carson (Virginia Mayo). There are suggestive situations and the way in which her garments are carefully dishevelled approaches indecency. What seems to be a Franciscan friar appears at intervals, such a caricature as to appear to be almost half-witted. The contempt for him shown by the other characters will inevitably be shared by the audience.

Apart from some good playing by Joel McCrea, there is nothing in this film which can be recommended.

Mc.
KIND HEARTS AND CORONETS.


Michael Balcon considers this film the most successful experiment that has issued from the Ealing Studios. Surely he is sadly underrating the value of much of his previous work. He says that Kind Hearts and Coronets has attempted a comedy level entirely new in our films. This is calculated to give the impression of originality. In point of fact it is strongly reminiscent of Charles Chaplin's Monsieur Verdoux, but is not nearly so well done. Chaplin, in addition to his brilliant acting and producing, managed to introduce a worthwhile note of satire. In this film there is no such element; it is merely a clever attempt to make a comedy out of a young man's determination to murder all those who stand in the way of his ambition. There is nothing particularly funny about murder. To take the edge off our normal reaction against acts of violence, the whole thing is conceived and carried out in an imitation Oscar Wilde style. This method only partially meets the difficulty and thus, although there is quite a fair ingredient of humour, it never becomes really funny.

Louis Mazzini (Dennis Price) is the son of an Italian singer and an English mother, who is the daughter of the Hon. Duke of Chalfont. The mother has been disowned by her family and since his father died of excitement at his birth, Louis is brought up in poverty. His mother impresses on

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SOME FILMS REVIEWED

NOTE. Inclusion in this list does not connote positive recommendation. Films that are positively harmful are not included here. Readers are reminded to refer to the full reviews when assessing a film.

Category A, indicates adults only; B, adults and adolescents; C, family audiences; D, particularly for children.

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Visitation (B) (134)
Winslow Boy, The (B) (248)
him his distinguished lineage, and gradually it becomes an obsession with him to inherit his birthright. He is goaded into drastic methods by the flighty behaviour of Sibella - (Joan Greenwood), for whom he has an uncertain affection. He eventually eliminates six people who stand in his way to the Dukedom and the other two relieve him of this responsibility by dying unaided. He successfully courts the dignified wife (Valerie Hobson) of one of his victims, but now that the campaign is won he meets his downfall through the treachery of Sibella and his own conceit.

Alec Guinness acts the part of eight different characters, a difficult feat that he performs very well. But apart from the uniqueness of this achievement, what else is there to commend it?

No doubt Guinness is good for you, but would it not have been better to allow other actors to show their mettle? His best piece of characterisation is that of a clergyman, though, as with the other parts, whilst succeeding in making him ludicrous he also makes him lovable and thus not really satisfactory as a victim.

The general public will not, I think, suffer any ill effects from this murder clowning, but neither will they consider it the success that Mr. Balcon seems to anticipate. The more sophisticated will doubtless derive pleasure from the technical skill and general level of acting and polish exhibited, but for the rest I think they can only class it as an interesting failure in the art of making us laugh.

T.

Alec Guinness gives eight character studies
DOWN TO THE SEA IN SHIPS.


"The game is more than the play of the game, the ship is more than the crew." So sings Kipling and thus sums up the moral of this story about an ancient and gruff disciplinarian sea-
captain, who takes his grandson to sea and declines to send out an extra boat to search for the boy when he is lost in the fog. The first mate breaks the rule, saves the boy and, after being warmly thanked by the gruff old seadog, is relieved of his post.

Such a plot gives obvious scope for that type of sentimental and emotional approach to the boy-man relationship in which Hollywood revels. This is no exception. Maybe the British are too sensitive to be able to take such displays without embarrassment; I must confess that the characters in such films always seem to me to be completely unreal.

There is plenty of clean, exciting seafaring fun. Icebergs, whale-hunting, fog and fury. Most family audiences will like it. Richard Widmark as the first mate has a change from his usual tough roles, and this will please the ladies. Lionel Barrymore runs true to type: the only change in him is the shape of his whiskers. Dean Stockwell has an opportunity to redeem a long, rather effeminate past with a pleasant and manly performance as the grandson. V.


A comedy drama built round the idea of a couple of elderly ladies, who run a marriage bureau with something of the flare for reform of the old dears in *Arsenic and Old Lace*, though with less drastic results. We meet and follow the adventures of four couples who come within their kindly orbit. There are some amusing lines and situations, but it must be confessed that the idea does not quite live up to expectations.

There is interesting and competent work from most of the cast, with specially promising performances by Zena Marshall, whose French accent is much more convincing than that of Albert Leiven (mysteriously not mentioned in the credit notes) and Carol Marsh, whom we last saw in *Brighton Rock*. She has quite a gift for comedy. Denis O'Dea, after a long run of barristers and kindly policemen, here becomes a perfect English gentleman's gentleman with conservatively socialist ideas on class distinctions. Quite a feat for an Irishman and Denis does it very well. It is a pity that Zena Marshall's French (and presumably Catholic) girl is so ready to divorce her husband, even though he is a murderer. "For better, for worse," means "for worse" as well as "for better". V.
FOCUS


A good film is one that lasts more than 80 minutes and costs much more than £50,000. According to this criterion (the standard is set by R.K.O. Radio Pictures), The Window is not a good film. It is only intended to fill up space on the screen, while the audience is waiting for the million dollar smasher about Gable and that night in June.

Take it from me: R.K.O. and anybody else who works to this formula are doing their million dollar best to prevent the cinema ever becoming an art-form worth the attention of adults above the age of our mass-produced primary school product.

The Window is a story about a boy who was so accustomed to telling tall yarns that when, in fact, he witnesses a murder being committed in the flat above, no one will believe him and he has a most exciting and uncomfortable time (and so do the audience) trying to escape from the killers who now want to silence this unexpected witness.

There are two things that make this film noteworthy. A single, simple idea, treated in a workmanlike manner by the screen-writer, Mel Dinelli; and a camera which remembers that it has but one task, namely, to put the point of view of a terrified little boy.

The boy, Bobby Driscoll, is the only actor in the film. The others are mediocre. The director, however, has so concentrated on his central character and the central idea in his film, that the other elements fall into focus in a manner which leaves them looking better and larger than they are.

It is a terrifying little film and not for jittery nerves, but it provides an interesting study for those who wish to note what a craftsman can do when presented with a neat idea and no trimmings.

V.

A terrifying film, not for jittery nerves...

I am not ashamed to own that I like the Huggett family and I wish I were able to tell you that their latest adventure is worthy of them; but by no stretch of the imagination can it be said that they have been well-treated. It is all too evident that their producer has been looking around for new worlds for them to enter, just for the sake of being different and bringing in pith helmets and sand-storms and a trek across the desert à la John Ford. They are quite out of place and it is so silly, not to say snobbish, to have them making fun of foreigners who speak with mock-French accents.

The Huggetts are more at home at Clapham or Finsbury Park or on holiday at Clacton, and they could easily convince us (and others) that they were real in their proper surroundings.

I fear that, though Petula Clark is allowed to vindicate her Girl Guide wood-craft, by proving that her screen father has wandered off the desert track, many a hard-worked and worthy Guider (and Scouter for that matter) will take the caricature of Brown Owl (by Esma Cannon) as rather below the belt.

The cast is, as usual, competent without being convincing. Perhaps they are just a bit weary of being ever Huggett.


This film opens with a plump vicar telling his congregation how to put the world right. "Selfishness," he says, "is the cause of all the trouble... if only the law of Charity was put into practice... and so on and so on..."

Sam Clayton (Gary Cooper), a departmental store manager, takes the Vicar's words to heart and what happens to a man, his wife and his family when he observes the law of Charity (Charity according to the mind of Hollywood) is the theme of this comedy, or should I say farce?

As a Comedy

As a comedy it gets across with éclat, it is well constructed, the dialogue is tight and witty, there is ease in the acting and in the rhythm of the pictures, the humour is spontaneous, although at times you get the impression that a laugh is secured any old how; for example, the Salvation Army sequences are funny, but are they in good taste? As a bit of fun, technically well produced and well acted (Gary Cooper and Ann Sheridan deserve much praise) Good Sam is a good film, but...

As a Sermon

It seems obvious that Leo Carey is using this comedy as a peg on which to hang a film sermon, for the benefit of the modern mind. As a sermon it is silly and sentimental and could do harm. I do not suggest for one moment that Leo Carey has anything but the best of intentions, but a sermon based on sentiment rather than on doctrine is often dangerous. This film sermon is told in such a way that you could come to the conclusion that living for others only brings personal and family unhappiness. We see how the Good Samaritan, Sam Clayton, becomes the prey of loafers, cadgers, liars and is exploited by all sorts of nasty selfish people; his charity for others gets on his wife's nerves and she decides to leave him (and you wouldn't blame her). Sam ends up without a shirt to his back and drowns his sorrow in several gallons of booze. True, all comes right (after a fashion!) in the end, but not in a very convincing way.

In this film Leo Carey has unwittingly (I charitably suppose) caricatured Charity. Unknowingly he has revealed the difference between Charity and philanthropy. There is a danger that some film-goers may not realise that there is all the difference between Christian Charity and social philanthropy.
"A good comedy but a sentimental sermon"

THE INTERNATIONAL FILM REVIEW

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PRIVATE ANGELO


This film is a remarkable example of a multiplicity of talents residing in a single individual. It is written, produced and directed by Peter Ustinov, who in addition dominates the whole action with his magnificent portrayal of the character of Angelo. Based on the book by Eric Linklater, the story tells of the adventures of Angelo, a private in the Italian army, during the advance of the allied armies towards Rome. Angelo is no hero: he is probably the worst soldier ever to put on uniform: his one ambition is to get as far away from danger as possible. Yet in spite of himself he is constantly being involved in all kinds of dangerous situations, from which he contrives to escape by the most ludicrous expedients. Some of the comedy is really delicious. Angelo's dismay when he realises that the "party" to which he is invited by the British officers is a war-party and not the cocktail variety: Angelo entering Rome well ahead of the Allied forces on the back of a cow: Angelo showing off before his friends by ordering about two even less warlike soldiers than himself: these are pictures that will remain in the imagination for a long time. Yet it would be a mistake to think
that this is all just simply fun and games. There is an undercurrent of seriousness and a real effort is made to show the impact of total war on the ordinary man. In spite of his cowardice and genius for doing the wrong thing, Angelo is a more real person than any of the other characters. He is moved by the pity, the futility, of it all. But it is in those more serious parts that the film seems to move less surely. There is a lack of appreciation of the fact that human sorrow and pity for others, while they do help to explain and perhaps mitigate the culpability of wrongdoing, can never justify it. Thus Lucrezia, Angelo's sweetheart, who has had a child by a British soldier, excuses herself with the argument: 'There will always be thousands of people ready to justify soldiers in their horrid trade of destroying life, but when a woman is guilty of creating life she has only herself to talk for herself'. This seems uncommonly like two wrongs making a right.

For his purposes it was necessary for Peter Ustinov to give what may be an exaggerated and overdrawn picture of characters such as Angelo and the Count Piccolo Grando and there is a danger that people may think all Italians are like that, which of course is untrue.

This is an outstanding film, both as sheer entertainment and as an example of the extraordinary versatility of the genius of Peter Ustinov.
I have been asked to write a few words about the above film and why and how it came to be made. To most Frenchmen, whether Catholic or non-Catholic, the reason is fairly understandable. While St. Vincent de Paul's fame has always been more universal, the reputation of the Cure d'Ars is essentially French and does not seem to have crossed the borders of France, outside of Catholic circles. But he is possibly better known to the ordinary folk of his native land than his very outstanding precursor and to me, an Englishman whose life was spent mostly in France, the name is quite familiar. No wonder, therefore, that, following the tremendous success of Monsieur l'Vincent, not only in France, but throughout the world, some famous French scriptwriter should have been attracted by the life of this legendary
figure, whose untiring efforts caused so many people to be converted to the Faith and whose miracles are known in the humblest French cottage. To us in England, he stands as a somewhat new personality, and our ignorance heretofore of his existence may add a touch of curiosity to his already attractive and wondrous life.

The adventure is backed

By the summer of 1948, René Jolivet, a well-known French scriptwriter, was able to produce a screenplay, after having delved into the life and studied the character of J. B. M. Vianney, by reading all the books ever written about his person, benefiting furthermore by the tremendous help afforded to him by Mgr. Trochu—an authority on the subject and the author of a number of books on the Curé d’Ars. The screenplay was submitted to a producer who persuaded four of his friends to pool their limited private resources in an attempt to produce a film. In the person of Robert Chabert, of Francinex, they found an enthusiastic distributor who immediately agreed to back their venture. A shooting-script, complete with dialogue, all of which received the approval of Mgr. Trochu, was soon available. The Centrale Catholique, in the person of the Abbé Dewavran thereupon agreed to sponsor the production and a permanent delegate was appointed to supervise the making of the film. Young and audacious Marcel Blistene—who was responsible for Françoise Rosay’s "Macadam"—was chosen to direct the picture.

Main problem

The main problem had yet to be solved: that of finding an actor with sufficient sensibility to play the part of the Curé and whose features were as near as possible to those reproduced in the well-known lithograph of J. B. M. Vianney. The producers were fortunate in finding Georges Rollin, who not only resembles the Curé d’Ars, but possessed the required qualifications of sensibility and Faith within him. It is now established that, in order to acquire the spirit of the Saint, Rollin left Paris and spent some time in solitude within the precincts of a Retreat House of the Society of Jesus. From there, he emerged, having captured the
"ambiance" which he considered indispensable for the fulfilment of the arduous task of portrayal which he had been called upon to bring to life on the screen.

Available funds being limited, as is the case with the majority of French films nowadays, the film had to be shot in 10 weeks, 3 of which were spent in the Paris Studio of the Place Clichy, the remaining 7 on location near Bandol, on the south coast of France. Starting in November 1948, the director had completed his work on schedule, by the beginning of January 1949. The editing operations were subsequently supervised by the Abbe Dewavrin, whose ceaseless efforts were much appreciated by the producers of the film.

On the whole, the film in itself is an act of Faith, as the above survey endeavours to recount, and the producers hope that this particular feature of their work will be felt coming through the powerful medium of the screen.

_____


This film, not yet available in this country, provides an excellent example for a discussion on the essential constituents of a religious film. Inevitably it invites comparison with Monsieur Vincent; as inevitably it must fail to justify such comparison with what was, when all is said and done, a unique experience in film acting.

Be it said at once that Sorcier du Ciel is an edifying and beautifully made film which deals faithfully with the main outline of the life of St. John Baptist Vianney from the time he comes to take charge of the wretched little village of Ars. The photography is outstanding, more especially the earlier scenes. The acting of Rollin as the Curé and of Alfred Adam as the atheistical blacksmith is most moving. The atmosphere of post-Revolution France is authentically and interestingly evoked.

Nevertheless, it is with some misgivings that one thinks of this film being seen by the unbeliever, the non-Catholic, be he ever so sympathetic. The reason is that the film seems so obviously made to follow the success of Monsieur Vincent. The result is that, apart from the devoted and most conscientious acting of Rollin as the Curé, one is impressed by the self-conscious efforts of the cast to be impressive.

Of all mystical experiences which the chosen souls of God can undergo, the most difficult to convey by means of visual or sensible images are those in which locutions and visions have a part. St. John Baptist Vianney was, for a great part of his life, subject to visitations by the devil. This is an historical fact vouched for by many witnesses of the phenomena which accompanied these assaults. The manner in which these are presented in Sorcier du Ciel come dangerously near to trick photography pure and simple and even with the fervent attempts of Rollin to convey a preternatural experience, end by seeming more comical than terrifying.

Since it was through the courtesy of the distributors of the film that we were able to see it in London for a private performance during the General Council Meeting of the O.C.I.C. it may seem a little lacking in gratitude to express dissatisfaction with the film. However, we are far from saying that it is bad cinema or that the intentions of those who made it were insincere or that the film is a failure. It is simply to say, what has been so often said before, that it is well-nigh impossible to convey by means of the film, the state of sanctity, still less the growth of the soul in holiness. Such an intimate experience is subject to much misunderstanding; such misgiving that a film which attempts it cannot but risk ridicule or failure.

We are sure, however, that Catholic audiences will find this film of great value as an essay in screen hagiography and it will surely have a great success in those countries where a group of Catholic cinemas is able to assure it a satisfactory distribution.

J. A. V. B.
Georges Rollin gives a sympathetic study of the Cure d'Ars
Whiskey Galore

Starring: Basil Radford and Joan Greenwood, with James Robertson Justice and Gordon Jackson.
A Michael Balcon Production.
Director: Alexander Mackendrick.
Certificate: A. Category: B.
Running time: 85 minutes.

From Scott of the Antarctic to Kind Hearts and Coronets in six months of reviewing time is no mean achievement. The Ealing Studios, under Sir Michael Balcon’s discerning administration, have the happy knack of honouring both intelligence and a sense of humour in the audiences for whom they cater. Whiskey Galore, close on the heels of Passport to Pimlico and showing the same adventurous spirit that produced Hue and Cry, is in what may safely be termed the "Ealing Tradition". It is first and foremost an excellent piece of film work. Studio sets have been reduced to a minimum and natural locations used where possible. A Mobile Studio Unit was set up on the Island of Barra, in the Outer Hebrides, and the script so prepared that exterior or interior scenes could be shot according as the weather permitted, thus reducing both the time and the cost customary with location work.

The photography is beautiful and the scenery is made to play its part in telling the story in a manner that is most absorbing. The camera is used with a sense of humour. See the lugubrious effects produced by a line of Sabbath-attired islanders gloomily surveying the wrecked ship with its load of whiskey, likely to sink at any moment, and they held back from averting so terrible a tragedy only by their devotion to the Scottish Sabbath (or would it be their fear of the meenister's denunciation?). Or see the hilarious footprints on the sand after the precious cargo has been "rescued" by the Monday morning liberators! There are a dozen joyous moments in this film which only the camera has made possible. In fact, I would be prepared to say that any foreign country possessing a sense of humour and due gratitude to the Creator for the gift of thirst, could understand and appreciate this film without the assistance of sub-titles!

The story, like all good film stories, is built round a simple idea: an island which is deprived of its ration of whiskey by the rigours of war and to which Providence sends an America-bound ship laden with an export-only cargo of the precious liquor. The English Home Guard Captain, lacking both the Scotsman's devotion to the national beverage and his cunning when faced with the need for keeping it in the family, is outwitted in his attempts to turn the stuff over to the excisemen.

The acting of everybody in the film is excellent. Joan Greenwood is charming and convincing as an island girl, with just the right Irish-sounding accent which Compton MacKenzie assures us is natural. Basil Radford is perfect as the Home Guard Captain. Gordon Jackson, Jean Cadell, James Robertson Justice and Wylie Watson give splendidly complete portraits in their various parts.

If you are one of those intelligent persons who rarely goes to the cinema, go, I beg you, to see Whiskey Galore! Like the islanders, you will ask for more. If you ask loud enough you will probably get it!

V.
DON'T EVER LEAVE ME. Star-

It is difficult to say why this film misfires. It has all the makings of a good comedy and there are many very amusing incidents in it. It is evidently not intended to be a farce, but amusement is clearly the keynote. Unfortunately between the moments of laughter one feels for the most part boredom. I think it must be due to a rather impossible story presented in an incredible manner. A work of art, even if its subject is incredible, must deal with it as if it were credible. It must be consistent throughout. But it is just no good introducing serious-looking policemen, or worried-looking young men, into a situation which is so obviously bogus. Keep the policemen out and let the young man enter into the fun of the thing. Then everyone would be happy. In America they would have used the Abbott-Costello technique for this story and got away with it.

The film deals with the adventures of a young lady, Petula Clark, who is the daughter of a Shakespearian actor. Tired of being kept at the age of 14 when she is in reality no less than 15½, she co-operates in a half-hearted attempt at kidnapping and proceeds to blackmail her kidnappers, Edward Rigby and under compulsion, Jimmy Hanley, into not sending her home, so that she can further blackmail her father into letting her grow up. It all works out in the end and her father is persuaded to use his daughter (still aged 15½) as his leading lady. That is just one of the inconsistencies. As often happens there are several well-played character parts which are only allowed to whet the appetite, but have nothing much to do with what is going on. One wonders why any attempt was made to fit them in. On the whole this film is uneconomical in every way and artistically a failure.

But it is amusing and it opens with a very attractive song by Petula called "Don't ever leave me". It seems to have nothing to do with the story and one does not hear it again, but no doubt there had to be some reason for the title of the film.

BOOK REVIEW

The Development of the Film In Educational and Social Life. By Miss Dilys Powell. Royal Society of Arts Lecture; January, 1949.

Those who admire the keen analysis of film art which Dilys Powell contributes to the Sunday Times will be glad to be introduced to this illuminating lecture on the educational implications of the cinema, published in the "Journal of the R.S.A." for January 14th, 1949. She deals with the various modifications which the cinema has brought about in social life and lays particular emphasis on the power of the film as teacher. But she has this to say: "I cannot help feeling that the film in schools has other functions than to impart the principles of, say, chemistry. If we look back at the life of the other arts—for I persist in regarding the cinema as an art—we find that they existed for themselves before they were put to alien uses. Or, rather, I should say, that they had their origin in humane and religious needs before they became didactic instruments. Man wrote poetry before he began to use language as a means of teaching algebra. The development of the cinema has been so sudden that, almost before it has established its right to existence for its own sake, we are putting it to practical uses... Let us also use it to educate in the broadest sense of the word: to prepare and equip for life and to do it through art, which is itself the distillation of life." With such sentiments we can have nothing but the warmest agreement.
How Are We To Define
A Film?

What Defines a Catholic Film?

THE DIALECTIC OF THE ART OF FILM-MAKING It appears fairly logical to ask a priest who is a member of the Venice committee to write an article on the Catholic film. But every time I am asked I cannot help feeling somewhat diffident, because this rather supposes descriptions of films full of priests and nuns, processions and crucifixes and other pious objects. To protect myself as well as my reader against any tendency to clerical bias, I shall occupy myself with a grammatical exercise, and follow it with a philosophical excursion. The one is as natural as the other, seeing that man is a social animal, and therefore grammatical too. He is by classical definition a rational animal, in other words, a philosophical animal, asking questions and knowing no rest until he has found the answer in the very essence of things.

IN DEFENCE The most extreme of the noun Catholic would not deny this simple grammatical fact, "film" is a noun, and "Catholic" only describes it. Therefore the question is, How are we to define a film simply? The second question, subordinate to this is, what defines a film as Catholic? We are not interested here in the efforts of the man who wants to produce something Catholic without knowing how to make a film. On the other hand, we are always interested in the work of a producer, who gives us a well-constructed film, full of human appeal, because, as we hope to show, he presents human problems and makes us consider them from a Catholic viewpoint. Already grammar has led us to philosophy—what is this art, specifically distinct, which we call the film.

A first superficial answer is clear. The film is a strip of celluloid which brings to life some ordinary fact, some human story, in motion and sound. Materially speaking this is enough, because it distinguishes the film from other beings. However, formally it is not enough, because it does not specify the inner and essential elements which form the very substance of the art of film-making.

A MOST COMPLETE ART A formal definition of the film will serve as a starting-point for our discussion of the dialectic or driving force of the cinema. Having grasped the definition, the reader will be able to draw the conclusions. The film as an artistic phenomenon is a union of scenes and sounds easily to be found in nature; it is an art in which exterior movement is necessarily the expression of the interior movements of the soul.

The plastic arts (photography, painting and sculpture) and music can limit themselves to formal harmony, to the beauty of colour, line or sound, excluding any expression of higher things, such as the soul or the spiritual world. (We see this clearly enough in the Impressionist or Cubist schools of art, and in the "abstract art" of Kandinsky, Ozenfant and Mondrieau.)

It is true that the cinema, too, can create formal harmonies in moving pictures and sounds, as we see in the work of Feininger, Richter and Disney in the second part of Fantasia. But there are a host of economic considerations, external and internal, which
prevent the cinema from being content with this formal harmony. The external movement, the gesture, the glance, the dialogue, are treated under certain conditions of lighting and setting to obtain a definite effect, and this creates an atmosphere which is the expression of a state of soul. The producer and actor take a series of events in which human beings are concerned, and uses them to bring out some aspect of human behaviour in circumstances that are tragic, satirical or comic. Thus we can say that the cinema is the most complete of all arts, because it orchestrates, so to speak, the whole range of nature and art, of environment and man himself, and is then the most expressive of all arts.

MUST BE HUMAN Keeping these thoughts in mind, we go on to discuss two kinds of film which pose as Catholic, but are far from it—we cannot have the adjective without the noun it claims to describe. We must lay it down as a first principle that any film which fails to be really human cannot be really Catholic. There is an outstanding example in Cecil de Mille's Sign of the Cross. It has a plot which is full of saints and martyrs, ceremonies, prayers, crosses and altars. It seems at first sight to be a true reflection of Catholic life. It tells of the heroic profession of the Faith by the early Christians in the persecution of Nero, even introducing St. Peter, and these incidentals are merely the background to a story of a young Christian girl who is loved by a Roman nobleman, the Prefect of Rome. This love is, of course, a source of temptation to her faith. However, in real fact, the whole story is a monstrosity, far away from the truth, and giving no idea whatever of the impacts on the soul of paganism or Christianity. The good-looking sport, Marcus, is only a disguised cowboy, the pale and slender Mercia is nothing but a Puritan maid from New England. Because the hero cannot obtain the object of his desires by the more usual methods, he finishes by going to death with her in the arena, so that their union might be complete in the next world at least. Could there be a more stupid misunder-

standing of conversion and martyrdom? It is at the same time a pompous insult to real cinematographic art and the Church. Such a film has no right to the name.

Vulgar superficiality and stereotyped style are other types of crimes which would deprive a film of its right to the name, and therefore of its right to be considered as a Catholic film. An over-simplification of the distinction between good and evil, virtue and vice, religion and paganism, can be used to satisfy certain practical needs of organisation or publicity, but not in the production of a piece of narrative art. There are many salacious films which are too foolish to be dubbed anti-Catholic, but there are others so conventional, so superficial, that we cannot call them Catholic. From among many films, on subjects as the Passion, the Holy Land, great saints and the Little Flower, we mention one. It was made by a Catholic society full of good intentions, but with very little knowledge of the art of film-making. Entitled La Relève, it shows us a good grandfather, a wicked grandson, a pious child, a noble parish priest, and an even more noble child martyr, who on his death-bed inspires a vocation to the priesthood in his wicked friend, just to make sure that the priestly work is carried on. It sets forth a truth in the style of the penny catechism. It tells a story like a self-satisfied preacher who cannot realise that country people are not so stupid as he thinks. But the reality of Catholic life is completely lacking among so much that is commonplace. There are no real people, no complex beings, but only pictures, all sugary, with only a vulgar pretence at anything intellectual. No emotion arises from a film which is only a bad sermon, badly illustrated.

BASIC RULE There is, therefore, a basic rule to keep before our minds always in our search for the Catholic element in film-making. The film must be true to life, varied and discriminating and in some measure human feeling must be expressed. Remembering this rule, we can classify all remaining films according as they progress from the human to the moral, from the moral to the religious, from the religious to the Catholic.
This dialectic, which is going to define the nature of the Catholic film, is valid for any plot, from the life of a saint to a gangster story, from a patriotic epic to a simple story of home life and individual experience, for a woman’s love or the love of a priest. We shall choose one example from each category, and we shall take films which deal with man’s lower nature, rather than those on specifically Catholic subjects, like the Sacraments and public worship. In this way we hope to preserve the purity of our analysis.

FROM THE DEPTH OF HUMAN FEELING TO THE FRONTIERS OF MORALITY — The Kiss of Death, one of H. A. Thaway’s recent films, has been chosen as the best film of the month of June by L’Association Bruxelloise de la Presse Cinematographique. From the first moment, a sombre setting without great display, a technical subtlety plunges us into the middle of the underworld: we see the intense anguish of a man who moves in a world of his own, always threatened by our world, personified by the police, who can pounce on him at any moment to take away the swag and his freedom. Just as he is making good his escape, the gangster is caught and imprisoned. The style is of the realist school revived by the Italians. Spiritual intensity is not created by the invention of the scenario writer, but by the throwing into relief of significant details which cause a profoundly human story to arise from very ordinary facts. In the opening scenes, which are classic cinema, the method used is simple: the ascending lift is merely photographed for a few seconds more than usual, until the impassive faces of the gangsters reflect the unbearable tension which is intensified by the tittle-tattle of the people around them and especially by the silences. As the film continues, there is the same sombre style, the same economy succeeds in drawing out the intensity of the outlaw’s traditional attitude to life, the stifled revolt against society in the refusal of the prisoner to betray his accomplices, the depth of Bianco’s proud bitterness when he learns that his wife has been driven to suicide by his chief accomplice and when he decides to avenge himself.

He is set free with this end in view and becomes the cunning informer who gains the confidence of the guilty one to put him in the hands of the police. Hathaway’s art as director is admirably served by a splendid scenario, written by the well-known Ben Hecht, who made that other masterpiece, The Scoundrel. This writer is well able to use the restrained technique of Victor Mature to create a really human character.

And now the second theme begins to fit into the melody. The deepest feelings of the human heart have been latent from the beginning of the film, but now they begin to show through. Gradually from Bianco’s love for his wife and children a force arises which, though in a way very gentle, is stronger than the fetters of crime, hate and deception. He marries his wife’s friend who is both intelligent and attractive and she makes a good mother for his first wife’s children. All his strength is now calmly devoted to a nobler ideal, protecting his loved ones from the enemy, who is trying to kill his wife and children after being acquitted through lack of proof.

The arch-criminal will have to be caught red-handed by the police. The reformed criminal sees no other way out than providing the evidence himself. And the dangerous enemy is only finally arrested after Bianco has provoked him and has been shot for his pains. Fortunately for us (but less fortunately perhaps for the logic of aesthetics) Hollywood has decided that Bianco should recover to begin a new life in peace.

This story, which could have been a simple adventure story, with revolver shots and a chase making it just another film about gangsters, has been made into a living, intensely human

This is not the place to discuss the aesthetic realism of the film, which is dealt with at the first university to lecture on the cinema, namely the Catholic University “Pro Deo” at Rome. We refer those interested to these lectures, which will shortly be published, and to an article already published in the June issue of “Bianco e Nero”, entitled La philosophie de l’Ecole neo-realiste, in which we indicate briefly the facts which lead to a philosophic synthesis.
drama, a sounding of the soul, by sheer artistry.

There is a charming scene where the gangster pays a visit to the convent where his children are being looked after by Catholic nuns. Now and again there is a hidden allusion to the sadness of evil and the happiness of good. But it needs little reflection to see that although the film is true, although it goes deep, it stops short on the mysterious borderline where a man leaves one world by abandoning certain false criteria, without being able to recognise fully the nature of the criteria of the new world he is entering.

Something quite fortuitous and really extraneous to the story, the suicide of his wife caused by his chief accomplice, leads him to revolt against the rules which keep him in his environment. It is not conversion but coldly calculated revenge, which leads him to freedom, and ultimately to happiness in a new married life. Progressively, from the break with his old ideas, a new principle arises, namely that true love must lead to total sacrifice. A force, gentle but surprisingly strong, gives a first inking of the true meaning and end of life and death. But the problem of the criterion which justifies total sacrifice, which gives good and evil their real character, which is absolute, is not posited clearly enough and is therefore left without an answer. The film is very human, but it does not get to the most fundamental problems. It is not a moral film.

There are dozens of films like this which do strike at something really deep in a particular section of human life, but for all that they do not seem to find the absolute foundation of good and evil. We shall only quote The Black Narcissus, produced by Powell and Pressburger, which is about a community of missionary nuns. Not only is no attempt made to deepen the religious atmosphere, or even to enlarge on the moral question, but all attention is directed to considering to what extent climate and isolation and the conflict of race and tradition can stretch mind and body to breaking point. Types, subjects and problems are chosen freely by the artist. We cannot impose either theme, subject or moral spirit, but at least we can tell him that he is bound to encounter moral problems, whatever subject he deals with.

**MORAL DECISION** One example to **RELIGIOUS VISION**

One example to an art of living, an artistic logic we find in the unforgettable *City Streets*, by Ruben Mamoulian. This film represents his supreme achievement before his work relapses into mere commercial production. The set-up is almost the same as in Hathaway's film.

A gangster is caught in the act and put in prison and finds a new outlook on life through the pure love of a woman who remains faithful in hardship. Mamoulian has traced out with the greatest realism the psychological figure of an embittered rebel and yet has avoided with as much rigour and honesty as Hathaway, any hint of conventionality or moralising.

But on the same theme, with the same dialectic, he discovers a deeper reality of human nature. An invisible, inaudible reality, arising for the first time in the solitude, silence and obscurity of the prison, a force deeper than love or hate, deeper than fear or the desire for revenge, deeper even than courage or despondency—conscience. More silent than silence, more real than psychological banalities, a voice whispers in the shadows—what must I do, what must I become?—I must decide, I must change. Here we are confronted with the fundamental question of every human life, a man talking to himself about what he is and how he must shape his future. (The existentialism of today, which is so followed is precisely a study of the free decisive act which makes a man what he is.)

Mamoulian's film, as far as technique and artistry are concerned, is comparable with Hathaway's, but humanly speaking, it goes deeper because it asks the fundamental question—to what end must a man freely direct his life to make it worthwhile? *City Streets* is the type of a human film which has evolved into a moral film.

Morality is the tendency which seeks explicitly the good in as much as it is clearly distinct from the evil. But man's good consists in going beyond himself, in devoting himself to an ideal greater than the human individual. The dialectic of morality consists in learning by experience that since the good demands a sacrifice of the whole man, it supposes a nobler being, a greater than man, an Infinite Being. The task
of film-making, which thus begins to verge on human limits, is a religious film even if it does not discover the nature of the Infinite.

Thus we observe a certain religious tendency implicit in many Communist films such as *The Mother*, by Poudovkin, *Life is like that*, by Junghans, *The Way of Life*, by Nikolai Ekk, etc. In all these films there is a quasi-religious motive arising from the sacrifice of individual love for the ideal, a happy future for the entire human race.

Similarly, there are Moslem, Jewish and Protestant films (e.g., another of Hathaway's films, *The Odyssey of the Mormons*) in which God's revelation inspires a total gift of self-enduring through tribulation and doubt.

To go back to the dialectic of a sinner's conversion, we shall consider a third masterpiece of analysis, *The Informer*, by John Ford. In company with a few Socialists against several bourgeois, we awarded this film the first prize at the Brussels International Film Festival in 1935. The brutal but sentimental I.R.A. man (played superbly by Victor McLaglen) betrays his best friend for £20. He goes through the whole dramatic range, drunken joy, stupid presumption, bitter anguish, hatred of self, and self-pity, arriving finally at the logical conclusion, remorse, sorrow and reparation. This kind of thing has no sense without God, the Creator and Redeemer, who will reward the good and punish the evil. This leads naturally to the wonderful final scene in which the church appears as the normal setting, indeed the necessary setting, for the peace which comes to the dying sinner when he has asked forgiveness from the mother of the betrayed friend. Even from an artistic viewpoint, this is a greater and deeper film than *The Kiss of Death* or *City Streets*. This descent into the depths of the human soul gives us a sense of dramatic force far beyond that usually achieved by the cinema; it shows God as a partner in the tragic story of human destiny.

**RELIGIOUS TO CATHOLIC** And now we come to the final question of the progress of life and art. What kind of a God is He Who abides in the depth of our most profound desires, Who plays such an important rôle in the climax of our life when our eternal destiny is being decided. Is He an indifferent God, far away in the clouds, or is He a Father Who comes to our aid in the desperate struggle against the evil which is in us and around us. The Faith is a reply which could only have been given by God; it is the revelation of the Father in Heaven, who sanctifies us with His own life, and at the hour of death delivers us from evil for ever. God for us, God in us, this is the greatest reality of human life, it is the greatest artistic theme. The Catholic film is one that succeeds in presenting this almost inexpressible principle.

Ford's *Informer*, and *Odd Man Out* by Carol Reed, both take place in Catholic Ireland and as in many other films, a priest has a small part. But these films are not specially concerned with the Faith, with grace, with God in us.

*Odd Man Out* is human but neither moral nor religious.

*The Informer* is religious but not Catholic, since it does not show the sinner coming to God by God's grace.

*Les Anges du Pêche* by Bresson (scenario by Bruckberger and Giraudoux) is one of those rare films which put on the screen a specifically Catholic view of life. It is the story of a young Catholic girl, Anne Marie, who becomes a nun and wants to save the soul of a criminal, Thérèse, whom she has come across in a visit to prison. Thérèse, who is under sentence for murder, escapes and hides in the Convent of Bethania (a congregation founded to help ex-prisoners) where Anne Marie is a novice. The criminal has nothing but hatred for her benefactress who is completely absorbed in her idea of saving Thérèse. Finally she becomes such a nuisance to her fellow-nuns and Thérèse that the Superior decides to send her away. The two main characters, and indeed all the characters, are real. The realistic details, especially the cattiness which starts strife between the old nuns and the young ones, are told with pitiless justice, so much so that they might shock some people by their over-simplification.

The atmosphere becomes almost inhuman, even diabolic. Anne Marie
FOCUS

has broken herself in mind and body to save Therèse, but as Anne Marie lies dying, Therèse sneers with hatred. At this stage the hidden God intervenes dramatically and with decision. He has been acting all along in the secret depths of the soul, beyond the ken of psychologists. The nuns are gathered round Anne Marie’s deathbed, singing the “Salve Regina”. The police arrive and the Superior gives Therèse a last chance to escape. In Therèse’s defiant laughter we can detect a change—something has happened to her soul. She stands up, appears interiorly resigned; she holds out her hands for the handcuffs and her soul is set free and is at peace. She comes back to God by the triumph of grace. In the full Catholic sense of the word, she is converted.

Non-Catholic critics have put this film, along with Monsieur Vincent, L’Appel du Silence and Maria Chapdelaine amongst the classics of the French cinema. Their judgment is both intelligent and honest, for according to all the rules of right film criticism, this is one of the most intensely moving sound pictures ever made.

These critics also recognise that truth which we Catholics hold as a precious treasure—that God can raise us to a perfection that is more than human. The Catholic film is not in a distinct category from all others. It is the most complete, the most perfect realisation of the art of film-making, showing man fighting and winning and giving a glimpse of how that victory is achieved. The Catholic film says to the man that thinks, the same words Our Lord said to the sinful Samaritan, “O, if thou didst know the gift of God”.

FR. MORLION, O.P.

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WHAT'S IN A NAME?

With this issue of Focus, the organisation which is responsible for its existence announces a new name. Henceforth we are the CATHOLIC FILM INSTITUTE. This change has been approved by our President, His Eminence Cardinal Griffin, and is the result of much deliberation on the part of the Executive Committee.

The development which the C.F.S. has undergone since the days when Father Ferdinand Valentine organised it "to teach Catholic doctrine through the medium of film", is such that the word "Society" no longer aptly describes it. To the man in the street (and more important from our point of view: the man in the studio) a Film Society is a group of amateur cineastes mainly concerned with the production and showing of "sub-standard" films. Hence, in our contacts with operatives in the film world, we have frequently had to explain that we are something more than their understanding of the word "Film Society" led them to believe.

The functions and duties of the organisation have increased considerably in number and importance. Since the publication of the Film Encyclical of Pius XI, it has become incumbent upon Catholic Action in the various countries to set up a Catholic Film Centre. Each country that has hitherto done so has adopted a title expressive of its conception of its functions. Centre, Office, Commission, Institute, Legion of Decency. These are the labels that are most in vogue, but the element that is common to all is that their main object is to promote the right use of films. Some countries restrict their activities to the moral classification of films. Others, like Holland, Germany, Austria, France, extend their practice of Catholic Film Action to include the cultural aspects of film study.

In England we aim to follow the latter course. Recognising the tremendous potentialities of films, potentialities as yet hardly explored in the region of secular education and religious teaching, we strive to encourage Catholics (and others) to furnish themselves with the necessary standards of criticism and practice to enable them to make the fullest use of the art of film.

In the past four years our evolution has been considerable. In 1945 our sole activity was the publication of Catholic Film News. (The war had put a stop to many other interesting works.) Today our activities include the organisation of conferences, lectures, film reviewing, the publication of booklets dealing with various aspects of Catholic Film Action (we have a big programme planned). We have presented or produced films like Visitation and Crucifers to Walsingham, already being shown; we are making Rome of the Pilgrims and the Fatima film, all of which augur well for our future in this direction. We are distributing Alan Turner's Sacrifice We Offer, which is having a gratifying success and we are forming a library of films, of which we can feel safe in saying that they are enhancing the reputation of Catholic Film Action.

In a word, we are something more than a Society for showing films; we are an Institute for the study and propagation of every department within the meaning of Catholic Film Action. Criticism, publication, training classes, production (theatrical and sub-standard), Conference, Film Festival, Cinema Guild: all these are our concern. Each section offers unlimited possibilities.

Be it remembered that we are still a voluntary organisation under the authority of the Hierarchy. Still depending on the support of our friends and well-wishers, we suppose that we always shall, for we do not aim at commercial competition with Wardour Street, only that Christians be taught to understand and appreciate the power for good or ill which science has placed within our grasp alongside the printing press and the radio.

There is much work to be done by all. We are the end of one stage of our development. There can be no doubt but that we have it within our
power to do much for the enlightening of mankind. The Gospel story in all its implications, remains our theme. The variations on this theme are numberless. The special quality of the cinema is that it uses light to tell its story. So we say, using the words of the Psalmist: "In thy light shall they see light".

J. A. V. B.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GOOD WISHES!

I have benefitted by the reviews in Focus and have saved myself the trouble of seeing some mediocre films as well as having seen some very good ones. May the good work continue.

L. P. Lee,
New Zealand.

---

(INFLUENCE FOR GOOD

Bishop's House,
740 View Street,
Victoria, B.C.

Major Bullock-Webster,

Dear Major,

Thank you so much for your kind thoughtfulness in forwarding me some copies of Focus, the film review. A casual perusal of the numbers is sufficient to persuade one of the excellence of the periodical and its influence for good should be tremendous. I hope to use some of the material in our Parish Bulletin.

Yours devotedly in Christ,

*JAMES M. HILL,
Bp. of Victoria.

THINGS WHICH MIGHT HAVE BEEN BETTER EXPRESSED

Sir,

"... becomes the mother of a fatherless child ..." ??? !!!!

(Focus for July, page 187.)

Biology or Codology?

ANON.

---

PRIMARY INTEREST

Sir,

May I put in a plea for keeping up the 16mm. educational section, which I see will not be present in the next issue and is sometimes taken up with (very useful) articles on projection, etc., instead of reviews. I know this is secondary work to you, but to some the reviews are the primary interest in Focus.

P. C. HASTINGS.

Sir,

I must congratulate you on the arresting format and presentation of Focus. As your correspondence must tell you, your publication is fast earning world-wide attention.

Yours,

EDITOR OF Catholic Youth and Family, South Africa.

MUDDLED

Sir,

Film critic "V"s" comments on new film Fighting Father O'Flynn are as misleading as most of his other comments on films in past Focus issues. I am still muddled as to whether George O'Brien or Pat O'Brien stars; whether Ted Jetlsaff or Ted Tetslaff directs. I think the latter is correct spelling.

"V" should think again when he says "It seems to indicate that the critics are beginning to make their weight felt, etc., etc." when referring to "B" pictures slipped into circuits and scoring huge successes with audiences.

These unpretentious pictures made the grade in spite of adverse notices. Street with no Name, They Walk by Night were brushed off in a few lines by Press critics at the end of their columns as "just an average Hollywood thriller". The public, however,
FOCUS

discovered them to be first-rate and intelligent entertainment.

The Window, shown to the public as a "B" picture on both sides of the Thames without a single review from the Press, has had the ludicrous experience of being enthusiastically received by the press exactly a week after general release and moved to a special double bill programme in the West End.

"V" should see some of his movies with the public, and then he would see in the double bill, films made on a modest "B" picture budget in Hollywood that are really well-worth seeing, and sometimes vastly superior to its bigger brother—the "big picture".

"V" should try this experiment, if only to see why Wake of the Red Witch was so well received by all kinds of audiences.

Yours truly,
Rafael Newhouse,
Sound Editor,
London Film Productions.

---

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Few child players on the screen retain their natural childlike qualities. When one thinks back over the infants who have walked across our screens, it is with a shudder of repugnance at the grotesque adult-mimicry, the sentimental preciosity which the directors have secured from their little victims to pass muster as “child acting”. To Hollywood, which has been for so long the Mecca of filmdom, must go the condemnation for having produced the monstrosity. Without mentioning names, there is a whole genealogy of prodigies whose simian caperings have embarrassd intelligent adolescent and adult alike. To Hollywood, therefore, in fairness, must go the credit for having discovered the one child actress who has not sickened her audiences with the passing years.

Margaret O'Brien, from the moment that she evoked rapturous praise from the normally tight-lipped and reserved British film critics with her performance in *Journey For Margaret*, has retained her essential characteristics of natural poise and childhood wonderment. When she walks on to the set it is to live, as a child would, the situations she is called upon to enact. Doubtless praise is due to her directors, but to Margaret herself, or to her guardian angel, must go much of the merit of her endearing naturalness. Even when playing with such a scene-stealing giant as Charles Laughton in *Canterville Ghost*, she managed to convey the impression that this was all a huge game of make-believe into which, like Alice, she had wandered, but in which she was determined to retain her dignity (without probably knowing the meaning or existence of the word).

I had a talk with Margaret some weeks’ ago and was enchanted to find that she is indeed a quite natural and somewhat reserved little girl; inclined, and with reason, to be a little overawed at the galaxies of rather bored and weary-looking grown-ups whose duty it was to attend her Press-reception. I chatted with her about her work in the studios and discovered that she takes it all very seriously, in the sense that she knows she is doing a job of work and tries to do it well. She likes going to the cinema, she assured me, but when I asked her whether she saw her own films, she said, “Oh no, you see I know how they are going to end!”

She was very anxious, while in England, to see a pantomime, and, though it was already the middle of March, I think that one of the London theatres was keeping a show on ice for Margaret. I warned her that pantomimes were made mainly with grown-ups in view these days, but she declared that she was sure she would like it.

About her schooling she was enthusiastic. The studios arrange for and insist on a certain period at lessons each day for the film children. She learns her Catechism assiduously and is a naturally devout child. The reason for her visit to England was to present to the wife of the Prime Minister, the money she had collected for displaced children in Europe.

Her latest film is a new version of *Little Women*, in which she plays the part of Beth. This should be welcome news both to her many admirers and also to the big public which regards L. M. Alcott’s charming story as one of the world classics.

She began her film career through being chosen as model for child pictures on magazine covers. A picture of Margaret appearing on the cover of a magazine resulted in her first picture assignment, a government short starring James Cagney. This was followed by M.-G.-M.’s *Babes on Broadway*, with Mickey Rooney. Then came the film which caught the hearts and eyes of the critics: *Journey For Margaret*, in which the five-year-old tot gave a staggeringly real performance as a neurotic British war orphan.

Followed *The Lost Angel, Canterville Ghost, Meet Me in St. Louis, Song of Russia, Jane Eyre, Madame Curie, Music for Millions, Our Vines Have Tender Grapes, Bad Bascombe, Three Wise Fools, Tenth Avenue Angel* and *The Unfinished Dance*.

Margaret, in her earlier films, always managed to have a little piece of dialogue which amounted to a sermon, all the more appealing for its insouciance. It is to be hoped that she is allowed to retain in the adult career that is before her, the same blameless charm that is so rare and precious a quality on the screen.

*John Vincent.*
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By Our Educational Panel

Liverpool agent: T. J. O'Brien, 156 Lower Lane, Liverpool, 9.

Last Minute Notes

Fatima Film

Focus says "Bon Voyage" to Andrew Buchanan's film unit which sets out at the end of this month to make a factual film of Fatima. In all ages Christian artists have used the mediums of marble, stone, paint, music, and the rhythm of words to serve life and religion. In using the cinema which is the latest of the arts and which combines all the arts Catholic cinéastes are following in the footsteps of the Great Masters. It is appropriate that the Catholic Film Institute in this country should sponsor a film which will record the startling story of Our Lady's appearances in Portugal and which will reveal to the multitudes the part that she is destined to play in the resurrection of a fast decaying civilisation. Your prayers are asked for the success of this adventure.

Juryman

Focus offers its congratulations to Fr. J. A. V. Burke, who was invited by the Executive Committee which met in London last July to preside over the international jury which will award the O.C.I.C. Prix at Venice this year.

Summer School

Mr. Michael Leyland, who is the organiser of the Catholic Film Institute Summer School, has just sent this note:

"The Catholic Film Institute Conference will be held at Toynbee Hall, Commercial Street, from Thursday, September 8th, till Sunday, September 11th. The theme of the Conference will be the methods by which a film should be appraised and considerable time will be devoted to practical work. The sessions of practical work will include the working of cameras and projectors and other apparatus. The charge for the Conference will be 15/-, except for members of the Catholic Film Institute for whom it will be 10/-. The fee for a single day's attendance will be 5/-. Meals can be obtained at Toynbee Hall during the Conference. Members and others who wish to be present should apply to the 'Blue Cottage', Sumner Place Mews, South Kensington, London, S.W., by August 21st or afterwards."

EDITOR.
FILM GLOSSARY
No. 8
35mm. VERSUS 16mm.

By ANDREW BUCHANAN

Have you ever seen a 16mm. film that looked as if it had been made in a fog, described by a commentator who seemed to be wearing a gas mask? Perhaps you have, in a church hall, cookery demonstration, or classroom, in which case I am sure you blamed the producer for making a film you could hardly see and barely hear. Allow me to prove he is not the culprit. Only a few years ago, 16mm. films were confined to home entertainment (summer holiday records and baby filmed on every birthday), but with the development of the non-Theatrical Movement covering all specialised uses of film—religion, education, science, medicine, government propaganda, and so on—16mm. has become professionally recognised, and though it does not compete with 35mm. standard size film in cinemas, it reaches hundreds of thousands of people grouped into selected audiences in any kind of hall or room in which films can be projected.

16mm. has been adopted for such purposes because it is safe, being printed on “non-flam” stock, and because the projectors are portable—unlike the huge 35mm. machines which are bedded in concrete in cinema projection boxes. When governmental, religious and professional bodies began to make production demands on professional producers for 16mm. films, the latter, expensively equipped for making 35mm. productions, decided to continue working in the standard size, and to reduce the results to 16mm. on completion. 35mm. is easier to manipulate and enables various technical effects to be introduced which cannot be employed if producing in 16mm. in the first instance. Although 35mm. film both sound and picture, can be satisfactorily reduced to 16mm., 16mm. cannot be enlarged to 35mm. with good results. By making a film on 35mm. and reducing it, projection is possible in both sizes. If made on 16mm., projection would be confined, of course, to sub-standard shows. A first-class 16mm. reduction print shown on a good projector by an expert projectionist will be almost as good as, perhaps equal to, a 35mm. film shown professionally.

However—and this is where the producer is exonerated—sometimes, 16mm. reduction prints are not as good as they should be; a large number of 16mm. projectors are in poor condition in many cases, projection is in the hands of inexperienced people, and finally, some halls and rooms have bad acoustic properties. This combination of shortcomings is a very serious matter in view of the wide development of
16mm. film for important purposes, for it means that the public very often sees films at their worst, whereas, in original 35mm. form, they are first-class.

Next in importance to the showing of religious films is the current expansion of the educational film movement, depending entirely on 16mm. and yet many classrooms are unsuitable for the showing of films; often, they are imperfectly blacked out, and projection frequently leaves much to be desired. The 16mm. projectionist should know how to improve the acoustics in a room; how and where to place the speaker to obtain maximum clarity, and the right distance between projector and screen in relation to the size of the room. 35mm. cinema projectors burn high intensity arcs, which give a very powerful light, whereas the lamp in a 16mm. projector is, by comparison, low, and is unlikely to exceed 1,000 watts. I have seen perfect 16mm. projection in unsuitable halls, due to the expertness of the projectionist, and I have seen terrible projection in suitable halls, mainly owing to lack of projection experience, but, sometimes, due to poor quality prints. However, one can hardly expect the public to know the reasons for poor picture quality and inaudibility, which explains why the producer is usually blamed. Therefore, may I stress the need for all who are likely to handle 16mm. films to learn how to judge the quality of prints, manipulate a projector, and know its relation to speaker and screen. There are no reasons why 16mm. shows should not be as good, in their smaller way, as 35mm. performances, but there are a lot of important reasons why they should be.

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FILM REVIEWS

By Our Panel of Priests


That lady in ermine is that Betty Grable as a seventeenth century portrait which comes to life. The lady's dress is so arranged that her bare feet may appear "to show her humility". Also to show her legs.

Miss Grable also plays, no less incongruously, a descendant of the above in the 1860s. Undaunted by her crinoline she again shows her legs.

The film so paralysed me with boredom that I hardly had any critical reactions. Extracts from the dialogue are more expressive than any words of mine: "This woman doesn't make sense." "I'm getting bored." "I don't like it at all."

Award for Banality

The picture is only partially a musical. The lyrics would qualify for an award for banality. (Perhaps they are bad on purpose, but that is hardly an excuse for inflicting them on the public.) The humour is laboured.

At the end a priest appeared to officiate at a wedding. The purple stole which he carried (instead of the white one more usual on such occasions) concludes the film with subtle symbolism. For a purple stole is associated with penance and contrition.

And now I have two duties. One is to tell you what other people think, I must also leave on record what I have already written.

Q.
P.S.—It was not for his work in this film that Douglas Fairbanks, Jnr., recently received the K.B.E.


If Mr. Belvedere had stayed at college a little longer, maybe he would have learnt that two jokes do not make a comedy. I had heard that "Sitting Pretty" was good and I had come prepared to sit pretty and have a good laugh at its successor. Indeed, in the foyer I met a colleague (who has seen enough films to be able to separate the wheat from the chaff) who told me that I could expect some fun. To prove that I am not being subjective about this film, I record that my colleague hardly laughed at all and that when the show was over he merely said: "Amusing wasn't it?" I replied, "Mildly amusing". You see, I was in the right mood, yet all I could work up was a few light chuckles. I am not saying this was Clifton Webb's fault. Perhaps it was the company's fault, who thought that as a result of his previous success they were sitting pretty and could get away with anything.

This film, I repeat, is mildly amusing. It is not humorous. All the fun of the film consists in the clothes Webb wears and a few trivial things he says in a toneless voice. Shirley Temple comes into the picture and I regret to say that she still acts as though she were not yet quite grown up.

E.

This is a film about a scientifically planned murder which does not quite come off: I mean the murder; for the film is, of its kind, an exhibition model of what such a film, technically, should be. Its script is taut; its dialogue (with a few exceptions) realistic; its direction excellent; its editing neat and arresting; the characters rewarding and exceptionally well played by all concerned.

Psychology of Crime

The story is a grim one about a doctor whose wounded pride as a husband induces him to plan the scientifically perfect murder of the latest of his wife’s series of paramours. Such a story is, of course, quite indefensible morally speaking, but the intention of the film is not to present the actions of the characters as ethically desirable, rather to offer for the interest of the audience a study in the psychology of crime. It need not, therefore, disturb the consciences of instructed adults. Nevertheless, the automatic and quite unlikely “happy ending”, with its implication of reconciliation between husband and wife and condonation of what is, in fact, a particularly unattractive crime, weakens the structure of the film, as well as offending good taste unnecessarily.

Canine Agility

Those who like an absorbing, horrifying, cold-blooded murder story, presented with tremendous suspense will find this one up to their highest standards. One of the important characters (indeed, the only attractive one) is Monty, a dog. He is on the list of victims to be liquidated (how right this term is for once!), but for the sake of British sentiment about animals, it can be revealed that he escapes, after a magnificent display of canine agility.

Robert Newton gives us one of the best of his many first-class performances. His restrained study of an intellectual criminal is superb, Naunton Wayne, too, deserves special mention for his well-constructed portrait of an urbane Scotland Yard Superintendent.

As a somewhat cranky devotee of the gramophone, I must register my horror at the extremely careless manner in which Phil Brown handles some records: Brahms and Beethoven! Even Henry Hall deserves better than that!

V.


James (Call Northside 777) Stewart and Jane (Johnny Belinda) Wyman will hardly reap any artistic kudos from their first co-starring film. The publicity hounds have added their film successes to their names in a manner that is intriguing. Like the divorcee in Father Knox’s “Memories of the Future”, one can foresee the names of prize-winning film-stars taking up an enormous amount of space in the Telephone Directories of the future.

Family Entertainment

This pedestrian story of a man who is willing to sacrifice the progress of a small town to his ambition for money, and the woman newspaper editor who unwittingly helps him to ruin the town by her eagerness to show him up as a fraud, is entertainingly told and has a few bright moments of light relief, but is, on the whole, rather slow. Its denouement, in which, with the aid of a gang of schoolboys, James Stewart manoeuvres the deflated townsfolk into new ambition is, for British eyes, most embarrassing. However, it is, as the trade press would say, satisfactory family entertainment for uncritical audiences.

V.
FOCUS


The wild surmise of stout Cortez and his men finds counterpart these days in the wilder guesses of Warner Brothers in their discovery of Spain. Their ideas are perhaps a trifle fantastical, but who can blame them?—and since they have chosen Don Juan as hero who would have it otherwise? (I have a suspicion that they have mixed up Don Juan with Don John of Austria.)

Title No Clue

Do not be put off by the title, for it is really a most agreeable affair. The film has more humour than most comedies and more excitement than most Westerns. There is sureness of touch in direction, crispness of dialogue, excellent acting, plenty of action, light-hearted delicacy in romantic scenes and superb disregard for historicity. What more can be expected from a film in Technicolor? It is quite a long performance but our interest never flags from the burlesque love scene in England with which it starts to our final glimpse of Don Juan galloping after a coach containing a beautiful Spanish maiden.

Flynn in Trouble

Don Juan (Errol Flynn) finds himself in trouble in England but is extricated by the Spanish Ambassador who believes, how rightly, that Juan's heart, though embarrassingly large, is yet sound and true to the cause of Spain. So Juan and his trusty servant (Alan Hale) arrive in Spain armed with a letter of commendation to Queen Margaret (Viveca Lindfors). The Queen is a lover of peace and the cause of the common man. But her husband, King Philip III (Romney Brent) is an idler and weakling. His adviser, the Duke de Lorca (Robert Douglas) is treacherous and bent on war with England and thus unmistakably the bad egg of the piece. Don Juan by his recklessness in strife and by his devotion to the Queen succeeds against fearsome odds in bringing to naught the machinations of the black-hearted Duke. Errol Flynn has not done so well for posterity since he won the Battle of Burma.

It is a defect in this otherwise admirable production to make Queen Margaret, near the finish, express her love for Juan and her desire to go away with him. It is evident that the producer thought that love should be required to make the film-goer happy. But unfaithfulness is not true love. We prefer our heroines to remain heroines to the end.

T.


This film, we are informed, is a screen adaptation of a serial story from the Saturday Evening Post. This means, of course, that it will be a quick and slick story, with a neat development, and that all its ends will be carefully knotted together. But it raises the question whether such a story, intended primarily for week-end relaxation, ought to be screened. For it has no lesson except that a wicked woman will come to a sticky end; it almost points the moral that the same wicked lady can get away with it almost till the twelfth hour strikes. The theme is sordid and banal. The critic has to ask himself, "Have they nothing more serious or more worth while to film in the broad and wide United States than this miserable and, on the whole, unconvincing story?"

Hard and Glossy Quality

Yet I must confess that I did not feel bored or impatient while I was seeing the film. It has a certain hard and glossy quality which goes with a sure hand in film production. The plot is
well developed, the action is swift. Lizabeth Scott is not quite convincing as the heartless money-lover who drives a first husband to suicide and accidentally kills a second, while she deliberately poisons her male accom- plice. Don DeFore is not well cast. Only in the last few minutes do we discover what he is; till then, he has been a "mysterious" figure without sufficient personality to be "mysterious". Dan Duryea, on the other hand, gives an admirable performance as the "tough egg" in a silken cover but who none the less meets more than his match in "toughness" when he associates with Lizabeth Scott.

But, with the absence of a worthy theme and these many deficiencies in acting, the film is good camera work and offers an hour and a half of not unreasonable entertainment.

K.

Certificate: A. Category: B.
Running time: 105 minutes.

My first reaction before seeing this film was the feeling that at any rate the title did not give anything away. It invited one to speculate what even remotely the film might be about. What was the key word? Rope or Sand? Well, it was Sand, the sand of the South African Desert.

The film begins with tense music, and there is a tension all through which is not relaxed until the very end. One of the best features of the film's direction is this tension which is never overstrained but which is nevertheless kept taut throughout as the story works itself out.

The Story

The scene is a South African diamond town, and the hero is Mike Davis (Burt Lancaster), who is returning there determined to lay hands on a cache of diamonds that he discovered in the Prohibited Diamond Area two years previously. Mike had found this cache when as a hunting guide he once entered the barricaded Area to rescue the man for whom he was working. On this occasion he had been brutally beaten by Commandant Vogel (Paul Henreid), the head of the police force which had unlimited powers to prevent trespassing and stealing. Mike in revenge now determines to discredit Vogel by stealing the diamonds.

Learning of Mike's arrival, Vogel wants to get tough with him, but Martingale (Claude Rains), the suave company manager whose authority Vogel resents, has a better plan. He secretly hires Suzanne Renaud (beautiful Corinne Calvet), a young adven- turel who meets in Capetown, and introduces her as the niece of an important French stockholder. Her job is to make Mike fall in love with her and confide the location of the diamonds.

That is the general set-up and the remainder of the film is the working out of the plot from these beginnings. We must not forget to mention also the part played by Toady (Peter Lorre), a hanger-on in the diamond town, who knows all the news of everyone's comings and goings, but never seems to succeed in getting very rich. He provides a few minutes' marking of time in the action of the story in his usual fascinating way, without the tension of the action being in any way relaxed.

Enjoyable Film

The photography is uniformly good as is the acting. And the hero is shown to be a human being whose natural instincts of love and honour are not submerged by the corrupting environment of ruthlessness which precious metals often seem to breed. So it is a story with a cheerful ending, vindicating the fundamental goodness of human nature, and affirming that where love is strong enough a man will sacrifice diamonds for the woman he loves. A well produced and well directed film which I feel many will enjoy.

O.
In this film Humphrey Bogart plays the, for him, unusual part of a rather sentimental lawyer defending a young man (John Derek), who is accused of shooting a policeman. In a series of flash-backs the jury and audience are told the story of the young man’s gradual degradation to a life of crime under the influence of the poisonous environment of the slums of an American city.
Its Weakness

There is much that is interesting in this film. Anything that tries to arouse the social consciousness of the masses is worth while. But there are serious defects and omissions. Environment, while it may have a very great influence on character, can never remove the element of personal responsibility which in the end is the source of imputability. The weakness of this film from a Catholic point of view is that it seems to make environment and the circumstances of his life the only cause of Nick Romano’s downfall.

After a somewhat slow beginning the film assumes a greater interest and a more satisfying tempo as it progresses. There is some good acting by Humphrey Bogart, but even he does not quite succeed in giving reality to the rather melodramatic procedure of the law in America. John Derek does fairly well but it is too early to say whether he has what makes a star.
LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN


Although this is not a film to become wildly (forgive the pun) excited about, it is yet a pleasant and competent enough performance to recommend.

Softened Version

The film is a slightly softened version of Oscar Wilde's play. It is softened in that there is not the same hard, rather heartless, brilliance. Consequently the Victorian sentiment is more apparent and with it a sense for true human values. The man who mildly shocked his generation by his clever fallacies, can mildly edify our generation by his homely truths.

Mrs. Erlynne (Madeleine Carroll), of doubtful antecedent, so doubtful that there cannot be any doubt about it, is determined to establish herself in the cream of London society. She has charm and knows all the ropes, but she is in a hurry and so she makes use of a secret which forces Lord Windermere (Richard Greene) to further her plan by providing her with a house and money. This gives rise to unjust rumours about their association which Lord Darlington (George Sanders), in his infatuation for Lady Windermere (Jeanne Crain) uses to break up the happy Windermere marriage. He nearly succeeds in persuading Lady Windermere to elope with him, but in this he is thwarted by the intervention of Mrs. Erlynne. In so doing she sacrifices her chance of social success and of an advantageous marriage. The fan assumes importance only as a piece of material evidence in a certain compromising situation.

Not Enough Novelty

Lest this story should seem too remote from modern interests it is introduced, firstly, by means of sale of unclaimed property, found on bomb-damaged sites, in which the fan is put up for auction. Secondly and following from it by the encounter of two of the chief participants of the drama, Mrs. Erlynne and Lord Darlington. The introduction, in my opinion, is unnecessary and serves only to show a certain impoverishment of imagination and even of technique that can exist among professional film makers. The situations contrived in this overlong introduction are like the clichés of a busy journalist. The practice of inserting from time to time the two old people, gossiping over the past, is merely irritating—our interest is in the play, not in the clumsy frame work that has been arranged for it. In any case, has not this narrative style been overdone? The first few times we encountered it were passable enough, but the trick has not even novelty to recommend it now.

I had nearly forgotten to mention acting, general screen work, lighting and all the rest of it. All this is in accordance with the best Hollywood standards and that is saying a great deal.

T.
A scene from "Lady Windermere’s Fan"

a softened version of

Oscar Wilde’s play

Some of the elements in this film are deplorable, which is a great pity since it has a good story, excellent acting and reasonably restrained technicolor. I refer to the implications of the opening try-out of the Polynesian dance of courtship, satirised though it may be; it is not beautiful enough, certainly, to be the slightest moral danger, but it is ugly enough to be embarrassing.

Frenetic Playing

The worldly innocent Professor Frisbee (Danny Kaye) sets out on a round of the high and hot spots to discover trends in modern music. Most of the High Priests of Jazz and Swing and the rest come into the picture at this stage and we are given visual as well as aural evidence of the frenetic quality of their playing.

One result of this quest is that Honey Swanson (Virginia Mayo), a mollish type of "torch singer", makes a hide-out in the music research library where Frisbee and six other bachelor music professors are engaged in their compilation of a History of Music. As the girls would say, all seven professors are rather "pets". However, Honey finds her match in the only other woman there, the housekeeper, note-worthily played by Esther Dale, and to have any chance of being allowed to stay there she has to put on an act of falling in love with Frisbee. When put to violent tests through her former associations, she discovers that what was play has become reality, and presumably they both live happily nearly ever after.

For the Millions

Danny Kaye gives a neat performance of the belatedly awakened adult evincing a shy dignity which is utterly charming and the bombshell Honey plays opposite him with a mighty verve. The actors throughout know their business. One can foresee that this film will be seen by millions. Kaye's popularity will ensure that. The frenzy of the music will appeal to many who will, one hopes, be unaware of its implications.

X.


Despite the alleged snobbishness of those who enthuse about European films, it must be said once again that the non-English-speaking peoples have a much deeper and more artistic understanding of human feelings and behaviour than we or the Americans. In this Swedish film, a story of a violent love affair, the expression of emotion is perfect, from the quarrelling of an unhappy household to the unrestrained passion of the lovers. And with this, a careful attention to all those little details of dress and personal appearance which are the hallmark of real life.

Sorry Picture

But the story is a sorry picture of modern Sweden, pagan in the extreme. Iris and Robert, a housemaid and a Guards officer, exceedingly well-played by Mai Zetterling and Alf Kjellin, fall into a love which is good because it is beautiful. Robert offers marriage, which Iris refuses on the ground that their love might not last. But she justifies living with him in words to this effect: "I have had lovers before, but then I was young and ignorant. This is different, because this time I am madly in love." Robert is killed soon afterwards, and Iris is able to face the future with their child, because before he went away he said: "If we forget about God, our culture will collapse like a house of cards". Exactly what the connection is it is difficult to say; the clue may be hidden in the Swedish dialogue. But it is enough for the film to end with a close-up of Iris
registering an expression of ecstatic joy and purity. It is a pity that the amoral modern world will try to moralise, for having no moral principles it only succeeds in whitening the sepulchre.

U.


Good outlaws and bad outlaws, a good sheriff and a bad detective, the bank money stolen by bad outlaws and restored by good, posses of vigilantes chasing the good outlaws, lovely horses at full stretch, pistols popping off and hard fists driving home, virtue tested and rewarded, vice brought low—it is all there, often exciting, sometimes lit up by a flash of humour; but one could not quite put away the insistent query, is there a touch of satire in all this?

The Story

The Younger Brothers, four of them, have only a fortnight of their parole to run that they may earn the State pardon, which will enable them to leave Minnesota and fulfil their ambition of leading nice quiet lives as farmers in Missouri. In Cedar Creek, except for the sheriff, a just man, all the folks come under the malevolent influence of Ryckman, a disappointed, discharged and sinisterly limping detective with an insatiable grudge against the Youngers. They don’t really give the boys a chance. However, the Youngers contrive to escape from the awful webs spun for them by Ryckman, since they are dressed in their high resolve to get that pardon. With more difficulty, but just as effectively, they are immunised against the insidious temptations of an outlaw queen, who wants to incorporate them in her own outfit on advantageous terms to them.

Air of Morality

As the film medium is essentially one of action and movement, it is rarely that one finds either time or tranquillity for anything but the sharpest or most clean cut display of characterisation. The character is, as it were, impaled in the state in which it is supposed to be in the few days or weeks of the action and then displayed without any complications. All the complications lie in the circumstances. This, if it be true, may account for the slight air of unreality in the goodness of the good outlaws, the badness of the bad detective and the ineffectiveness of the bad, bad men. As the casting was for types not people, it hardly seems necessary to single out the work of any of the actors, but it was gratifying to see that the outlaw queen, in that delightfully wild country, had such an excellent and varied wardrobe.

The technicolor was quiet—no impossibly bronzed men in gaudy shirts—which I thought was a point up for technicolor. The horses, as I have hinted, were very good.

X.


Popular jargon distinguishes between that which is funny "ha-ha" and that which is funny "peculiar". This film attempts to give us both sorts. Abbott and Costello, especially Costello, succeed in giving us a good deal of the "ha-ha" variety in their strange or absurd encounters with the ghosts of Dracula and Frankenstein’s Monster. But the latter are very fake horrors which would fail to frighten anyone save the under-fours who, on no account, should be permitted to see the film. However neatly Dr. Dracula turns himself into a vampire and back again, we cannot take this or anything else in the film very seriously. But, then, I suppose we are not supposed to. Least of all Costello.

G.
CONSPIRATOR


Major Michael

Starts with a jerky pace and poor editing, however, when the Guards, busbies, band, Robert Taylor and Elizabeth come on parade, things liven up and I confess from now on I was intrigued and entertained and anxious to know how the story would end.

Robert Taylor (Major Michael Curragh) is the handsome villain of the piece, who tells tales out of barracks to a ring of communists, who hide in Hampstead. We are given to understand that Curragh is a Guardsman by day and a traitor by night, because as a boy something went wrong in his subconscious mind! (Hell must be paved with sub-conscious excuses for doing wrong things!) For some time the Major gets away with his double life, he even gets away with Melinda Greyton (Elizabeth Taylor), who makes a pretty wife, but what a fool the Major must have been: he continually gives Melinda reasons to suspect that there is something phoney going on in his life. So like every good wife she determines to get to the bottom of things; one day she manages to get to the bottom of his trousers pocket and finds a document which discloses his treachery . . . and hell knows no fury like a woman who finds out she has married a traitor.

Party Orders

When “The Party” (what a party!) realises that Melinda knows all, the Major is ordered to liquidate his wife. He determines to do so, but again something happens in his subconscious mind which makes his shooting go crooked; he reports his failure to the crooks in Hampstead and they order him to shoot himself; like a good obedient lad, he goes home, puts on his Guards uniform, looks at himself in the mirror, squares his fine manly shoulders, takes a pistol in his strong right hand and in the true up Guards and at ‘em spirit, pulls the trigger, just as Scotland Yard and the War Office, who (apparently) knew all about him, are closing in . . .

Suspense Rather Than Sense

The entertainment value of this film is good; some nice photography makes it look good, but the acting, with the exception of Thora Hird, who plays the part of the maid, and Marjorie Fielding, who plays Aunt Jessica, is mediocre. Elizabeth Taylor has not yet reached the acting age of maturity; whether she will develop into an actress, I wouldn’t like to say. This is the sort of film which depends on suspense rather than sense for its success. It concludes with an act of suicide which I condemn.

E.

PENNY A DAY FOR 240 DAYS’ FUND

IF one fourth of the Catholic population in England and Scotland contributed a penny a day for 240 days The Catholic Film Institute in England would be able to set up a production unit. It was the pennies of the Catholic population in France which made possible the making of the film Monsieur Vincent.

Kindly send donation to:

CITY ACROSS THE RIVER


This film props up the half-truth that you and I are responsible for the slum problem. Drew Pearson, who introduces the sermon, wants to know what we are going to do about it. Now any film which attempts to reveal the sort of life that people in the slums are compelled to live is worth its weight in gold, for it cannot be said enough that it is a first law of life that a human being should have a decent place in which to dwell.

Inasmuch as this film says something which needed to be said it is to be commended, but (I fear) it is too aggressive to receive sympathetic
and palaces and the haunts of the cultured and the learned free from sin? Any priest who has worked in parts where poverty abounds will record deeds of heroism and sanctity, he will tell you that men who live in good houses do not always have good hearts. The weakness of this film-sermon is that it exposes a disease without probing the cause. In fact that is the weakness of most film-sermons.

Slums are the symptoms of a world suffering from sin and the remedy is the grace of God.

Up to a point this problem is yours and mine. But what can we do about it? If sufficient people shouted out that decent houses to live in are more essential than luxurious clubs to play in, or up-to-the-minute schools to learn in, perhaps "the powers that be" would do something about it.

This is a sincere film. It is worth seeing but the things you see are not pretty.

E.
**FOCUS**


Category: B. Running time: 90 minutes.

Ealing Studios have done it again; another good film. The idea in *The Train of Events* is not original. Thornton Wilder, for example, used it in *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* and in this case, since bridges built by British engineers do not fall, it had to be something else. But the alternative, a train smash, was well chosen and well dealt with. The film opens with a most realistic presentation of the disaster, and then we are taken back three days to follow the stories of four of the people involved. In his version Wilder tried to explain why his particular people were led by Providence to be on the bridge when it fell. *The Train of Events* is less ambitious and only gives us the sequence of events leading up to the fateful accident, and if the stories are somewhat lacking in interest, the common-place is at least true to life. Of the four stories included, two have happy endings and two end in tragedy, which is perhaps a fair division.

**Worth Seeing**

From the production point of view I cannot remember anything that jarred. In particular the four domestic surroundings of the various sets of people, a matter in which the cinema often fails, were excellently shown. Most outstanding were the railway scenes, which showed a nice discrimination and good photography. Since they were taken at Willesden, they could hardly fail to have the genuine look.

Jack Warner, as the engine-driver, gave one of his best performances. Valerie Hobson and John Clements are their usual polished selves. Irina Baranova seems to overact, even for a Russian ballet dancer. Susan Shaw, as the engine-driver's daughter was exactly right and Joan Dowling, miserably in love with a German ex-P.O.W., shows herself a competent actress. This is certainly a film worth seeing.

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**EVERYBODY'S CHEERING.**

Running time: 95 minutes.

A very ordinary American musical with very little to commend it. We were at least spared the sight of crowds of ecstatic bobby-soxers swooning when Frankie opened his lips to croon. In general, the film was but a very thin excuse for each of the stars to show off the particular talent for which they became renowned. Esther Williams swims, Frank Sinatra croons and Gene Kelly dances. The rest of the film just spends its time working up for them to do it again.

There is too, the inevitable song all about the good old U.S.A. while a large company dances and tries to look colourful.

The story concerns a famous American baseball team, who suddenly find themselves owned by Esther Williams. In spite of this they manage to get well on the way to winning the baseball championship until the producer decides it looks too easy. So the rich man is introduced to spoil it, since he stands to lose a lot of money if they win. In spite of his machinations they do win at the last minute, and the rich man, while trying to escape from justice, is hit neatly on the head by a bottle, thrown by a young lady about fifty yards away, so far as one can gather.

The film is original, however, in that Frank Sinatra does not fall in love with Esther Williams, as we have been led to believe will happen, but with the bottle-throwing young lady. I cannot imagine why!

I had to wait a few days before writing my notice of Family Honeymoon. Consequently I have had the advantage of reading first what the professional critics had to say. They are severe on it. One describes it as "leery". I thought that rather severe. Despite the background implications of the subject, a honeymoon complicated by the accession of the three children of the bride who had been a widow, there were more laughs than sniggers. The trouble was that there were not enough laughs.

Claudette Colbert and Fred MacMurray were wildly amusing as the harassed wife and puzzled husband. Rita Johnson made sudden appearances now and again as the would-be disruptive blonde, and the naughty children had a lovely time being naughty.

In a way the film might have been better had it been worse, if you know what I mean. As it is, it has the worst of every world by being ineffective. My advice to the earnest filmgoer would be: Just take it as read and pass on to the next item on the agenda.

X.

SOME FILMS REVIEWED

NOTE. Inclusion in this list does not connote positive recommendation. Films that are positively harmful are not included here. Readers are reminded to refer to the full reviews when assessing a film.

Category A, indicates adults only; B, adults and adolescents; C, family audiences; D, particularly for children.

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O.C.I.C. General Council Meeting

Representatives from Sixteen Countries

Representatives from sixteen countries lent an atmosphere of international importance to the General Council Meeting of O.C.I.C. which was held in London, at the Newman International Centre, in July. Each of the delegates, distinguished in his own country for the work of Catholic Film Action which he directs, contributed wisdom and experience to the deliberations of the Council. In addition to the counsellors who accompanied their national delegates, technical experts on the production side from many lands added their share to make the conferences authoritative.

At the opening of the Council, Egypt and Chile were admitted to full membership of the International Catholic Cinema Office (O.C.I.C.) and a special welcome was given to the Secretary of the National Film Institute of Ireland, who came as the representative of the Irish hierarchy, thus securing the valuable interest of this important Catholic nation in the affairs of the O.C.I.C. In addition to these countries, there were representatives of Austria, Belgium, Cuba, Dominican Republic, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Poland, Switzerland and Uruguay. Apologies for absence were received from the Catholic Film Representatives in Norway, Holland, Luxembourg, Denmark, Spain, United States of America, Brazil, Portugal and Venezuela.

Directives from Rome

The tone of the conferences was set at once by the telegram of filial devotion which was sent in the name of the General Council to the Holy Father, and which elicited the most cordial good wishes and the Papal Blessing. From Mgr. Montini, the Papal Secretary at the Vatican, came a specially valuable letter outlining directives for the theme of the Conferences, which was "the attitude of Catholics with regard to the industrial and economic aspect of the cinema". The first importance is to be given to the moral tone of the cinema, and no merely commercial consideration should allow any deviation from the Gospel teaching, "Blessed are the poor in spirit". This spirit can and must prevail in the art of cinema, as it does in other fields of Catholic Action. Even on the economic and commercial planes, the influence of the National Centres must be towards the spirit of "Seek ye first the kingdom of God". Mgr. Montini pointed out that the Holy Father follows with the keenest interest the work of the Catholic Film Centres and wishes the faithful in the various countries to give their full support to the activities of their National Film Centre.

To us of the Catholic Film Institute, these messages are of particular value, for we have set ourselves the task of trying to use films for the highest purposes, at the highest level of professional competence, at the lowest outlay consistent with social justice. It is not proper, it seems to us, that film should be used for religious purposes by religious persons as a means of securing vast profits after vast outlay. That is for the commercial cinema; though even here, as Mgr. Montini indicates, our influence ought to be towards the end that the spirit of Christian poverty prevail.
**Points on the Agenda**

Most of the Conference was devoted to the economic and industrial discussions, but an important point on the Agenda was the Crusade of Prayer for the Film Apostolate. In brief, it was suggested that an organised powerhouse of prayer be devised to obtain for the workers in this vast and perilous field, the invaluable spiritual support which direct appeal to the Treasury of Grace can secure. In addition to the nomination by the Holy Father of a Patron Saint of the art of cinema, it is hoped that an order of contemplatives will be designated to aid this work with their prayers; an association of layfolk also is envisaged, who will undertake to recite a special prayer for the Film Apostolate. Priest members of the National Centres will be asked to offer Mass for the intentions of the Apostolate. A model prayer was submitted which, with the other points raised, will be considered by the National Centres. Eventually a report will be issued subject to the approval of the Holy See and the assistance of the general public enlisted. In the meantime, we earnestly beg the prayers of our readers and others for light and direction in this matter.

The Prize which O.C.I.C. awards each year for the film, which "contributes most to the moral and spiritual betterment of mankind", was also discussed. It was decided that in future an O.C.I.C. Prix be offered at each of the major Film Festivals and an annual award for the best film of the year. For the forthcoming Biennale at Venice, the following were selected to serve as Jury of Adjudication: Rev. J. A. V. Burke (Chairman), Dr. Andre Ruszkowski, Father Leo Lunders, O.P., MM. Pierro Regnoli, Turi Vasile, Lo Duca.

The Holy Year will figure largely in the work of the International Cinema Office. It has been entrusted with the organising of the Cinema Section of the Grand Exhibition, which will be a feature of the Holy Year arrangements in Rome. An International Pilgrimage of Film Actors and Technicians is to be undertaken. Each National Centre will be asked to secure the attendance of a representative group of film personalities from the various countries.

The International Film Review was reported on and discussed both during the General Council and during the meetings of the Executive Committee of O.C.I.C. and the Editorial Committee of the Review. High praise has been lavished upon the review from all quarters, but very much more support is needed to make it financially independent. We beg our readers and all who take the cinema seriously to give their attention to what has been described by the Film Correspondent of the *Tablet*, as "one of the most enlightened and enlightening film periodicals in existence".

**Social Amenities**

Two Receptions added to the social amenities of the Conference. Distinguished personalities from other sections of Catholic Action graced the first and included representatives from Pax Romana, the Knights of St. Columba, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Union of Catholic Mothers, Catholic Action Girls’ Organisation, Sword of the Spirit, members of the Polish Circle in London and others. We were particularly honoured by the presence of the Venezuelan Ambassador and the First Secretary of the Dominican Republic. At the second reception, which closed the General Council, members of the cinema industry in this country were present in great numbers and included among the critics Miss Dily Powell, Miss Freda Bruce Lockhart, Campbell Dixon, Roger Manvell; from the Rank Organisation: J. Arthur Rank, Air Commodore West (Eagle-Lion), David Chancellor and John Kinross; from the London Film Productions, Ingram Fraser and T. Marfi; G. M. Hoellerling, Managing Director of the Academy Cinema; the Secretary of the British
Board of Film Censors; the Director and Secretary of the British Film Institute; John Argyle, Managing Director of Argyle Productions and many other distinguished members of the Profession.

On Wednesday, July 20th, the Executive Committee of O.C.I.C. entertained Sir Michael Balcon, Sir Alexander Korda and Mr. J. Arthur Rank to dinner at the Café Royale. The occasion was intended as a friendly gesture on the part of the International Catholic Cinema Office to the most representative of the film magnates in this country. The dinner was an informal one, but speeches were made by Father Hilary Carpenter, O.P., and Father Burke on behalf of the C.F.I. and by Dr. Jean Bernard and Dr. Andre Ruszkowski on behalf of the O.C.I.C. Each of the distinguished guests replied and declared his great interest in the work of the International Catholic Film Office and his gratification at the constructive approach to the problems of the cinema which, it was evident, was the preoccupation of the Church. On their part they promised to encourage the production of intelligent and worthwhile films, to which the intelligent audiences, which it was the purpose of O.C.I.C. to train, might go.

In addition to the persons already mentioned, there were present Mlle. Yv. de Hemptinne, General Secretary of O.C.I.C., Mrs. Margaret Moultrie, Assistant Secretary of C.F.I., Dr. Charles Reinert, Vice-President of O.C.I.C. for Switzerland and Signor Lieto Monaco, President of Orbis Films, Rome.

The O.C.I.C. delegates were the guests of the Argyle Productions at Nettlefold Studios, where they saw work being done on The Girl who Couldn't Quite, the film version of Leo Mark's outstanding play. The film stars Betty Stockfield, who played in the stage version, and Iris Hoey and Bill Owen. After they had inspected the studios and been entertained to an enormous tea, the Argyle Productions most generously delivered the delegates by charabanc to the Hammer Theatre, in Wardour Street, where they were to see a special showing of Joan of Arc.

This film was only one of several which gave the General Council something of the atmosphere of a Film Festival and helped to provide the background against which these General Council Meetings are usually held. Scott of the Antarctic was also shown to the O.C.I.C. A special screening of unusual interest was that of Sorcier du Ciel, arranged by M. Georges Arnul, with the co-operation of the Institute Francaise and the French Embassy. A full account of this is given elsewhere, as also of Crucifers to Walsingham, the Premiere of which was held at the Tatler Theatre, Charing Cross Road, London, W.C., on Tuesday, July 19th.

"Scoops"

Other films of particular interest and poignancy were two 16mm. two-reelers made in Hungary, by the two Hungarian delegates and smuggled out of that unhappy country. They showed life in Budapest before and during the war, and demonstrated most graphically the affection in which the heroic Cardinal Mindszenty was held by his people. We saw the Cardinal surrounded by crowds of devout Hungarians, both during processions and also more informally during food-relief scenes.

Another "scoop" was the film made by J. P. Chartier of the Pope's first television address. Together with scenes from an ordination, shots of the Holy Father inspecting the television equipment at the Vatican, the film includes a seven minute address made by His Holiness specially for this occasion. The film was brought to this country and shown to O.C.I.C. by the courtesy of the French Embassy.

During the week, the Archbishop of Concepcion, Chile, Mgr. Alfredo Silva da Santiago, who was representing his country at the General Council, said Mass for the intentions of O.C.I.C. at St. James' Church.
Our Lady of Fatima

A film unit composed of members of the Catholic Film Institute and Andrew Buchanan’s technical team, will go to Fatima at the end of September, to make a film which will tell the story of the apparitions of Our Blessed Lady to the three Portuguese children in 1917.

The project is the fruit of the devotion of Kathleen Rowland to Our Lady of Fatima. Readers of the Universe will be familiar with that journal’s enterprising attitude towards any expression of Catholic Action. Kathleen Rowland it is who has been the inspiration of the Fatima Rosary Crusade which the Universe inaugurated. Flowing from this came the idea to tell the general public through the medium of film, of the sensational messages which Our Blessed Lady gave the world through the instrumentality of the three children, Jacinta, Francesca and Lucia. Kathleen Rowland, who is the Film Critic of the Universe, wrote the script for a full-length documentary and with the enthusiastic support of Father Hilary Carpenter, O.P., Chairman of the C.F.I., launched an appeal for the funds necessary to make the film. The response has been amazing. Every section of the community has sent in a donation to help make known the message of Fatima. Archbishops and old-age pensioners; out-of-work actresses and invalid mothers; soldiers and housewives; all are keen to make use of this powerful medium to spread Our Lady’s warning to the world.

We shall give further reports of this interesting enterprise in due course. In the meantime, it is a valuable try-out for the big appeal which the C.F.I. is shortly to make for the funds to produce the large-scale feature film on the life of St. Thomas More. Mention has also been made of a film to deal with the life of Blessed Edmund Campion. There is no lack of suitable subjects for films of Catholic interest in this country but we shall have to tread warily, in order not to weary the general public. It is right and proper that we should start out on this new pilgrimage of worthwhile film production under the guidance of Our Lady.

“Crucifers to Walsingham”

It has been pointed out that there was a serious omission in the list of persons mentioned in the programme, which was handed out at the premiere of this film. We gladly take this opportunity to say that members of the Catholic Truth Society played a considerable part in initiating and carrying out the plan to make the film and one of their staff was actually with the unit which was present at Walsingham on the closing day of the Pilgrimage. To all those unnamed friends and well-wishers, who played in this way the important but unglamorous role of Chorus in this Play, our warmest gratitude.

O.C.I.C. Prix

At the General Council Meeting of O.C.I.C., the Catholic Film Institute was honoured in the person of its Secretary, who was elected President of the Jury of Adjudicators which is to award the O.C.I.C. Prix at the Venice Film Festival to the film which “contributes most to the spiritual and moral betterment of humanity”.

Office “Staff” on Vacation

We hereby offer apologies to any correspondents whose letters may have been unusually neglected during the month of August. Our devoted but overworked staff (all three of us) have been enjoying, we hope, a change from the atmosphere of film and its octopus-like convolutions.
A Message from the President of O.C.I.C.

As we come to the close of the General Council of the O.C.I.C. and before leaving the hospitable soil of Britain, I feel called upon to express to the officers of the Catholic Film Institute our admiration for their intelligent, devoted and constructive work for the delegates of the 16 countries represented at our reunion.

Far from restricting themselves to a purely defensive attitude against the dangers of the cinema, the executive of the C.F.I. have succeeded, in spite of the special difficulties which exist in a country which has only a small minority of Catholics, in creating and developing cordial contacts with both the specialised cinema press and the cinema industry itself.

We are glad to notice how efficacious this attitude already is and what promise it has for the future. We have also admired the truly international spirit of collaboration which animates your work. Since the film is an international medium, the solutions of the problems which it presents can only be reached by the national centres to the extent to which they recognise the need of an international effort in this direction. The C.F.I. has understood this most admirably and we congratulate them thereon.

It would be impossible for me to end this message without expressing to the C.F.I., in the name of all the delegates, our warmest thanks for the remarkable manner in which they organised the meetings of the General Council and for the charming and generous reception which they gave to all the participants. The pleasant atmosphere which the C.F.I. was able to create, contributed, without any doubt, to the success of the meetings.

To these expressions of gratitude, I add our good wishes for the continued success of the C.F.I. and their excellent organ Focus. May they underline still more the part which the Church must play in a domain, the importance of which, perhaps, only the future will fully reveal.

Jean Bernard,
President of the International Catholic Cinema Office.

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Summer School
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Practical work will be a special feature

Applications to the Hon. Secretary, Catholic Film Institute,
20 Ovington Square, London, S.W.3.
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir,
Andrew Buchanan's second article on "Film Editing" made good reading. He clearly shows the paramount importance of intelligent editing, in the making of a successful film.

But Mr. Buchanan makes one distressing point. He states, while dealing with the final stages of editing, that: "after all, sound is the governable factor—" This statement might well account for the host of thoughtlessly edited pictures in this country.

With the graduation to direction (and Hollywood) of such first-rate cutters as David Lean, William Hornbeck, Otto Ludwig, Charles Frend, Thorold Dickinson and Robert Hamer and others—a less imaginative, less courageous type of "film cutter" occupy the cutting-rooms in British Studios. These timid technicians nibble like mice at the film, worry oh so much, about perfect scene matching and allow sound to govern their every move to the point of jerkiness and slowing up the action or tempo. Where a ruthless elimination of a badly directed reaction, or close-up or even a whole scene would benefit a film enormously, the very thought of cutting out dialogue too, fills many of them with horror. It is significant that David Lean, our most successful film director, and considered the finest film editor in the country, used to cut his "rushes" without the sound track, merely fitting his dialogue track to what was left of the picture, even using this method in the final stages of editing.

A more courageous approach to cutting, imagination to edit, coupled with a firm conviction that what is projected on to the screen is all-important and must never be dictated to by the sound track, will bring back to British films that velvety-smooth, beautifully slick editing one finds in Hollywood productions.

Yours truly,
RAFAEL NEWHOUSE,
Sound Editor.

MUDDLED

Sir,
Rafael Newhouse is welcome to his views on the critical value of "V"s contributions to Focus, but he surely misreads both Focus and the few discerning national dailies whose critics went to the trouble of seeing and praising The Window long before the Academy paid them the compliment of putting it on for a West End run. The critics, on the whole, know their job pretty well and the really good film does not often get past them. Their value can be assessed by the money spent by a certain noble magnate to protest all over the hoardings of London, when his colourful but corny expedition into Scottish history met with the fate it deserved at their hands.

Incidentally, can Rafael Newhouse claim, as "V" does, that the misquoting of the actor's name in the title of the review under fire, was a complete lapsus calami? Otherwise his Fighting Father O'FLYNN looks a little silly! As for mis-spellings of names: after I had reached the century in compiling mistakes in cinema trade papers, I ceased to be so sensitive about such things.

V.

50,000 — OUR TARGET FOR 1950 !
If every reader of "FOCUS" secured another four readers we should have a circulation of fifty thousand.
VISUAL AIDS FOR THE TEACHING OF FRENCH

By Our Educational Panel

En Route pour Paris. 4 Film Strips prepared by the Daily Mail School Aids Department to illustrate the story of a visit to Paris. Text published by Harrap.

Films and text could be adapted to suit knowledge and ability of pupils from 14 years upwards. Though the text is mostly in the present tense, the range of vocabulary is wide and the conversational idiom varied. Adult students should find it useful. For younger pupils films and text together would prove more valuable as an attractive means of revising work done than as a method of breaking new ground. Where pupils are planning a visit to Paris the film strips would be an excellent preparation, and the text likewise. After the visit, the films alone could be most enjoyable, particularly strip C which will be appreciated best by those who know Paris and the surrounding country. The views are well chosen and the photography is very good. Strip A and the latter half of strip D illustrate the usual journey by train, boat and aeroplane. They could be used with any text-book dealing with "Le Voyage", a common theme in most French Courses. The second half of strip B will appeal more to girls than to boys as it illustrates the shopping done only by "Yvonne".

All the film strips, and particularly strip C, provide material for extensive work in the study of the French language, customs and history of Paris. They will not make the teacher's work less, but will add to the interest of the subject. Oral work done without any text can be as simple or as difficult as the teacher likes to make it. The film strips supply sufficient variety of subject matter to give the freedom and scope necessary for a useful lesson.

Art et Civilisation. Presented by Lumina, Bloud & Gay, Paris. XVIIe Siècle, Bc. 7, 10; XVIIIe Siècle, Bc. 7, 11.

The XVII C. strip opens with a portrait of Louis XIII and de Laynes, this introduces falconry—then follows a very comprehensive series of pictures intended to give us a glimpse of the social and political history of the Grand Siècle, together with the arts: architecture, sculpture, painting, engraving, furniture, costumes, military art, as well as literature. In fact, this tableau is so comprehensive that it runs the risk of confusing the mind of those insufficiently acquainted with these topics. It is therefore best suited for revision and a final bird's eye view of all the matter previously studied—and seen at closer range, for some reproductions of famous paintings are very small and the photography rather indistinct.

The XVIII C. strip takes us through the reigns of Louis XV, Louis XVI, the French Revolution, the Empire, with the same completeness. Both strips end by a short series of photos showing Art in Europe of the corresponding period. (Suitability: H.S.C. class.)


La Fontaine would be very pleased with this attempt at making children understand, through pictures, what he really wanted to say in his fable. Dame Belette, Janot Lapin, and their ill-chosen judge Raminagrobis, are dressed up, but are none the less real animals, though human enough in expression.
and conduct to make us realise that they are performing "La Comédie Humaine". These clever drawings are sure to be liked by the children and to help them to express ordinary actions and feelings in the French language. "Les Souhaits Imprudents", on the same strip, a well-known and simple story, could be used with beginners.

(Suitability: 12 years old.)

LE PETIT NAVIRE. Editions Filmostat,
No. 8038, 14 Rue Taitbout, Paris.

This illustrates the song of the Petit Navire stranded on the high seas. The central figure, the little cabin-boy with his chubby checks, will attract the sympathy of everyone, especially in his hour of anxiety when threatened with being eaten up by a famished crew, he climbs the high mast and there beseeches God and His saints to come to his help. His little anxious face becomes serene again when falls the rain of fishes. The sub-titles are unfortunately in very small print; but the drawings are clear and should help the teacher to unfold the story in simple words for the benefit of young beginners.

"La France Monumentale et Artistique," Editions Filmées, 15 Rue d’Argenteuil, Paris. (Le Pays Basque and all following strips are lent, free of charge, by the French Tourist Office, 179 Piccadilly.)

LE PAYS BASQUE. Collection La Doue
France, Strip I, II, III.

Strip I shows us Bayonne with its cathedral, cloisters and arcades; from there we go to Biarritz, St. Jean de Luz, where we see the famous basque game, the "Fronton", thence to Hendaye, La Bidasoa, l’Ile des Faisans. At Sare we are shown the discoidal tomb-stone, at St. Jean Pied-de-Port a basque dancer. We come to the River Gave, get a pretty view of the village St. Engrace and its romanesque church. St. Palais offers us a very artistic and interesting inscription over the porch of a farm. And so we end our tour with the satisfied feeling of a tourist who has seen in a short time most of the characteristics of an old-fashioned French province which has singularly kept its ancient customs. And as the journey was taken by car we are not left with the impression of having been hurried through. This strip should provide material for a lecture in simple language adapted to the degree of proficiency reached by the listeners.

(Suitability: 14 to 15.)

VAISON-LA-ROMAINE, No. 866.

A small Provençal town situated in a charming countryside, and possessing a romanesque church, the ruins of a 10th century castle as well as a small arch which intrigues the passerby. In 1910 excavations were begun and the statue of a Roman Emperor came first to light, then the amphitheatre, then the city, the remnants of a basilica, and last of all, in 1934, "La Villasse". This true story proved most thrilling to a set of children who knew enough French to understand the sub-titles and the explanations given in French, and had just learnt about Roman houses and cities.

ARLES ET L’AME ANTIQUE, No. 868. ARLES ET L’AME CHRETIENNE, No. 869.

The first rouses the same kind of interest as Vaison-la-Romaine since it shows a settlement of the 4th century B.C., when Arles was a market place where Greeks from Marseilles and Gauls met freely. Its monuments are Gallo-Greek in style, whilst the plan of the town, with its amphitheatre, arena, forum, is Roman.

The second strip shows the juxtaposition of Arles-la-Chrétienne to ancient Arles.

NOTRE-DAME DE PARIS. Same series as above, Nos. 775-79. 5 strips: Présentation de Notre-Dame, Chronique de Notre-Dame, 2 strips, Les Sculptures, Les Visions Imprévues et le Trésor.

Very good set of strips. Présentation de Notre-Dame has first class photo-
graphs of the different views of the cathedral; *Les Sculptures*, *Le Visions Imprôvues et le Trésor* complete the description, whilst the *Chronique de Notre Dame* showing how this shrine has witnessed many of the most important events in the history of France should prove very valuable to the teacher.

(Suitability: H.S.C. class.)

**LA CATHÉDRALE DE STRASBOURG, Nos. 780-84.**

Another series of 5 strips of similar import to *Notre-Dame*. Good photographs. The titles are as follows: *Sa Naissance et son Développement; Son Achevement et sa Gloire; L'Ascension de la plus haute Flèche du Monde; Les Portails et le Pilier des Anges, L'Histoire Sainte contée par la Grande Statuaire; Sourires et Grimaces de la Petite Statuaire.*

**FILMS**

**LE RHONE.** Sound film, 11 mins. Hire: to French Tourist Office, 179 Piccadilly, free of charge.

This film is intended to show how the force of a very rapid and tumultuous river has been seized and transformed into electric power at the famous Génissiat barrage. Its title is therefore a little misleading, since we should naturally expect to be shown the course of this beautiful and, up to this day, irrepressible river. We actually see just enough of its turbulent waters to appreciate the difficulties man's genius had to overcome. Indeed, the process through which the Rhône is forced into the channel prepared for it illustrates vividly (and perhaps a little too swiftly) man's power over nature in an overwhelming display of ingenuity and technical skill. The film should prove useful with boys of 15 to 16, provided they were sufficiently acquainted with the French language, as the rhythm is very rapid, both as regards movement and sound.

**TERRE BASSE ALPINE.** Sound film, 22 mins. Hire: as above.

Here again man's industry has been given first place though the successive pictures of potato growing, hay-making, aniseed gathering, take us through beautiful country. Whilst the peasants cut hay and corn with the scythe and even sickle on the slopes, modern machinery is used freely on flat ground. A characteristic feature is that of the quickness and dexterity of the French peasant; never a useless movement or a false stroke. Unfortunately the film reviewed was rather old so that the sound was indistinct and practically impossible to follow.

It is to be hoped that soon the F.T.O. will find their way to renew their stock of otherwise interesting films.

These films are part of a series of 28 films lent to schools by the French Tourist Office, and are not primarily intended for teaching. The F.T.O. asks that they be shown to 16 year olds or over, as the talking is too quick for those who are not quite proficient in the French language. Without the sound they would be valued by a teacher keen to show the country and able to give the accompanying lecture in French.
ROSARY FILM IN OCTOBER

ANDREW BUCHANAN, who directed "Visitation", will make "Pilgrimage to Fatima", the documentary film that will bring to the screen the message Our Lady entrusted to three little children.

It is the self-sacrifice of hundreds of lovers of Our Lady which has made this film possible.

Thanks to hundreds of gifts of shillings, half-crowns and pounds from labourers, invalids, Bishops, pensioners, groups of neighbours, Catholic society groups, almost every type of person, the first half of the film is already paid for.

A film unit will leave London for Fatima on September 29th, the feast of St. Michael and the Holy Angels. Shooting will begin at the shrine on the first Saturday in October—the month of the Rosary.

These are messages we have received from some of the people who are making Our Lady's film:

"Here is £1 in thanksgiving to Our Lady for getting us a nice little home and asking her to bless us in it . . ."

"A little gift for Our Lady from Mary" (half-a-crown enclosed).

"This £3 is from our family of 12 in thanksgiving for our eldest boy's vocation to the priesthood. He had the great privilege of visiting Our Lady's shrine at Fatima in 1945 since when he has joined the Irish Dominicans and we hope with God's help he will be ordained in a few years."

"My son is in hospital. I beg Our Lady to help him, but if it is not her Divine Son's Will, I beg of her to take him under her mantle to Heaven."

"Begging Our Lady's care and protection for a coming baby."

"In a time of trial I have found much joy and consolation through the message of Fatima."

"A grateful father and mother of five children," send 5s.

"In thanksgiving to Our Lady for helping my husband to get work after nine months' unemployment. Please pray now that he returns to God."

Will YOU help us to finish Our Lady's film?

Please send your gift to: Fatima Film, The Catholic Film Institute, 20 Ovington Square, London, S.W.3.

You would help us, too, by enclosing a stamped, addressed envelope for our grateful acknowledgment.
CATHOLIC FILM INSTITUTE

I wish to become a member of the Catholic Film Institute, and enclose remittance value..................for..................year(s) subscription.

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Andrew Buchanan’s celebrated film on the work of the Medical Missionaries of Mary. 7 reels. Monochrome. Hiring fee: £5. All profits devoted to the work of the missions.

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Alan Turner’s film on the place which Mass occupies in the everyday life of all working people. 4 reels. Kodachrome. Hiring fee: £3.
Also available. Silent Version. Monochrome. Suitable for instructional purposes. This Silent Version omits the introductory and final work shots of the colour version. Hiring fee: 30/-.

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Dick Powell    Evelyn Keyes

"THIS MAN IS MINE"
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COVER PERSONALITY

GEORGES ROLLIN

The exceptional opportunity of seeing the film Sorcier du Ciel, given to the members of the Catholic Film Institute during the recent General Council Meeting of O.C.I.C. in London, seems to demand some attempt to outline the personality of the player of the principal role.

I admit at once that the task is somewhat beyond me for, as far as I know, only once before has this actor been seen in England. To attempt an estimate of a film actor on the strength of two parts, therefore, is, even for the writer of film publicity, very much to make bricks without straw.

In spite of this exasperating lack of material, however, the effort of hunting for details about the career of Georges Rollin, has itself provided a picture of a personality, obviously rare in the world of film, whose very dearth of interesting biographical “stories” tells us more than the column-long “copy” of less elusive stars. This note would have appeared in last month’s issue of Focus, with the notices on Sorcier du Ciel, had we been able to find a still of Georges Rollin suitable for our cover design. It transpired that, like our Alec Guinness after his appearance in Oliver Twist, photos of the actor out of character were not easily obtainable. Some embryo stars stud the photographic firmament with studies of themselves in every conceivable and inconceivable posture, in the hope, presumably, of attracting the attention of exploring studio astronomers. Not so Georges Rollin. Eventually, a special demand to Paris brought to our office the pleasing portrait which adorns our cover this month. I make bold to say that it reveals a great deal about a very amiable personality. Added to the clues which percolate through his playing of the role of the Curé d’Ars in Sorcier du Ciel and the positive information which he gives of himself in an article in the second number of International Film Review, it is safe to say that here we have a man unspoiled by the glamour of the studio, capable of taking a great deal of trouble to bring to the screen the fullness of the characters he is asked to portray, having a very definite sense of the moral responsibility of the film actor and, most important of all, recognising the source of all spiritual power and knowing where to seek it.

The other film in which Londoners, at least, have had the opportunity of studying Georges Rollin, is Goupi Mains Rouges. In this intriguing essay on the evolution of a French peasant family, Rollin played the part of Goupi Monsieur, the one member of the family who has had the advantage (?) of a Parisian education. He finds the country frightening and its inhabitants inscrutable, but he is who eventually reaps the benefit of the peasants’ deep-rooted love of the soil. This part demands no very great acting skill, nevertheless, Rollin brought to it a charming and appealing insouciance which made it stand out in spite of the strongly limned main characters.

In the same way, his quality of charm and apparent indifference to the histrionic aspects of the character of St. John Baptist Vianney, have the effect of bringing out into strong relief, the basic simplicity of the Curé d’Ars, that foundation on which was built the special manifestation of the grace of God in Vianney’s soul.

In this part Rollin is much happier when left to himself, so to say. When the make-up man gets to work on him, both to depict austerity and old-age, the result is unfortunate. He has to fight to bring through the stuff he is wearing, the soul of the saint which he has hitherto revealed to us.

In the article in the International Film Review, Rollin tells us of his efforts to achieve something of the spirit which moved the Curé d’Ars. He mentions the difficulty which the screen has in depicting the spiritual. He goes on to say: “Actors are not engaged because they bear a physical resemblance to the parts they play, nor because they possess the right attitude of soul”. In the case of Rollin, the first is not true. It was precisely because he bore a strong physical resemblance to John Baptist Vianney that he got the part. The second, in his case, is also not true, for he went to great trouble to try to acquire something of the right attitude of soul for the part. In this he reveals himself most of all as a person to be watched on the screen of France. May he carry his integrity through all obstacles to help to bring to the cinema the ideals he has in mind.

John Vincent.
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By Andrew Buchanan

The Third Man
Winter Meeting
My Dream is Yours
Madness of the Heart

Some Films Reviewed
Notes of a Juryman
Decisions of the International Jury of O.C.I.C.

Letters to the Editor
Visual Aids to Local Studies
By Our Educational Panel

The Critic Criticised
A Film of World Importance

About this time last year, a few of us were sitting in the Vicomte Georges de la Grandière’s study, listening to his plans for the filming of *The Divine Tragedy*. I remember that I was fascinated by the daring of the project and moved to enthusiasm by the sublimity of the ideas which inform the film. The Vicomte told us that this film would emerge as a challenge to the modern world. In portraying the drama of the Passion and Death of Our Lord, it would ask us whether we were living our lives according to the teachings of Christ or nailing Him to the Cross, day in and day out, by our sins and selfishness.

World Interest

This noble theme has captured the sympathy of the Christian world. In England, Sir Stafford Cripps, Chancellor of the Exchequer, has shown his interest by allowing the export from the Treasury of £50,000 toward the total cost of the film, which stands at £400,000. Several of our daily papers have given publicity to *The Divine Tragedy* and emphasised its spiritual and social importance. There are two articles, one by the Baroness Ravensdale and one by Charles Graves, in *Everybody’s* (September 19th issue) which are well worth reading.

*The Divine Tragedy* may surpass all other films. Talent, time and money will not be spared. Abel Gance has devoted twenty-five years to the script and the whole story has been submitted to the most renowned theologians in Great Britain, U.S.A. and the Continent, who have given it their unanimous approval. Over a hundred people, including priests and monks, were tested for the rôle of Our Lord before the ideal was found.

Story for “Focus”

Editors are ever hungry for good stories; when, therefore, I saw Vicomte Georges de la Grandière at the première of *Crucifers to Walsingham* I (of course) asked him if he would write an article on *The Divine Tragedy* for Focus. He smiled and said . . . “Of course . . . I will give it to you now.” He opened his brief-case and handed me the “story” which we are publishing in this issue of Focus.

Dedicated Men

The men engaged in the making of *The Divine Tragedy* are dedicated men. They approach their work after the manner of the medieval architects who built cathedrals to sing the praises of the Creator and to broadcast the “Good News” of the Christian Revelation. Editor.
FILM GLOSSARY

No. 9

WILD TRACKS

By ANDREW BUCHANAN

Some film terms are mere slang, and quite misleading, but "wild tracks" have been aptly named for the very simple reason that they are wild, and not tamed. The majority of sound tracks are recorded in synchronisation with visuals, of course, one camera filming picture, the other filming the voices and sounds occurring in that picture; both run from the same source of electric power, at the same speed. Such tracks are tamed, or harnessed to their visuals, whereas wild tracks are unrelated to visuals when recorded.

Usually, they are known as effects tracks, and cover such varied sounds as the breaking of waves on rocks, birdsong, marching feet, explosions, cheering, mass singing—it being quite unnecessary to record such sounds with their corresponding visuals in the first instance. Just a small mobile recording unit, or even a tape recording machine, can capture a multitude of sounds without being chained to picture cameras. This gives as much freedom to recording as is given to cameras filming mute scenes unrelated to microphones. Wild tracks, dealing with general sounds, or the singing of crowds, do not demand the same accurate fitting to visuals as do synchronous tracks. Instead, they provide backgrounds. Let it not be thought, however, that they are of secondary importance. Sound effects can bring a film to life in magical fashion if assembled with skill, and they point the way to the making of films vested with maximum pictorial movement, because they are not governed by dialogue tracks. The average film centres around and depends upon the dialogue of characters seen speaking on the screen, and, for the purpose of heightening dramatic appeal, it may also have a musical background, which, if recorded badly, has a way of pushing into the foreground, and drowning the dialogue. That ruins a film. Sensitively handled, and introduced at the right moments, music, heard more or less unconsciously, can help the visuals to flow and greatly increase
the appeal of a story. Of course, when natural sounds occur, as they always do, in dialogue scenes, they are recorded normally, but the value of the wild track lies in applying it to scenes which may contain no dialogue at all. In the factual film field, where so many films are produced in the first instance in silent form by unrestricted cameras, a well-scored wild track of sounds will add enormously to the reality of the visuals. But it needs to be continuous.

It would never do to insert a track of the sound of a ship's engines, and then forget to obtain a track of the sound of the sea being ploughed up by the bows of the ship, or of the wind, or the cries of gulls.

Above all, wild tracks can be woven into music, one sometimes superseding the other, and creating a symphony of sound-music, and some of us believe that this kind of accompaniment to visuals which are self-explanatory as distinct from the dialogue scene in the tradition of the stage, is the formula for the truly universal film, understandable by all peoples. At present, however, dialogue is the accepted method of narration, and whilst this is so, the international picture language of the screen will continue to be confined to national circulation. This will not always be so, for the time will come when the screen will present a universal language composed of visuals, natural sounds, and music.

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The title of this film is not, alas, misleading. It is the story of a Gaiety Girl who makes good in the good (or bad) old days of Edward VII, from her début at the New Bedford, Camden Town, until she becomes the rich and fashionable Duchess of Wellwater. We have seen this sort of thing many times before — even in glorious technicolor, and to the accompaniment of old-time musical numbers. The humour is what we would expect of those "naughty" times, and there is an implicit assumption that the younger male aristocracy of the day occupied their time lounging outside the stage-doors of the Gaiety Theatre; nor, it seems, did marriage draw them away from their vigils.

Jean Kent as "Trottie" captures much of the atmosphere of Edwardian life; James Donald (Lord Landon, her husband) might have stepped straight out of Debrett's Peerage (1908), and Michael Medwin (Monty, Marquis of Maidenhead) from the pages of P. G. Wodehouse. There are some genuinely amusing scenes of family life both in the back parlour of Mr. True's Art Shop (he is an expert "toucher-up" of pictures), and in the stately rooms of Wellwater House. For the rest, as you must have gathered by now, I was not on the whole greatly impressed with this very light—or should we say slight?—comedy.

P.


Experiments in the cinema are welcome. And so it is interesting when a film—and an M.-G.-M. film at that—steers entirely free of facile glamour and superficial romance and has an all male cast.

Though the scene is English, the atmosphere is American, for all the action takes place at a U.S. bomber station. The film is quasi-documentary, a matter of targets and priorities, losses, strategy and morale. The problem of immediate losses weighed against the destruction of vital German production is stated without subtlety and solved with military orthodoxy. And, of course, it is assumed that non-American contributions to victory are negligible.

Perhaps the picture will be a consolation to Americans who suffered bereavement as the result of bombing raids. But otherwise it seems ill-timed. If the war were either more recent or more remote, perhaps, one would be more in the mood for it. But the film has no relevance to contemporary reality and, considered as entertainment (by which, of course I don't mean light entertainment, which is not intended to be) I thought it often lacked tautness.

Among the preparations for a raid only one of a spiritual character appeared, and that was the Catholic chaplain exercising his priesthood.

Q.

In the course of filming, Cockpit seems to have lived up to its name. Several spots of bother, one has heard. I lent them a stole (unblessed and unused by a priest, I may say for the benefit of the punctilious) for the wedding scene. Then months afterwards they wanted it again, since much of the film was being re-taken.

They assured me that there was nothing about the wedding to which I could possibly object. So before I saw the film I was naturally a bit perturbed to read in C. A. Lejeune's column what the Polish journalist had written to her. What he means by the wedding being invalid in any church (italics mine) I don't know. Admittedly the canonical position is a bit peculiar, but mightn't the old Polish priest have possessed delegation to assist at the marriage of the "displaced" Catholics to whom he was attached? And in any case there was apparent danger of death and no other priest was available owing to isolation. I leave it to the canonists and hope for the best. Especially as it was my stole.

As for the Christmas carol at the wedding, I really think that might have been the only religious music such a scratch choir as appeared on the screen could muster in the circumstances. Several Poles have described as "perfect" the Polish accent of the choir, which made the recording, and which the journalist calls "atrocious". I think he overstates his case, not least when denouncing Englishmen for insulting the English!

But he has a case. "I don't think it's funny, I think it's terrible," will be the reaction of many to the plight of displaced persons. It is not everyone who realises that life is only tolerable because terrible things can also have a funny side. But for the British to make a film about misfortunes they have not shared, is to invite resentment. With a few exceptions like The Third Man, they will be more successful if they leave "foreigners" alone and make films about (say) Test Matches.

Siobhan McKenna and William Hartnell were presumably chosen for their aptitude for the parts they play and Dennis Price (again I am presuming) for his unique and frequently exercised gift for making love with the tip of his nose.

I find just now that I am getting like Aesop and the Duchess in "Alice in Wonderland" and almost finding morals in films. And the moral of this is (apparently) that the peoples of the world will only unite if there is an outbreak of the Black Death.


This is the story about divorce in relation to the child of the marriage. Christopher Blake, a boy of 13, is the son of parents who are about to be divorced. Ted Donaldson gives a very clever study of a remarkable boy who loves both his parents, and is faced with the problem of choosing between them. In his day-dreams, he finds his problem solved, but they do not help much in the realities of life. In fact these dreams have very little effect on what happens, except to make the whole thing more interesting and to bring home to the audience the bad effects of divorce. It ends in court where a sympathetic judge, distinguishing between divorces that are necessary and those which are due to misunderstanding, leads the boy to a decision by which his parents realise that they still love one another. In the happy ending we are spared the kisses, which in fact indicates how well the emphasis is kept on the child's side of the question. This is a very good film, in which Ted Donaldson is outstanding and the others adequate, and, allowing for the purely natural approach to the divorce problem, of a good moral tone.

Some years ago Douglas Newton wrote an excellent novel which was runner up for one of the important literary prizes. It was called "Low Ceilings" and the theme was the victory of artistic integrity over expediency in the life of an architect. It was a quiet tale of inner conflict and, necessarily, there had to be temptations and the price to be paid. Here we have the same theme speeded up, externalised, glamorised and rendered more pompous—for now it has to be a success story—in an American novel called "The Fountainhead", written into a screen play by the author herself, Ayn Rand.

It may be deduced that this is a serious subject. And the film attempts something serious in presenting it. We are inclined to dismiss films with light-hearted pats for providing just entertainment and no more. However, with seriousness comes responsibility for critics, as well as for the film industry. In a moment I shall try and summarise the story and I think the reader will see for himself that the criss-crossing strands, so far from isolating the issue and making it stand forth clear and unmistakable for a judgment of any value to be made, complicate and confuse the issue.

The story

Howard Roark (Gary Cooper), an architect, will have no truck with an architecture which is not sincere, true and functional. He refuses to do work which fails to satisfy his own sense of values (Eric Gill would have gone all the way with him there). Of course he becomes hard up, so he goes to a quarry in Connecticut where he works an electric drill. There follow some extraordinary encounters with Dominique Francon (Patricia Neale), the quarry owner's daughter.

Coincidences multiply. Her father is also a successful architect, who has taken into partnership young Peter Keating, who has just jilted her. Again a coincidence, she has a job with the sensational newspaper The Banner and its publisher, Gail Wynand. She and Keating (Kent Smith) and Wynand (Raymond Massey) are all destined to play big parts in the life and career of the anonymous quarryman. The train of events is already started when in her very presence Wynand bribed Keating away from her. It is because of the jilting that she goes into the country.

So back in Connecticut she comes upon Roark at work with his drilling. She looks, speaks and behaves as if she were in some tough kind of trance, "all passion spent" and then some. She is very unmaidenly in her pursuit of this unknown workman until he disappears.

The reason for his departure is that a worth-while commission has come his way at last. He gets on with the job, but the architectural expert of The Banner induces Wynand, as a kind of silly season stunt to initiate a violent smear campaign against the Enright Building and the unconventional architecture it stands for. Now Dominique as a protest, not knowing the identity of Roark, but for justice sake, resigns her job, Home Design columnist, on The Banner. She and Roark meet, to her great surprise, at the formal opening of the in every way extraordinary Enright Building he has designed. She loves him very much, is afraid of the opposition he has still to face and tries to bribe him into safety with an offer of marriage. Again this mysterious integrity comes in, although for the life of me I cannot see why they don't marry. But with like nobility of mind they don't! Instead she marries Wynand, making it clear that she doesn't love him.

Some years later Wynand, forgetting all that his Banner had done to Roark, commissions him to build a country house, a temple fortress is the idea, for his nice but never loving wife. Roark does it and does it his own way. Everyone is very honourable and Wynand and Roark become fast friends, to the increasing discomfiture of Dominique.
Meanwhile the hare to Roark's tortoise, Peter Keating, has lost his vogue as a successful architect and he begs Roark, for old time's sake to supply him with plans for a great new estate, allowing them to be submitted over the name of Keating. Our hero agrees, provided the job is done strictly as designed. In fact façades and frills are added. Strangely enough there appear to be no legal means of redress, so the injured Roark blows up the buildings with dynamite, gives himself up and is released on bail. Our old friend the Banner's architectural expert, Ellsworth Toohey (Robert Douglas), turns up again as a diabolus ex machina and organises a successful agitation against Roark, which even Wynand and his Banner cannot arrest. Wynand puts up a good fight for his friend but in the end does a Judas act and eventually pays the Judas price of suicide. Meanwhile, by a massive speech in his own defence, Roark secures a verdict of not guilty and is free. Dominique is also free of her unloved husband. They marry!

The story is too complicated and too long, as well as in parts too sententious and too slow. Quite a nice chunk could have been omitted by dispensing altogether with Ellsworth Toohey, the architectural expert of The Banner, who pops up now and then as the man who knows what is good and true and persistently and designedly opposes and persecutes it. Neither his motive nor his power is satisfactorily indicated. Opposition to genius is sufficiently explained by the self-protecting fears of the mediocre.

I concede that artistic integrity was vital to Howard Roark, but I'm not sure, judging from the samples of his art, that society had not right of honourable self-defence! His court speech was terrible. The unfortunate actor, Gary Cooper, could hardly get it across—too long (a very long five minutes) and not convincing. Take his dictum: "The world is suffering from an orgy of self-sacrifice," equating a despicable compromise with self-sacrifice. Any ordinary Christian should know that surrender to self (self-interest, self-indulgence, self pity and so on) is very different from surrender of self, self-sacrifice can only be regarded as surrender to self by writers and producers who have no idea worth anything in the field of ethics. And though religion and morality are never hinted at in this film, it does make a great bother about ethics.

X.


This film is a detective-thriller of the type which the Americans do so competently. A beautiful young girl is found dead in a cheap hotel in Chicago, and the first person on the scene happens to be a newspaper reporter. He discovers a diary containing the telephone numbers of various people, whom he rings up in an attempt to obtain some "human-interest" details of the girl's life. The reactions of these people are so extraordinary that he scents a mystery which he proceeds to solve. The story finally revealed is a sordid one. The girl has been the mistress of a wealthy man who, in a fit of drunken rage, strikes her and is led to believe that he has killed her. He is blackmailed by a gangster for whom it is essential to conceal the fact that the girl has been alive all the time and finally died from tuberculosis. The story ends with a gun-fight between the reporter and the gangster.

It is an exceedingly confused picture and the confusion is not lessened by the fact that there are several characters who look remarkably alike and all speak so rapidly that it is almost impossible to discover what is going on. The tension is well built up and the pace maintained, but there are moments of very bogus sentimentality. Perhaps the worst is at the end when the diary is solemnly burnt in a "sacramental urn"—whatever that may be.

The acting is as competent as one expects in this type of film. Though not very distinguished it could be a lot worse.

Mc.
The Divine Tragedy

A Synopsis  By Georges de la Grandiere

The film opens in the main hall of the Faculté de Médecine in Paris. A lecturer is showing us a documentary film about the winding sheet (linceul) of Christ which was found in Jerusalem. It is like the Holy Shroud of Turin; but because the author is unwilling to assume the authenticity of this relic, which is not of faith, the scene is not set in Turin. The lecturer presupposes, however, that he is demonstrating the shroud of Christ. As he indicates the marks of the Passion and sufferings of Christ imprinted on the winding sheet, and explains their physiology, there flits across the screen a shady character. It is Ferlussi, the personification of the devil, who is always prowling around to do us harm. We meet him throughout the film.

TRAGIC ANNOUNCEMENT

Quite suddenly the lecture is interrupted. The tragic announcement is made that the first atomic bombs have fallen on the world, that atomic clouds are spreading all around and claiming millions of victims. One valley, free, so far, from the terrible cloud, remains. To this modern "Noah's Ark" all types of beings rush to save themselves. The camera creates the vivid atmosphere of the apocalypse and depicts again all the wretchedness of the world such as we have seen in Europe, Palestine, China, India ... fleeing refugees, separated families; death in all its horrible aspects. This fleeing mass of humanity reaches the valley only to find the way blocked by an impassable mountain of rock. They can go no farther. They prepare to die. Passions become inflamed. In turn the angel in man and the beast in him gain the upper hand. In the Basilica, the sole remaining building, we witness the casting off of all restraint. Among the dying there is a prelate who has saved the winding sheet of Christ; among the living we see "Mado", the modern Mary Magdalene, and "Charon", the modern Judas, and "David" a mysterious person who symbolises Good as Ferlussi symbolises Evil.

THE SHROUD COMES ALIVE

At the summit of the mountain, there is a cave which is the home of the hermit Paul. We see him coming down the valley to bring help to mankind, to show them the way which he alone knows. But first the crowd must come together to ask God to hear their prayers. Paul seizes a large crucifix, to which he nails the Holy Shroud and with a resounding voice cries: CHRIST'S BANNER, HIS SHROUD. As if in reply a voice is heard: WHY SEEK YE THE LIVING AMONG THE DEAD. Then, in the midst of indescribable astonishment, the body of Christ, lying along the shroud, slowly rises. Through the medium of the Shroud Christ returns to earth. He is going to speak to the thousands of Jews among whom he lived yesterday and to the thousands of wretches to whom he has just appeared. We recognise on the biblical screen the Shroud (a crowd similar to that of the valley; the characters of today are like those of yesterday, indeed like those of all time, the clothes alone distinguish them. The crowd is divided into three groups: the faithful, the unbelievers, and the unstable, who are capable of better or of worse. The cinema has just taken us into the fourth dimension. Space and time are no more.

WE SEE JESUS

The camera has drawn nearer to the Shroud, which, like a biblical scene, now occupies the entire screen. We see

A thirty-year-old professor of philosophy will play the part of Our Lord
Jesus and Mary, His mother, and John and the disciples and Judas, in whom we recognise "Charon". We behold some of Christ's miracles: the blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the lepers are cleansed, the dead rise again.

Now, we see Jesus departing from these parts and followed by a great multitude. He takes a path up a mountain. In an extraordinary visual synchronisation, Paul carrying the winding sheet unfurled by the wind and also followed by a great crowd, ascends a mountain path. The ascent proceeds in a striking parallelism and the words of Christ, because they are eternal, apply to the modern world as much as to the world of the Jews. When Christ halts, Paul halts, for both the old world and the new world are about to hear the unforgettable Sermon on the Mount.

From the hearts of the thousands who have listened to Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, there ascends a mighty prayer, which will be said by millions of people during the next two thousand years. After Christ they repeat . . . Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name . . . deliver us from evil . . . Alone, hidden behind a boulder, stands Mary, who concludes the prayer with the word: AMEN.

THE PASSION

Now Christ, in the midst of His disciples, announces the approach of His Passion. Then follows the raising of Lazarus and the next evening the supper at Bethania in the house of Simon the leper, where Mary Magdalen anoints the feet of Jesus with precious ointment.

A short scene of lucid psychology explains the conflict of Judas, the treasurer who has taken from the community purse in order to buy land for himself; he is accused by Peter, John and Thomas, not because he betrayed Christ for money! His drama is the drama of thwarted love. Too much had he loved Jesus, who preferred outcasts and sinners . . . "I longed so to be with Him, to serve Him, to protect Him . . . to have Him all to myself! I hate you because you have all taken my place in His Heart. Now it is too late; there is no more room for Judas!"

John, who has told Jesus of Judas' theft, returns looking very pale and says, "The Master has said that Judas is our brother and that he could take as much silver as he wanted". The disciples fall to their knees and ask
his pardon. This is more than Judas can bear; this generosity wounds again, even more.

PALM SUNDAY

It is Palm Sunday. Jesus makes His entry into Jerusalem. He has just reached the top of the Mount of Olives, surrounded by a crowd, who wait but a sign to proclaim him king. Jesus speaks and His words addressed at once to the biblical crowd (the Jews) and the modern crowd become for us a thrilling actuality. "When you shall see the armies encompassing Jerusalem, know that the desolation thereof is at hand—when you see nation rise up against nation, there shall be tribulation such as has never been since the beginning of the world . . ."

During this time the chief council of the Sanhedrin decide to put Jesus to death in spite of the opposition of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. Annas is the chief priest, answerable before humanity for this decision. When Jesus has cast the buyers and sellers out of the temple there follows the Last Supper.

In the modern story, the story of Charon follows that of Judas, and the group of unbelievers try to climb higher as the danger increases, but the Miraculous Shroud holds them back.

We are in the Garden of Olives; the soldiers seize Jesus. In similar fashion the profane group of mockers try to seize possession of the Shroud. The faithful flee, David vanishes, Paul is wounded; they need Paul, however, to show them the way, so they allow him to carry the Shroud nailed to the Crucifix. Events hasten to the inevitable conclusion; Jesus is going to die to redeem mankind; Paul will die to defend the Cross.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

The soldiers of the Sanhedrin lead Christ to Pilate, then to Herod and again to Pilate. Here begins the most distressing part of the Divine Tragedy, "The Way of the Cross". A solemn yet triumphal symphony is used, one of such dramatic intensity that it cannot be described. The contrast between nature, where all things speak of joy and life, between the travellers who await Easter with all the excitement of a feast, and the sufferings of Jesus carrying His Cross in the midst of all these people who are hostile or indifferent is vividly portrayed.
Paul, too, climbs his Calvary, bleeding and falling beneath the weight of the cross. Scenes of the modern world are super-imposed on scenes of the biblical world until the moment when the Crucifix rises from the belvedere, which marks the top of the mountain.

Christ is nailed to the Cross. Between the rhythmic fall of the hammers we see the hands of Christ which rest on the heads of the Faithful, which heal the sick, which caress little children, which break bread . . .

On the modern screen, Paul is also at the top, but the crowd meet with a horrible deception, for separating them from the opposite side is an impassable abyss. They can go no further. Every man’s fury is unloosed upon Paul.

Here the camera takes the place of Christ and allows us to live subjectively His nightmare alternated by His face reflecting all the love that He infuses at this moment in the hearts of men. Jesus is on the Cross; but look, He is next to each one of us, He incorporates Himself in us, for the pouring out of His Blood vivifies, penetrates, binds with bonds both deep and mystical . . .

“IT IS CONSUMMATED”

Jesus is dead. We see the terror in the temple; Joseph of Arimathea goes to ask Pilate for the body of Jesus; then follows the conversion of Procula, Pilate’s wife.

Suddenly from the thousands of pilgrims comes a murmur, then a veritable chorus which rises up to the Cross, to Christ on the Cross at the foot of which all these people are kneeling and praying: “Our Father, Who art in heaven . . .”

In the meantime all the “Crucifixions” of the greatest painters follow each other on the screen. It is an outburst of pictorial genius: the masterpieces of religious art follow each other. Palestrina, Bach and Handel create their finest accents, the voice of Pascal speaks some of his finest lines.

TRIPLE SYMPHONY

Now comes the Deposition from the Cross, still accompanied by the triple symphony. Now the Resurrection, the apparition to Mary Magdalen, the well-known scene of the journey to Emmaus and that of the unbelief of Thomas; and lastly we come to the Mount of Olives.
Now, Christ is seen afar off on the Shroud-screen and so speaks to the man of today and to the Jews of yesterday. We notice that the wind has risen and is blowing strongly on the belvédère. "You are all witnesses of these things."

We see the moderns facing us while we hear the voice of Christ. "I go to send to you the gift promised by My Father." Now the disciples appear while Christ's voice continues.

THE ASCENSION

Christ is alone on the Mount of Olives. He seems to grow taller; His feet hardly touch the ground. He is surrounded by a supernatural light and at that moment the winding sheet shakes violently in a gust of wind and with a great noise flies away. There is left only a little patch of white, fluttering above the glaciers.

On the belvédère, the faithful manifest their emotion. They are at the end of their strength and will await death as a deliverance. Suddenly a man gives a shout of joy. He has seen someone appear on the unapproachable side of the mountain. It is David, strangely mysterious, strangely Christ-like. He has found the way to the other side and returns with helpers, good happy people of another land, where discord has not incensed the passions, where war and atomic bombs are unknown. Joy resounds on all sides; meanwhile, David disappears from our sight, walking towards the valley of fear, and all who watch him going farther and farther away ask themselves who he might be, or rather, not daring to say.

The years have passed. A basilica has been built on the belvédère to commemorate the great events. Paul's Crucifix is on the summit; two workmen are fixing it when suddenly they see a man coming towards them—it is David, who comes up to Christ on the cross and substitutes himself for Christ. Then he disappears and the carved wooden figure of Christ takes on again its eternal expression of fixed sadness. The two men fall to their knees while Christ replies to the last question asked of David:

"And behold I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world."

THE NEW CITY: Reconstructed in the shadow of the Cross
Cielo Sulla Pali

The O.C.I.C. Prize Film, Venice 1949

Alessandro intercepts Maria on her way to the fields

The Italian film, in common with others, as evidenced by the programmes at Venice, is suffering a serious decline from the excellence of the first post-war years. This decline is not inevitable, we hope, and is certainly not, so far, complete. The first post-war film of the great director, Augusto Genina, has all the marks of the Italian film renascence at its best; a simple story simply told, closeness to the soil, peasants playing their own natural parts, camera work that is a joy to behold, acute observation of life and conduct, and, over all, the sense of complete direction by a man with great understanding of what he wishes to show and the patience and tact necessary to achieve it.

The story is of the short life of Maria Goretti, the little Italian girl whose canonisation is to be one of the events of the Holy Year. This peasant child was one of a family whose near-destitution, as presented in the film, makes one wonder that the growth of Communism has not been greater in Italy. Such abject poverty is the fertile ground for the discontent which breeds economic and political disruption. The answer is, perhaps, that the simple but basic religious faith of such peasants, provides a bulwark against the erosion of human dignity and personality which is a feature of the development of Marxism in places where abject poverty is allied to urban materialism.

Certainly, the misery and destitution depicted in Cielo sulla palude, is the most terrible since that seen in Monsieur Vincent, with which film, this one deserves to be compared. But whereas in the French film there was, in spite of the charity of St. Vincent, a sense of hopelessness and despair among the outcasts of the Paris streets, the Italian film shows a spirit of religious endurance, which those close to the soil experience more easily than their unfortunate brethren of the man-made slums.

Maria and her family come eventually to live in a farm, where her father dies

The shadow of martyrdom falls across Maria.
of disease bred by want. Her mother becomes the housekeeper who constantly resists the amorous overtures of the heavy-drinking tenant. Maria herself works on the land and in the house and finds joy in the beauties of animal and woodland creation. Her sweet simplicity expresses itself in natural prayers to her father to protect them and her instruction of her younger brothers and sisters in the rudiments of religion. At her First Communion she promises herself to Our Lord and asks to be a martyr. She at length dies at the hands of the son of their employer, whose lustful advances she has several times rebuffed. She dies with words of forgiveness on her lips and a prayer for her murderer's conversion.

This terrible story is proffered with complete simplicity and unvarnished truth. The peasants whom Genina employed to act the parts of the Goretti family and their contemporaries, do so, under his skilful direction, with astonishing effect. The child who plays the part of Maria transmits, by means of the screen, the radiant personality of the little martyr to such an extent that it is difficult to realise that she is not Maria Goretti herself. Her smile and her natural sweetness are enchanting. With such a subject it would have been all too easy to descend into mere sentimentality or religious bathos. That both these dangers have been avoided is due as much to the natural integrity of the peasants, whom Genina chose, as to his ability as a film-maker.

The camera work is at all times of a high standard, but perhaps, the most telling moment is the last, where the camera follows, in an intricate tracking shot, the large crowd which presses against the door of the room where Maria is dying. As her last words of forgiveness are uttered and she dies, the crowd gently falls to its knees in a kind of wave; out of the door, down the stairs, round the corridors and out into the street where the movement is exhausted in a sea of kneeling figures. Another moment of pictorial beauty is the one where Maria wanders through a marshy woodland, drinking in the poetry of God's nature.

Here is a film that is worthy to be ranked with Monsieur l'Incent and which, like the French masterpiece, is destined to raise the enthusiasms of many as well as the dislike of others. It is the consequence of all great human art that is touched with religion that it should do so. I do not know when this film will be shown in England, but all those who clamoured for Monsieur l'Incent must certainly ask for this. But, like the French film, it is not for children.

J. A. V. B.

The police come to arrest the murderer of Maria
The Third Man


The name of Graham Greene, who wrote both the original story and the screenplay, is apt to suggest the study of tortuous Catholics—the alcoholic priest, the suicidal layman, the still believing gangster. Here, indeed, we have a cynical, ruthless racketeer who must presumably be a Catholic, since he is buried as such. But although belief in God and mercy is once mentioned, the conflicts involved are not the preoccupation of the film. Psychological aspects are not paraded, but they are there; one is conscious of that reserve which is an element of art.

The excellent script of this multiple-mystery story has an agreeable hint of the John Buchan tradition in its manner. Those who are not aware of the running time and the cast, may think that the end is coming half an hour before it does. And then away we go on a new and exciting track. The master touch of Carol Reed's direction (albeit a little mannered) appears in the camera work, the dark street and the rubble heap, the man hunt—with even a suggestion of the hunting horn in the echoes of the soundtrack—and the heightening of tension by means of irrelevancies.

The scene is in post-war Vienna. An international team of actors do first-rate work, including a very memorable study of an old Austrian woman by Hedwig Bleibtreu. The director is not afraid to let those characters who know no English speak German. Those in the audience who don't understand German are thus made to share the bewilderment of the American investigator; for those who do there is a little additional enjoyment and humour. There is not much German dialogue, but what courage it must have taken to include what there is. One can picture the consternation there would be in some studios at the very thought of other nationals speaking their own language in a film. But here there is no attempt to play down to the sort of audience which usually frequents the Plaza.

A neat burlesque of the official culture which follows in the wake of British victory provides comic relief and one most effective anti-climax.

A film made in England about the
Continental requires a touch of genius if it is to ring at all true, and that touch is not wanting. I do not know Vienna, but such is the sense of authenticity that my first surprise that a priest should recite the creed in German at a graveside was succeeded by the thought that this must be a genuine Austrian custom.

The music, as soon as it began to accompany the credits, perplexed me with its suggestion of Hawaii. Actually it is a zither solo. This is something new, but its desirability is open to question.

_The Third Man_ comes like a breath of fresh air into the used up atmosphere of the cinema. It is first class entertainment for intelligent adults. But it is far from highbrow, and the story of the mysterious death of Harry Lime also provides plenty of thrills to be relished by the schoolboy.


Here is a film that can be highly recommended, but we should warn you that the opening is not at all promising. You will be tempted at first to think that it is the old, old theme, run a little thin—but you will be mistaken, for Hollywood has at last decided to face real problems with a view to giving a worthwhile solution. It is sufficient to say that a war hero falls in love with a rich authoress (she writes poetry); but ordinary love cannot banish their respective troubles; it is only when they have learnt true love, love that is willing to make sacrifices, that their anxieties are dispelled. This is a rare film, in that for once the characters seem to have loyalties to Someone (dare we use the capital letter?) above themselves.

Once more Miss Bette Davis gives us sincere acting, and her superb performance is well supported by John Hoyt and James Davis, who is, however, just a little too morose for a conquering hero.

We cannot understand why the censors should have given the film an "A" Certificate. To us it seems suitable for anyone over fourteen and our advice is that you make sure you see it yourself.

_P._


The formula of this picture is familiar enough: radio stage cabaret performer makes good in spite of all difficulties, including Jack Carson's assistance. (A great pity in this case; I much preferred Martha—Doris Day—before she became famous.) The film does not remain on one level. Its highest involves some mild satire, mostly associated with Eve Arden, who thus steals the picture—and what there is of it to steal.

A dancing sequence, combining live action and cartoon, displays much ingenuity and little taste. The colour I found agreeable throughout.

The glamorous singer is the mother of a small boy, a thing common enough in real life, but rare in films. His performance will strike you either as "sweet" (an ejaculation used more than once by some ladies sitting near me) or as nauseating, according to taste. You need have no other qualms however. We are not disturbed by divorce, still less by illegitimacy. His daddy was killed in the war.

I gather that the picture is out to teach us two lessons. (1) If you want to succeed on the radio, cut out hot music and comedy numbers and give them "ballads, love songs and torch toons". (2) When little Freddie needs a stepfather, marry one like Mr. Carson and not like Mr. Bowman.

_Q._
J. Cotten meets a friend of Harry Lime...

...The Third Man
Madness of the Heart


Let me say at once that I found this a very pleasing and attractive film—just unalloyed romance, you know, without any searching problems to be posed or resolved. The heroine looks charming, as a romantic heroine should, and speaks in an unstrident fashion which is very becoming. The hero, Paul Dupuis, as in Passport to Pimlico, plays with disarming sincerity—as if there were any need to disarm any of us once we had surrendered to this sweet drug!

The story opens in the convent chapel at the end of Benediction with Lydia Garth (Margaret Lockwood) as a white-habited novice playing sweetly at the harmonium. Then Reverend Mother (Cathleen Nesbitt) summons her to the presence and while waiting to enter Reverend Mother's room, Lydia, by convenient flashback, lets us in on her recent history: a delightful falling in love sequence with the young Count Paul de Vandière (Paul Dupuis), brought to an end by her sudden blindness and subsequent but impetuous entering of the convent, "taking the veil" where she had passed her happy

Paul de Vandiere (Paul Dupuis) and Lydia Garth (Margaret Lockwood) in "Madness of the Heart"
hooldays. She is so happy in her reverie of Paul that the wise and kind old Reverend Mother was obviously so very right in telling her she had no vocation and must return to the world. The Rank people are certainly concerned to present a sympathetic view of nuns and convent life. It was a pity, therefore, that the only wrong thing in that galère—if one may respectfully so describe it—was Lydia as a novice at all. The kind nuns might easily give a favourite ex-pupil six months' rest to recover from her shock and to adjust herself to life without sight, but even wise and kind Reverend Mothers don't accept novices whose blindness keeps them from their own true love.

So Lydia returns to lay life where her Harley Street friend and former employer (Maurice Denham) stages a reunion with Paul, who has been so unhappy all these months. They marry and he takes his blind bride to his craggy Provençal château. Very soon various parties, for reasons of self-interest, begin a system of regular persecution as far as Lydia is concerned, and she becomes less and less sure of herself. Kathleen Byron and Maxwell Reed come into their own as double-faced villainess and smooth, double-dyed villain. With a little help from the old Count (Raymond Lovell) they very nearly succeed. But virtue triumphs, for a marvellous operation restoring sight to the blind leads to happy and dramatic results.

I can never refrain from praising Thora Hird. In *Madness of the Heart* she fills another character part to perfection.

In Provence all the French characters in this English film seem to have caught faint echoes of Paul Dupuis' way of speaking English. This makes us know they are meant to be French. To mention that is not to sneer at it. It does give an atmosphere such as was intended.

X.

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### SOME FILMS REVIEWED

**NOTE.** Inclusion in this list does not connote positive recommendation. Films that are positively harmful are not included here. Readers are reminded to refer to the full reviews when assessing a film.

Category A. indicates adults only; B, adults and adolescents; C, family audiences; D, particularly for children.

**REVIEWED IN “FOCUS”** (Vol. II, Nos. 8 and 9)

- *Abbott and Costello meet the Ghosts*  (A) (245)
- *Champion, The*  (A) (206)
- *City across the River*  (B) (248)
- *Conspirator*  (B) (247)
- *Don’t Ever Leave Me*  (C) (221)
- *Down to the Sea in Ships*  (C) (210)
- *Everybody’s Cheering*  (250)
- *Family Honeymoon*  (A) (251)
- *Good Sam*  (B) (212)
- *Impact*  (A) (205)
- *Iris*  (A) (244)
- *Kind Hearts and Coronets*  (B) (208)
- *Knock on any Door*  (A) (240)
- *Lady Windermere’s Fan*  (B) (242)
- *Le Père Tranquille*  (A) (206)
- *Le Sorcier du Ciel*  (C) (218)
- *Les Paysans Noirs*  (A) (207)

**Magic Town**  (C) (237)
**Marry Me**  (B) (210)
**Mr. Belvedere goes to College**  (236)

**New Adventures of Don Juan, The**  (B) (238)
**Obsession**  (A) (237)
**Poet’s Pub**  (C) (207)
**Private Angelo**  (A) (214)
**Rope of Sand**  (B) (239)
**Song is Born, A**  (A) (244)
**That Lady in Ermine**  (B) (236)
**Too Late for Tears**  (A) (238)
**Train of Events**  (B) (250)
**Whiskey Galore**  (B) (220)
**Window, The**  (A) (211)
**Younger Brothers, The**  (C) (245)

**WE RECOMMEND**

- *Christopher Columbus*  (B) (183)
- *Hamlet*  (B) (130)
- *Joan of Arc*  (B) (126)
- *Johnny Belinda*  (A) (42)
- *Maytime in Mayfair*  (B) (172)
- *Monseigneur Vincent*  (B) (230)
- *Passport to Pimlico*  (C) (150)
- *Rachel and the Stranger*  (B) (70)
- *Scott of the Antarctic*  (B) (14)
- *Snake Pit, The*  (A) (159)
- *Visitation*  (B) (134)
Notes of a Juryman

Paris

The Biennale opened at Venice on August 11th. I came to Paris on August 8th and renewed contact with our friends of the Centrale Catholique du Cinema et Radio. The Director, Abbé Dewavrin, was away, but I was given every consideration by his deputy, Father Emmanuel Flipo, S.J., the priest whom, last year, I found working as a technician at the studios at Billancourt under the direction of Maurice Cloche.

The two days at Paris were extremely full. Four films; a meeting with the Saarbrucken delegates to O.C.I.C., who had failed to reach London; a talk with Jean Desourmont, the Director of Cine-Selection, whose interesting article in No. 2 of the International Film Review indicates what can be done in the way of raising standards of film exhibition by a person who has set moral and artistic criteria and abides by them; finally, three hours spent at various travel and railway agencies trying to secure a reservation to Italy, which, on account of the strike of restaurant car and wagon-lit workers, I was told was impossible. In the end, I had a perfectly comfortable seat and plenty to eat.

The most impressive of the films was Cage aux Filles, the new Maurice Cloche work. Through the courtesy of the Director, I saw the first montage at the studios at Billancourt. The subject of the film is juvenile delinquency and tells in a vivid manner the story which our Good Time Girl failed to tell. The atmosphere of the unsatisfactory home, which is the occasion of the girl's downfall, is faithfully evoked and the acting of Danielle Delorme, the young French actress who plays the part of Micheline, the principal character, is extraordinary. The photography, especially of the exteriors, taken at Lyons, is magnificent. Maurice Cloche again demonstrates his power of bringing to the screen subjects of vital interest.

The main interest of Barry, the rather sentimental story of the St. Bernard monks and one of their dogs, Barry, is that Pierre Fresnay plays the part of a priest, but this time without the inspiration which he brought to Monsieur Vincent. Needless to say, he plays with the greatest competence, but the part is not worth more. This film I saw at a private cinema in the Champs-Elysées through the courtesy of the distributors. Another film seen in a private cinema in the same region was Escadron Blanc, dealing with the adventures of a French military group in the Sahara. It is in the manner of the great American epic films of heroic endurance, and compares favourably with them. The photography of the desert scenes and the acting of the rather enigmatic characters is up to standard in this genre. The performance in particular of Jean Chevrier as an iron-disciplined Captain with a sympathetic heart is good. This film, which I saw through the courtesy of Jean Desourmont, is a good example of the worthwhile subjects which his organisation sponsors.

The only film I paid to see (and that is usually the last thing a film-critic does if he can help it) was Une Si jolie Petite Plag, which I went to at the suggestion of Père Flipo as an example of the present school of French film. It has Gerard Philipe and Madeleine Robinson and is a psychological study of an introvert youth who struggles unavailing against the effects of maladjustment and cruelty as a child. Gerard Philipe gives a sympathetic study of the central character, but the general atmosphere of the film is pessimistic and fatalistic. It is not a healthy sign in the French cinema that it should be so pre-occupied with pathological characters. Fortunately there is Maurice Cloche as representative of a more optimistic outlook on social problems.

Venice

The Venice Festival opened with Snake Pit. This terrifying film had a warm reception, but the applause was mainly directed at Olivia de Haviland for her magnificent performance. The problem which was raised in London when Snake Pit was first shown also arose at Venice. In discussion with
Italians and French and Belgians, I noted the same reaction: should such a subject be made available to the public in general? There is an unhealthy atmosphere generated by this film which is not altogether dissipated by the evidently sincere and sympathetic acting of the principal players, Leo Genn and Olivia de Haviland.

The slowest film ever is Sofka, the Jugoslav offering to the blasé Venetians. Blue Lagoon made the British members of the audience feel acutely embarrassed. The hissing which the Italians reserved for this film was hardly more unaccepteable than the praise of the colour which polite Italian friends made. However, we lifted our heads again when Scott of the Antarctic, which was given without Italian subtitles, kept the audience gripped until the last magnificent sequence. The warm burst of applause which greeted this film was evidence of appreciation of a great effort to tell a human story.

Two films which have a considerable importance from the points of view of international understanding and friendship, are Report of the Refugee Situation, January 1949, produced by Macfarlane Shankland for the British Information Services, and Combat sans Heine, an account of the Olympic Winter Sports at St. Moritz, a Swiss film. Mr. Shankland, who is Official Representative of the British Film Producers' Association at Venice, has performed a difficult task with admirable detachment in this film. In 35 minutes of screen time, there are but ten minutes of commentary and no other sound whatever, so great was his determination not to let any emotional stimulation interfere with the camera's report of conditions among the refugees. It was first shown to the World Federation of Churches at Amsterdam. It should be shown to all politicians who say they have the welfare of mankind at heart. Combat sans Heine is an admirably produced documentary record of the St. Moritz Olympic Games. The photography is in every case extremely beautiful; the editing a marvel of imaginative montage. Its importance from the international point of view is that it demonstrates that people of every nation can engage in friendly rivalry and submit to international regulation without losing their sense of proportion.

A film which invites comparison with Good Time Girl and Maurice Cloche's Cage aux Filles is the German Maidchen inter Giltern about the life of girls in a Reformatory in Germany. It is made with care and played with sincerity, but there is about it a note of teutonic melodrama, which robs it of the effect it might otherwise have had. It is better than the English film but not so good as the French one. An American film concerned with the same subject of rehabilitation of delinquents is The Quiet One, by Sidney Meyers, a detached study of a negro boy's journey back to mental normalcy and social awareness. It is an impressive piece of work of its kind and it was only spoilt for me by its complete lack of recognition of the part which spiritual powers can play in such rehabilitation.

In general, the Biennale has struck a serious note so far. It is only August 14th and the film will continue to roll until the first day of September, so there is plenty of time for humour and laughter. It is satisfying, perhaps, to note that anything which might exacerbate national feeling is being avoided. For this reason, Peter Ustinov's Private Angelo has been withdrawn from the Festival. That is a pity, not because it is a great film, but it has some human quality even though it does make fun of Italian soldiers.

There are innumerable short films, both entertainment and factual. Scientific films and films for children are part of the Biennale arrangements this year. For the first time a Festival of Children's Films is being held here and it is arousing considerable interest.

About these things, more anon. For the present, it is gratifying to report that the Catholic attitude to films is being given the greatest possible consideration by the directors of the Biennale and we are made thoroughly welcome at every manifestation of the Festival: even to the extent of being invited to night club activities! Since we have to say Mass, Father Lunders and I, we restrict our participation in the more relaxing exercises of the Biennale to what is conformable with our own special office!

J. A. V. B.
Decisions of the International Jury of O.C.I.C.
(International Catholic Film Office)

The Jury of the International Catholic Film Office at the Xth International Exhibition of Cinema Art at Venice, 1949, have unanimously decided to award the O.C.I.C. Prix, offered to the film contributing most to the spiritual and moral betterment of mankind, to

CIELO SULLA PALUDE (Maria Goretti),
by Augusto Genina (Arx Films, Rome).

In the same sense, a Special Mention is attributed to

SCOTT OF THE ANTARCTIC, by Charles Friend (Ealing Studios Production).

Among the many documentary films dealing with significant human problems, the Jury singles out the following as examples of films of special interest:

THE QUIET ONE, by Sidney Meyers (U.S.A.).
REPORT ON THE REFUGEE SITUATION, JANUARY 1949 (Great Britain).
I SENZA PATRIA (Italy).
FRERES FEMAINES (Switzerland).

and also the following films inspired by religious art:

LA PASSION SELON ST. MATTHIEU (Italy).
L’EVANGILE DE LA PIERRE (France).
VIEUX TESTAMENT (Italy).

as well as LE TROUBADOUR DE LA JOIE (France) the first attempt at teaching morality by means of animated cartoons.

The O.C.I.C. Jury is happy to note that films dealing with such religious and social problems have been admitted to the Festival among the other more spectacular, artistic and scientific films presented at Xth Biennale. In particular, the Jury welcomes the inauguration at Venice of a Festival of Films for Children and expresses the hope that the success of this experiment will encourage the production of films specially designed for the young.

The Jury hopes that these categories of films will always find a place within the programmes of the Festival and that in this way the cinema may be enabled to exercise as fully as possible its influence for the common good.

*The Jury of The International Catholic Film Office:

President:
Rev. John A. V. Burke (Great Britain).

Members:
Domenico Caligo (Italy).
Rev. Leo Lunders, O.P. (Belgium).
Bjorn Rasmussen (Denmark).
Pierro Regnoli (Vatican City).
Andre Ruszkowski (Poland).

Venice, September 1st, 1949.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

152 Birchley Street,
St. Helens,
Lancs.

August 15th, 1949.

Sir,

I ask your kind consideration of the subject of this letter.

It has been truly said that the Catholic Church does not change with the years, but adapts her approach, teaching and technique, to suit the needs and conditions of the age, and it is with this end in view, and your association with Focus, that prompts me to write you.

It is now accepted, generally, that the Sunday Cinema has come to stay; probably 50 per cent of the population finds its Sunday entertainment there. Many picturegoers, particularly the young, probably have not been to Church Service on Sunday, and the name of God is too often only heard in the workshops, and then not with respect or reverence—no wonder, then, the idea of Religion does not play a
part in their lives. Older people will probably hear some form of service on the radio, or may read about God and thereby obtain some idea of Him, but with the young this is very unlikely, therefore the only way to introduce God into their lives is through the medium of the cinema.

I suggest that an approach be made to Pathé Gazette or British Movietone, to obtain their assistance by allowing a three to five minutes talk in their News Reel on Sunday evenings in every cinema in the country on some aspect of Religion, and the love of God, to be given by a priest or a prominent layman, much in the same way as they would a talk by the "Savings Movement Group", etc. (not necessarily to deal with Catholicism), and so bring home to those who attend, the truth that there is a God, and they have a duty to Know, Love and Honour Him.

There are, of course, many variations to the above proposal, but this is submitted to you in all sincerity to use whatever influence, or contacts you may have, to enable the Word of God to reach those who otherwise may never hear it.

I have been reading your Editorial on The Catholic International Film Congress, and you quote Very Rev. Fr. Hilary Carpenter, O.P., in his sermon at the Mass as saying, "God at sundry times revealed Himself to the world through the medium of sight and sound," and that "God had given the mighty machine of the Cinema to spread the Truth"—there may be great possibilities and potentialities if we could put it over well.

I will be pleased to have your comments.

With every good wish,
Yours,
THOMAS McCORMACK.

(I feel sure that the Executive Committee will consider your letter very carefully.—Ed.)

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**FILM EDITING**

Sir,

Your correspondent, Rafael Newhouse, takes rather a roundabout journey to agree with my statement in the article on Film Editing that the sound track of the average fictional feature film is the governing factor. For reasons which are not clear to me, Mr. Newhouse mentions various cutters whose method of overcoming this domination by the track seems to be to hunk out scenes and sequences altogether, and he describes how David Lean cut his visuals without bothering about the sound track, and then fitted the latter to whatever visuals happened to be left after his attack on them. This all sounds very brave, but even Mr. Lean must synchronise his dialogue with the visuals of the people speaking it, which illustrates the fundamental point that the track governs the visuals. If a film depends upon dialogue to narrate its story, quite obviously the dialogue must be given its length. The solution is not, as Mr. Newhouse appears to suggest, to ignore the track and cut the visuals according to one's mood; nor does the solution lie in the hands of cutters, who have to cut what is given to them. It depends upon those who visualise and write films, to be skilful enough to create subjects which shall not depend upon dialogue, but upon visuals supported by sound and music. Sound is flexible. Dialogue is rigid.

Yours truly,

ANDREW BUCHANAN.

---

c/o The Rev. Francis Brauney,
The Catholic Church,
Burham-on-Crouch,
Essex.

August 23rd, 1949.

Sir,

Perhaps you will be interested to hear of my feelings on re-reading, after a lapse of time, that famous little article headed "A Q-rious Nightmare".

Well, even more than the first time, it made me laugh, and I think it is one of the most brilliant combinations of wit, humour and satire that I have read for years. I think also that for those who have ears to hear it is the kind of thing that succeeds (sometimes) when a whole year of preaching falls flat.

Yours faithfully,

D. ROCHE.
VISUAL AIDS TO LOCAL STUDIES
By Our Educational Panel

LIBRARIES:
Central Film Library, Imperial Institute, London, S.W.7.
Gaumont-British Film Library, Aintree Road, Perivale, Middx.

FILMS

This film, with the accompanying booklet, gives an account of a local survey carried out in Co. Durham under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Education, and forms, with the three following silent films, a specimen visual unit designed to show the possibilities of visual aids to local study.

The film illustrates the genesis of the plan in the mind of an enterprising schoolmaster and the methods he used to enlist the interest of a group of schoolchildren. Subsequent pictures show its gradual evolution embracing research into the geography, industry and occupations, history and folklore of the neighbourhood. The photography is good and well chosen, though some of the sequences are rather too speedy. Perhaps the pleasantest touch is the soft Northumbrian burr of the children.

The handbook, "Bishop Auckland" (sic), merits nothing but praise. It contains a wealth of the kind of information dear to lovers of the English countryside, and is not only indispensable to the understanding of the films, especially the silent films, but is also valuable in its own right.


This film illustrates one of the lines of enquiry followed up by the children as described in the previous film. It shows the production and marketing of milk from a typical farm. The photography is clear and adequate, but apart from its local connection the film has little to distinguish it from other similar films.


Unlike the preceding film, this is one of absorbing interest, showing the very efficient methods of making cast steel wheels for trucks employed in an apparently primitive forge.


A panorama of the neighbourhood studied in the previous films, showing its heights and configuration. Not of great interest except to those who took part in the survey.

FOLLOWING THE RIVER. Six silent films in colour (marked F.S.C.) or black-and-white (F.S.). Issued by G.B.I.

Hiring charges: colour, 9/- first day, 3/- extra days; black-and-white, 4 1/2 first day, 1/6 extra days.

The six following films form a series intended to introduce reality into Junior School studies by following a river from its source to its mouth.

It is cast in narrative form in order to appear to children and enable those for whom such opportunities are not available to enter into the experiences of children who are more fortunately placed. Though the films are primarily intended for children 9–12 years, they would also be appreciated by older boys and girls who could learn much from them. The one criticism to be made of the series is that the name of the river is not given till the last film is reached, and that no map is given (unless this occurs in Film 2, which was not seen by the viewers). To save others the suspense that the viewing committee endured, let it be said that it is the Clyde.

The children find the spring from which the river takes its rise, and follow it through the upper reaches. They drink the clear water and see something of the wild life among the hills. They meet a shepherd, and a friendly motorist who gives them a lift. The photography of this film is beautiful, and it would be a mistake to miss the coloured version.


This film was not seen, but it is an essential one in the series, since it shows the most important natural function of a river, the irrigation of the countryside, in this case a fruit-growing area. It also illustrates the use of water power to drive a mill.


This and the two following films are rather more complicated than the previous ones and would need careful preparation before being shown to the children in order to be intelligible and interesting to them. The children in the film spend a few days in the bridge town, find the bridges, wharves and factories that line the river, and are shown over the docks.


The two elder children visit a steelworks and see the complete process by which the iron is smelted in the huge furnaces, by men who have an apparently complete disregard for their own safety and comfort in loading the furnaces and testing the red-hot metal.


Like the preceding one, this film is highly technical, and should not be shown without careful preparation and the help of the notes. The children are taken around the shipyard and shown all the skilled work that goes to building a ship, and the way in which it is launched when completed.


This film will be a popular one, for it takes up the excitement and adventure of the first of the series. The children board a ship which is outward bound, and watch her being taken down the estuary by the pilot, past the docks and shipyards to the open country once more, then past the lighthouse and out to sea.

FILM STRIPS

The following strips are all produced by Common Ground, and available from the Educational Supply Association, at 15/- each.

How to Look at a Town, a Village, a Seaport.

A set of strips which would be useful, not only as an introduction to the study of the localities in question, but also as a general guide to those embarking on similar surveys, and which could also be used as material for geography lessons in general.

As a guide to local studies, valuable suggestions are given which would ensure that the survey would be something more than a sightseeing. Attention is directed to the reasons for the development of the centre of population in question — strategic, economic, or religious: also to the natural resources, especially the water supply, the industries and means of transport, housing and social services, as well as to its historical and artistic or other distinguishing features. Each film strip has valuable teaching notes. The photography and the interest vary from one strip to another.

How to look at a Town. C.G.B. 324.

This strip is delightful in every sense, for the town is Ely, and the treatment and pictures are excellent. We see the reasons for the growth of Ely as the capital of the Fenland—as a place of refuge from the floods, and defence from foes—and later as an important agricultural centre. The shots give an excellent idea of the continuity of history—the same needs expressing themselves in different media: transport by river and stage coach, now replaced by railway and bus; the cathedral school and the council school; the old houses and narrow streets and the modern housing estates; the almshouses and the municipal buildings—and always, either prominently or in the background, the crowning glory of Ely, and its raison d'être, the cathedral.

How to look at a Village. C.G.B. 189.

Here, as in the preceding strip, the plan and the teaching notes are very
good. But there is no special interest attaching to the village chosen (Ashwell), and the photography is not of the best. However, we are shown all the elements of village life—the cottages and gardens, farms, shop, post office and blacksmith, also the old mill and brewery, the village cricket-ground, the bus stop. We see also the church and chapel, vicarage and churchyard. In fact a useful strip both for town and country children; but not the best advertisement for the beauty of the English village.

How to look at a Seaport. C.G.B. 325.

The least interesting of the trilogy, and possibly the least useful, since it describes a seaport in decline. However it could be turned to good account, for it analyses and illustrates the reasons for the decline of the harbour and the failure to develop a new one. There are also pictures of the XVIII Century Customs House and the lighthouse, and the strip concludes with glimpses of other types of seaport for reasons of comparison. A thought-provoking though unromantic strip.

LONDON MARKETS.

Covent Garden. C.G.B. 80.

This strip would be useful both as a preliminary to a visit to the famous market, or for children who may never have a chance to see it. It gives a general view, showing the display of everyday produce, the familiar scenes, the loading and unloading, rules and regulations governing the market, and the retailers packing to depart. The notes give the history of the place, from the time when it formed part of the garden of Westminster Abbey, to the erection of the floral stall from the Great Exhibition of 1851.

Billingsgate.

Gives a good idea of this busy centre by means of glimpses of its picturesque scenes and features. It would have been improved by the addition of diagrams of the fisheries and lines of supply. There are good notes giving the history of the trade, and of the Company of Fishmongers.

LONDON DOCKS.

This is an admirable strip. It begins by a literal bird's eye view of the most famous docks in the world, which is made more clear by useful maps and diagrams and infra-red photographs of the estuary. In addition there are clear accounts of the methods of handling the different cargoes, labour and time-saving devices, locks, dues and personnel. The strip would be the best possible introduction to a visit to the docks, or to a survey of them.

---

**THE CRITIC**

Reader: I liked the August and September numbers of FOCUS.

Q.: I'm so glad. What was it about those two specially?

Reader: There wasn't much by you in them. We don't want journalism in magazines.

Q.: No?

Reader: No. Also you are uncharitable and vulgar, more vulgar even than the films themselves. Not that I see many of them.

Q.: Well, I suppose some people might not like what you write.

Reader: I don't follow you.

Q.: No. I didn't think you would.

Reader: Also, you are irreverent.

Q.: Irreverent?

---

**CRITICISED**

Reader: Yes. You have been unmistakably flippant about Gounod. I don't understand how such a thing could be printed in a Catholic paper. And your insinuation that Fr. Connell's lecture sent you to sleep was most offensive and in the worst possible taste. If I were he, I should demand an apology.

Q.: Oh, dear. I do hope he wasn't offended. He is the last person I should want to hurt.

Reader: Well, I can tell you he doesn't think much of you. And I don't wonder. Really, I don't know what is the matter with you.

Q.: Perhaps the trouble is that I have no sense of humour.

Q.
THE CATHOLIC FILM INSTITUTE

National Film Reviewing Office
(Affiliated with Office Catholique International du Cinema)

President: His Eminence, Cardinal Griffin
Vice-President: The Rt. Rev. Abbot Upson, O.S.B.
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1. To further the cause of Christian culture by means of the cinema.
2. To encourage the development of Catholic criticism of films with the object of influencing, as far as possible, the type of films publicly exhibited.
3. To promote the organisation of discussion groups for the study of films.
4. To establish a library of films of Catholic interest.
5. To encourage the production of films calculated to demonstrate the Christian cultural heritage of Europe in its arts, crafts, religious life, agriculture, architecture, etc.
6. To establish when and where possible Repertory Cinemas where films of permanent interest and value may be seen.

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It was the pennies of the Catholic population in France which made possible the making of the film Monsieur Vincent.

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COVER PERSONALITY

ALIDA VALLI

The recent glut of second-rate Italian films shown at Venice came as a shock to international audiences which had, perhaps too easily, grown blasé on the post-war masterpieces of Rossellini, de Zampa and Lattuada. In the same way, the superb performances of Anna Magnani, Carla del Poggio and Aldo Fabrizzi have made us overlook the noisy, melodramatic exhibitions which are accepted for acting in so many of the "other" Italian films.

So, the advent of an Italian actress to the international screen is, perhaps, something less than the sensation which it might have been two or three years ago. Another point. The average first-rank Italian actress has been more notable for her histrionic ability than for her Venus-like qualities. Hence our polite scepticism when we were told by the publicity boys a year ago of the coming of a front-rank lady from Italy, who could give points to the luscious if dim-witted Hollywood lovelies.

However, here is Alida Valli to confound and entrance the critics. Her current film, The Third Man, which is, by every count, an example of what is meant by film art, is no easy vehicle on which to ride to festival fame. The other players are all first-class people, who give first-class performances; the script is a magnificent thing of its kind from one of the few modern writers who have mastered the technique; the director dominates the screen like a Michaelangelo; the story has all the suspense of the best detective thriller. In spite of this competition, Valli manages to hold her own and to imprint herself on the memory at several points in a film which is packed with distracting souvenirs of technical excellence.

In such a film it is inevitable that dramatic situations should tend to overshadow the finer points of acting. Nevertheless, Valli contrives to add touches of finesse to even the most routine of police-story sequences. This is due, doubtless, to the fact that she was trained early not only as an actress but as a director of films. Indeed, she seems to have taken her chosen art very seriously. At the youthful age of 15 years, we learn that she was beginning her study of the experimental cinema in Rome. After a schooling in philosophy, she spent a year at the "Centro Sperimentale di Cinema" and then crashed into films with a starring rôle in her first. In all, her film career in Italy produced 34 major films before she went to Hollywood to star with Gregory Peck in The Paradine Case.

It would provide an interesting topic for discussion by a filmology class to compare the effect of first-rank directors upon their actors. Under Hitchcock, Valli's acting with Gregory Peck was glittering but unreal. In the hands of Carol Reed she becomes a warm, live, frightened actress in Vienna at a time when the international disunity makes life hazardous even for the native—and she is a Czech with a forged Austrian passport. Her performance is now sparkling rather than glittering, but is much better. With Frank Sinatra in Miracle of the Bells she need not be taken seriously. Irving Pichel is not in the same rank as her two other directors and her work for him is little more than typical of the Hollywood routine. Still, it was the first time that British audiences had seen her and they liked what they saw.

Altogether, Alida Valli sounds like an intelligent and attractive person as well as being a beautiful one. The combination is rare enough on the screen for us to be excited when we meet it.

John Vincent.
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A LEGEND OF NORFOLK

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FOCUS

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C.F.I. PUBLICATIONS

WHY A CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY?

THE SACRIFICE WE OFFER

CATHOLICS AND THE CINEMA
By Freda Bruce Lockhart. A Reprint of The Tablet article.

Price 1d.
The Fatima Film

It is a strange but true fact that light is born in darkness; that joy is the child of pain; that success is the fruit of struggle. It augurs well for the Fatima film that it followed the Christian pattern of created works and was brought forth in pain. Kathleen Rowland, who has just returned from Fatima, phoned us some facts about the film.

(i) Shooting of the film began on the first Saturday of October; almost immediately most of the unit went down with the shooting pains of a physical sickness and everything went wrong. On October 13th (an auspicious day) there was a change for the better; this symbolic day was born in brilliant sunshine, several hundred shots were taken which according to Andrew Buchanan, who is producing the film, are of excellent quality. So far a film of about 6,000 feet has been flown back and processed. If the weather holds, the remainder will be completed in about a fortnight. The première is scheduled for May 13th.

(ii) From the beginning the authorities in Fatima were most helpful and manifested sympathy towards this British Catholic film adventure. The Bishop's secretary took a personal interest in the film; he told Kathleen Rowland that he himself, had made four attempts to make a full-length documentary of Fatima, but had failed each time and in such ways that he believed the devil was working against him. This fact reminds us that the making of this film is a spiritual act as well as a work of art and calls for prayer and sacrifice. It can be said, truly, that it is being produced by public demand. Over 10,000 petitions, from contributors to the film, were presented to Our Lady by Fr. Burke who acted as chaplain to the film-unit.

Very Rev. Fr. Hilary Carpenter, O.P., (Chairman of The Catholic Film Institute) implores this mighty army of petitioners to continue to pray to Our Lady for the success of HER film.
Once upon a time, though not so long ago, amateur film producers were rarely taken seriously by professionals; their 16mm. equipment was regarded as a toy, and, for reasons I cannot explain, many people thought the work of professionals must be superior to their efforts. Now, merely because a man does not earn his living by his technical or artistic ability is no evidence that his work is less good than it would be if he turned professional, when, quite possibly, it might deteriorate! Apart from that, the recent wide recognition of 16mm. the world over has not only dispelled the toy idea, but made us realise that in amateur movie circles are people with longer and more gruelling experience of 16mm. production than anywhere else. In view of the vast non-theatrical audiences now reached by 16mm., the amateur, should he feel inclined, can find a large market, if he plans to make the kind of films needed by specialised audiences. More probably, however, he will not be very interested, preferring to continue to make films to please himself and his technical friends. That is not my concern here, for the main purpose of these notes is to draw attention to the production methods of the amateur, irrespective of subject-matter. I have considerable experience of amateur films, having adjudicated at competitions for many years, and I well know that the best of them not only equal professional productions, but sometimes out-distance them in originality and artistry. That fact has special significance today, when the professional industry is once again swaying dangerously over the edge of the cliff leading to financial ruin. It is always more or less tottering, of course, but each crisis carries it nearer to the point when it will finally crash to pieces—and only when it has done so can it be reborn in a healthy condition.

Every inconceivable reason is brought forward for this grave state of affairs. Everyone blames everyone else; councils and committees vest it all with magnificent mystery, and probe about for months, write reports, and seemingly avoid fundamentals. The real reason rarely comes to the surface—a human reason which has assumed inhuman proportions—SELF-INTEREST. As a result, professional film-making has almost stifled the free creative faculty, and developed into a night-marish machine beyond the control of those who built it. A mixture of
governmental, technical and theatrical rules and strangulations has created a formula for sending costs up so high that to recover them from distribution is exceptional. Nor is that all. In the process, film is losing its soul, and if you are not too easily distracted by technical excellence you will have observed the fact.

And so today, professional film-making is rather like employing the "Queen Elizabeth" to ply between Dover and Calais. Amateur film-making is like rowing across. Both get there. The first, bankrupt. The second, exhausted, but happy in achievement. The professional uses a lot of money, a maximum of equipment, and has a minimum of freedom. The amateur has no money, a minimum of equipment, and a maximum amount of freedom. Consequently, he has to use his brains and obtain effects by the simplest and most ingenious means possible—which is the best way, of course. Quite recently I saw an amateur melodrama shaped in the mould of fantasy that was made in a suburban cellar, and it knocked quite a lot of spots off many a £200,000 feature. And I have seen brilliant colour films, ranging from journeys across the world to studies of garden insects, and comedies and literary cameos, all made for a few pounds, by people filled with enthusiasm and a love of the work. The amateur film-maker is a craftsman, and the spirit of craftsmanship in the professional film world, as elsewhere, is being crushed by a machine composed of human beings welded together in a mechanical mass. That is why I suggest the amateur is offering the professional a lesson—a lesson containing the solution he seeks, in vain, because he is always looking in the wrong direction—sometimes intentionally.

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In the article on Flaubert in Chambers' Encyclopaedia, where it immediately follows one on Flatulence, it is stated that "Madame Bovary is not constructed according to English ideas of decorum". The film, however, is a laborious effort to justify the novel for which its author was prosecuted in France and acquitted. James Mason, in the part of Gustave Flaubert, maintains that Mme. Bovary was more sinned against than sinning. We are shown the story of her life and hidden to exercise the truly Christian virtue of forgiveness, a lesson rubbed in at the end when a priest says the "form" of Extreme Unction in English.

Well now, this is all very nice and so is the salutary lesson which the amorous lady learns from her lovers, MM. Dupuis and Boulanger, and from her financial backer, viz., that unprincipled people are apt to let you down eventually. But as for what the synopsis calls "the romance her nature craves", "a way out of her slavery", "tender and honest devotion cannot satisfy her", "again she finds herself longing for the unattainable", "even after she has a child...lack of fulfilment", "death is the only way out"—what the silly young woman really wanted was a kick in her voluminous petticoats. She only got what was coming to her. (And all due to reading novels apparently.)

What is most unsatisfactory from the Catholic angle is that whereas God's ultimate forgiveness is indicated by the anointing of each sense which had sinned, something more is needed than her kissing of a crucifix to make it clear that in order to profit by the Last Sacraments she would have to be sorry for her sins, including that of delayed action suicide.

Apart perhaps from some ballroom sequences, the film is pedestrian at its best and at its worst slightly reminiscent of Idol of Paris. And the ball—with all those Frenchmen about—was, as I feared, the beginning of the end. Who was there to tell the poor, motherless girl, whose life had hitherto been bounded by the convent school and the farmhouse, what we English have always known, that after a glass of port wine and a set of the Lancers, a woman's virtue is as good as gone?

For my last word on this picture I need look no further than the last words to appear on the screen: "Made in Hollywood, U.S.A., by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer".

Q.


"See how these Italians hate one another" could make an apt sub-title for this film which is worth seeing if you like a story with ideas; intelligent acting and expert direction. The acting of Edward Robinson is particularly good. None of the characters is
particularly lovable but they are all authentic characters. The script is slick, epigrammatic but, perhaps, a little too self-conscious.

It is interesting to observe that America which abounds in wealth and believes in the get-on-in-life doctrine is pouring out again and again the sort of film which tells us that power and wealth do not bring happiness.

The story of this film is about an Italian-American barber-turned-banker who gained, so to speak, the whole world but suffered the loss of his soul.

The blurb calls this a starkly realistic story of love and hate, ruthlessness and power, portrayed with remarkable skill and insight by a capable cast and a very able director. I agree with the blurb!

E.


Category: U.

The Red Horse is not the horsey counterpart of Rin-Tin-Tin or Lassie. You never become attached to the colt. It is important simply because it is the property of little Peter Miles, Myrna Loy's son, whose ambition is to become a real horse-hand like Robert Mitchum.

The technicoloring is well done. The subdued colours depicting dawn are soothing to the eye and the sizzling bacon and eggs certainly look appetising.

Peter Miles can act, as when he produces the misty look in his eyes and sees himself at the head of a company of mounted knights. Myrna Loy is the busy housewife, but not so piquante as the Thin Man's wife. Robert Mitchum's life seems to be one round of stable chores.

With such a theme as a little boy's attachment to a horse, the film achieves almost the miraculous in rounding the pit of sentimentality and the Red Pony never becomes Black Beauty. It is an unpretentious, even-tempered film, an anodyne for frayed nerves.

N.


Category: B. Running time: 85 minutes.

The success of Overlanders has made us willing to look with undue optimism towards films made by British companies in the dominions and colonies. What a skillful scriptwriter and an inspired director were able to do for Australia has led us to overlook the skill and the inspiration aforementioned. Diamond City has only the scenery and none of the inspiration of the Australian film. Yet South Africa is surely rich in every merely material asset that made the other film notable? What is lacking? That must be the concern of the film makers to discover. Here it need only be said that an emasculated British "Western" in which English accents and hymn-singing predominate is the result of an attempt to gate-crash the domain of those who knew how to make Stagecoach, The Virginian, Oxbow Incident and others of this kind.

The acting is worthy of a better cause. David Farrar and Niall MacGinnis are virile enough to satisfy most tastes. Honor Blackman does not add to her reputation much, though that is not her fault. Diana Dors tries so hard to remind us of Mae West that we heartily wish her a better part for the future.

V.


Certificate: A. Category: A.

Running time: 94 minutes.

This is a film which is so clumsily made that it is difficult to say what it is all about. I am very partial to William Powell but I fear that if he takes too many false steps he will lose prestige.

E.

The story opens promiingly. The Blarney Stone has been stolen. The local police sergeant, Barry Fitzgerald, welcomes the opportunity to display his detective skill. Not unnaturally he is quickly ousted by his superior officers, but he is still determined to carry on with his own detection. The situation is further complicated by the advent of Bing Crosby as the private investigator of an insurance office. How could a comedy misfire with such a setting? This film shows how it can be done. There is poor producing, poor directing and the key folly of introducing a wise old woman called Biddy O'Devlin (Eileen Crowe) with a long rigmarole of predictions that have to be fulfilled. Bing sings a little, quite pleasantly: Barry shows glimpses of his form but the dominant note is one of aimlessness.

Is the Irish atmosphere difficult to capture on the screen?—it is so rarely achieved and certainly not in this film. Perhaps film producers are under the impression that anything Irish is necessarily childish.

T.


Will Slattery (Richard Widmark) is flying a plane through a hurricane. He is shaken about till we are nearly green. When things get particularly grim in the air he sweats prodigiously and sees episodes in his life in a series of flashbacks.

It appears that Widmark is a private pilot to a candy manufacturer. He meets Veronica Lake with whom in the past he has been friendly. He reveals to her that she has "got into his system" and nothing he can do can get her out. This is unfortunate for Veronica for she is married to John Russell. It is even more distressing for Linda Darnell who is practically engaged to Widmark. An urgent call comes to Russell to track down a hurricane. Widmark knocks out Russell who has been drinking and takes on the job himself. He succeeds where everybody else would have failed and so saves many lives. Somehow the hurricane has worked Veronica out of his system so all is well.

It takes a long time to find out what it is all about. The conversation is often difficult to follow. John Russell I thought was the most convincing actor. On the whole I suppose you would class it as an average sort of film. It reminded me of a remark passed by a farmer to an undersized nephew: "When you take off that hat and spit once or twice there ain't much of you left". When you take the hurricane and the aeroplanes out of this film there isn't much else worthy of comment.

T.


This film is not as good as it might have been; nevertheless it is light and bright and gay and should act as a tonic for tired minds. Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers radiate charm and their dancing numbers are a pleasure to eye and ear. Look out for the dance of the shoes which is original, interesting and intriguing. Sometimes people write to us to recommend films suitable for "the family". The Barkleys of Broadway is suitable for any family which is not super-fastidious.

E.
DATE WITH DESTINY. Starring: Glenn Ford and Terry Moore. 
Director: Joseph H. Lewis. 
Category: B. Running time: 88 minutes.

What looked like being a third-rate horse racing film turned out to be, after a bit of waiting, a carefree comedy which we can recommend to all. The film, like the racehorse in it, after a rather poor start, fairly romped home in the end and was a winner at the finish.

You do not, of course, believe in reincarnation. You think it impossible that Uncle Willie (James Gleason) racehorse owner and trainer, whose one ambition in life was to win the Derby, having failed should after death come back as a horse just to win that race. It is hard to believe, even when a horse is facially so very much like him, appreciates the radio and petunias just as he did and likes the same brand of tobacco. Even then, you will not believe—but you very nearly will—and the betting is odds on that you will shout with the rest of them on the course at the Derby “Come on Uncle Willie”.

Terry Moore is “irresistible”. Irresistible in a variety of ways. In charm, of course. But also in her go-getting, forthright and push-you-out-of-the-light sort of way, with her own technique for extracting money, bets, lifts, everything she wants, and even love from her unwilling suitor (Glenn Ford). She too is a winner. Wins him and the Derby as well.

We are not supposed to learn anything serious from this film, I know, yet I think it would be difficult to find anywhere a more effective debunking of the popular superstitions of reincarnation and of modern pseudo-psychology.

And all this good entertainment is in very real technicolor, which is, if I may say so, a bit too real to be real!

G.


What happens to an Under-Secretary of the Treasury who has the reputation of “The Terror of the Department” when dealing with the public purse but is incapable of controlling his family’s reckless expenditure when he comes into a fortune, is the story which this film tells most successfully.

It is taken from a novel by Arnold Bennett which I have not read but which, it is clear, has been translated very effectively for the screen. The time is the present and there are many pointed and witty allusions to modern economic and political situations. Except for a rather overdone dream sequence it is very good film indeed and is certainly the most successful of the recent Wessex productions. This is due, I imagine, as much to the competent screenwriting of Ian Dalrymple as to the skill of the director in keeping his story moving and the proficiency of the actors in interpreting it.

Nevertheless, full credit must be given to Cecil Parker for a polished study as Mr. Prohack. He is ably and loyally supported by a team of superlative performers but is never overshadowed. It is instructive to watch his expressions and gestures as well as to note the inflections of a very expressive voice. This is screen acting at its best.

Hermione Baddeley and Heather Thatcher give proof of the excellence of their stage training. Glynis Johns, also, who seems never to give an untidy impersonation, is in complete control of her part as a rather pert secretary.

I recommend this film as a well-tailored example of British comedy at its neatest. It is sure to amuse you.

V.
"Who cooked these sausages?" Lord Lister (A. E. Matthews) and Beecham (Cecil Parker) have a spot of bother

**THERE WAS A LAND**

This brief film was made for a purpose, namely to bring forcefully before the minds of ordinary English men and women the tremendous debt they owe to the Polish forces who joined with our own during the war and to the Displaced Persons from that unhappy land now so pitifully dependent upon their charity. That purpose it fulfils without any doubt. Even though the material available for picturing this great Catholic "land that was" proved inevitably sparse, this is still a fine and moving film. It is fine because that sparse material was put into the most competent hands of Andrew Buchanan, who edited and produced it; it is moving largely because the commentary, written by Margot Adamson, is spoken by Robert Speaight and is an almost perfect example of its kind.

HILARY J. CARPENTER, O.P.

(There Was a Land can be hired in 35mm. from the Anglo-Polish Catholic Association, 51 Eaton Place, S.W.1. It will also be available in 16mm. shortly. Running time: 20 minutes. 2 reels.)
THE CHILTERN HUNDREDS


Here is a film which makes no claim to be considered as a serious contribution to British film art but which even the critics will hardly deny is good value for money. Its weakness is that it can scarcely conceal its theatrical origin, cleverly though Patrick Kirwan tricks it up as a film. Its strength is that it has a team of players who are adept at giving every nuance of dialogue, every telling pause, every gesture, every significant silence its full value. This mastery of technique covers the bald patches in many a threadbare play. When it is applied to a rich and rewarding play such as William Douglas-Home’s political satire, the result is entirely satisfactory. True, there are those who will say that the absent-minded peer with the imbecile son and impeccable butler are rather lacking in originality as characters, but when they are drawn and played with the skill achieved in The Chiltern Hundreds one does not mind how many times before a playwright has made use of them.

Cecil Parker and A. E. Matthews are perfect as the butler and the peer in the story of the series of elections at East Milton in which the peer’s son has to stand for Parliament in order to avoid being disciplined by his Army Colonel. The son changes his party with the ease of a lay Vicar of Bray. His American fiancée, shocked at the sabotaging of ancient privileges induces the butler, stalwart supporter of Tory traditions to oppose the son of the house at the polls. Various other figures come into the game to make the fun complete but it is the peer and the butler who are the greatest joy and in the hands of Parker and Matthews are served nobly.

Marjorie Fielding, also, is an old trouper who evidently enjoys herself in this kind of piece and transmits her happiness to the audience. David Tomlinson and Lana Morris (her first starring rôle) are competent as the peer’s son and the serving maid, though I fear that Tomlinson may be accepting stereotypes too easily. It is fatal to acting to suppose that one need not work hard to play a part one knows very well.

This is a film for the family.

V.

PENNY A DAY FOR 240 DAYS’ FUND

IF one fourth of the Catholic population in England and Scotland contributed a penny a day for 240 days The Catholic Film Institute in England would be able to set up a production unit.

It was the pennies of the Catholic population in France which made possible the making of the film Monsieur Vincent.

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The Hasty Heart


Here is a film, with many faults and weaknesses, which I am sure most of you will like. You ought to see it because it is an honest attempt to present a spiritual problem, albeit without seeming to recognise that a spiritual problem requires a spiritual remedy. You will like it because the characters, in spite of being exaggerated and sentimentalised, are warm and alive and are played with tremendous gusto and sincerity.

The problem is the ancient one of having to see the image of God in the most unlovely and unamiable human vestures. Though there is an almost self-conscious effort to avoid using the terms which would naturally bring man's Maker and man's duty to his Maker into the dialogue, implicitly everything that is said points to the centre and source of man's responsibility for his brother's keeper. Patricia Neal, as the nurse, says (was it perhaps instinctive?) "God bless you", that lovely wish which can lift the company to altogether different climates. There are such phrases as these: "We are all going to die sometime"; "Whether you like him or not doesn't matter; he needs your help"; "I've hated what I could not have"; "The world might be healthier if more people were sick". They indicate a serious approach to the story and the depths to which the audience is invited to penetrate.

Briefly the plot is as follows. Lachie, a dour and embittered Scotsman, not knowing that he has but a few weeks to live, is placed in a ward in a Burmese military hospital with five men from various English-speaking countries who have been warned of Lachie's fate and asked to make his last days happy ones. He rebuffs them at every point. Eventually they break down his resistance with the present of a full highland regalia for his birthday. All goes well until he discovers that he is to die. He then throws back the gifts and spurns his new friends because he cannot bear to think that he was the object of pity. This attitude so incenses the other men that they tell him that what he had from them, their friendship as well as their gifts, he had got for nothing. He had done nothing to deserve them. After a tense scene he comes back and begs to be allowed to remain with them: "I dinna want to die alone". And so his last days are made happy with friendship.

There are many faults here. The characters are overdrawn. The Scotsman is the quintessence of everything imagined by the Sassenach about the Scot. The sets are obviously stage sets. The nurse is just too glamorous for the Burmese jungle. Blossom, the man from Basutoland, would certainly have learned more than one English word after months with British soldiers. However, these are all legitimate licenses to allow a good story to be told and I am certain that you will pay the film the compliment of tears and thus assure the makers that you like something a little different from the usual sex and sadism that is your customary film diet.

Ronald Reagan and Patricia Neal work sincerely to make the story believable. Orlando Martins, the Negro player, gives a touching and beautiful performance as Blossom. The other players too, are more than adequate. But this is Richard Todd's picture. His work is magnificent. He makes one believe in the unbelievable Scot. He forces us to accept Lachie as a real person and compels us to like the unlikeable. He is a great actor.

Catholics, of course, will know that the initial error, not to say injustice, was to keep the knowledge of his impending death from the man who had most right to know it. Those last days are the most important in a man's life and fortunate is he who has the opportunity to arrange his affairs in time and peacefully.

V.
"... I was thinking of making a proposal of marriage"

Yank (Ronald Reagan) does some plain speaking

A spring-like morning in September is not the best time to plunge into the darkness of a cinema to see a sombre—we will not say sordid—film. The odds are all against the film getting a generous appreciative criticism, but a great film would overcome those odds; even a moderately good film would have done so, as Enchantment did, some months back. As it was, we were completely unmoved, even in those moments that were intended to be high-spots of tension and emotion, as when Gemma’s baby, Piccolo, dies. We could not help thinking that it was a merciful release—merciful, chiefly, to us who now would be spared from seeing the child any longer. The trouble is that they are not real people we are seeing—only film stars churning out the same old stuff and doing the conventional thing and we could not care two hoots about them or mind in the least if they fell in or out of love with the right or the wrong people. The film failed because we were intended to care very much and to be very worried and concerned about them all.

The settings were hardly less conventional, whether it was Venice, the Dolomites (pronounced “Dawlarmites” especially for U.S. audiences) or London. We felt we were never very far from Hollywood. In the Dolomites the sun shone (and the moon!), and there were flowers—all according to prescription. In London things were different. We were shown the London where there are only slums, it is always night and very dark indeed, and where, when it was not foggy, it is always raining. (In the real London outside the sun was shining brightly!) The wedding was just a stage wedding, in a church of uncertain denomination, without witnesses (was it lawful?), but with a baby in the arms of the bride-groom—as if to tempt our tears. Every time we were shown Sebastian’s slum flat the gas fades out and the last shilling goes into the meter. Once would have been enough to establish his poverty. After the first time it was tedious.

Ida Lupino puts up a good performance as Gemma. I was sorry I was not more sorry for her. Errol Flynn plays the part of an erratic and fickle composer with some dash indeed, but he is always the film star, very handsome and pin-up. Eleanor Parker as Fenella is pleasant and restrained, in fact, very “nice”—a word much overworked in her own vocabulary. She, possessing everything that money can buy, testifies that with these things alone “Life is a vacuum—and I loathe it”, and has the good sense to admire the less fortunate Gemma for “her useful, loyal, unselfish and forgiving character”. We found so much good, at least, in this film and, apart from Mr. Korngold’s ballet music—which was good while it lasted—I doubt if you could find more.

G.


Under Capricorn is a screen play from an adaptation based on a play from a novel by Helen Simpson. What was the original story, I do not know, but I understand it was interesting. After passing through various processes it has become the story of an Irish society woman who in the early 18th century married the family groom. They were pursued by her brother who was shot dead by his sister in defence of her husband. The groom took the blame, was deported to Australia as a convict, where in due course he was joined by his wife. We are not told how she
managed to get away from her family but that does not matter as the story does not begin until the groom has become a useful and respected citizen of Sydney and his lady wife has taken to drink. It would be interesting to know why she took to drink, but we have to be content with the fact that she did and that she was encouraged by a sinister housekeeper who had designs upon the master of the house.

A childhood friend comes to Australia as the guest of a new Governor. They meet and he devotes himself to her reform which he achieves in an incredibly short space of time. But as of course they have fallen for each other, it is no doubt love which has so quickly bridged the gap between delirium tremens and perfect sobriety. Anyway, the housekeeper so works upon the suspicions of the husband that he creates a scene at a Ball at Government House to which the young couple have gone to celebrate the lady's recovery. Lover and lady rush back to the house. "Come fly with me," says the lover; but the lady tells her story and avows she has always loved her groom. The tender scene which this declaration engenders is rudely interrupted by the husband. Husband accidentally shoots lover and housekeeper is unmasked trying to murder her mistress. But the lover fortunately recovers and is sent home by the Governor and now that the housekeeper is safely out of the way, husband and wife are happily reunited.

This twaddle is not, I believe, the story Miss Simpson wrote; but it is, I think, a fair account of the impression left by the cinematic version which is unreal to the point of being little more than an essay in Hitchcock technique. Not that that technique is not interesting in itself. Hitchcock is one of the few directors who is able to translate into terms of cinema what in the theatre is known as timing. This is not a matter of keeping the audience guessing what is going to happen next (indeed, in this film that is often only too obvious), but of careful preparation, of the apt pause, of the line spoken and the gesture made at precisely the right moment. This he achieves frequently and sometimes with great effect. Lady Henrietta's entrance, for instance, at the dinner party. First the swish of a skirt, then the patter of bare feet, a shot of the feet, a shot of the skirt, the sound of the voice and then at last the lady herself. And the scene before the Ball: the two men are waiting for her at the foot of the stairs. They call her. There is an unaccountable delay. Will she come down drunk, will she come down at all? And then at last she comes, mistress of herself, radiant, dignified.

But technique cannot make a film any more than an Irish brogue can make an Irishwoman. Miss Bergman is evidently a very good actress. Her portrayal of a woman suffering from acute alcoholism is so delicate as not to be in the least offensive. To write of her as drunk would itself be an offence. But she is not Irish and for all that she says "Plaise" very prettily, will never be so. Yet the Henrietta of the film is essentially Irish. When she speaks of her countryside, of her horses, of her groom lover, the words she says should conjure up nothing else and nothing less than the Irish scene itself. Miss Bergman is never near it.

Joseph Cotten as Sam Flisk, the emancipated groom seemed to stand out as the only solid bit of flesh and blood in this welter of unreality. Margaret Leighton did her best with the part of Milly the sinister housekeeper, though it seemed to call for someone more angular and grim than she could ever be. Michael Wilding as the Hon. Charles Adare provided the titivating romance and Cecil Parker gave a convincing and amusing study of the Governor.

The technicolor and the music added to the unreality. The colour is still too exaggerated and the pink lining of Miss Bergman's hat in the final scenes was a dreadful distraction. For some reason which I am too innocent to understand we were twice treated to the tune "Here we go round the Mulberry Bush"; and at least during one conversation in a house that to the best of my knowledge was devoid of musicians, a violin solo was played in the next room.

Unreal and unmoving. Something has gone wrong somewhere and I think it is in the story. I have a feeling that Miss Simpson had in her mind, and most probably in her novel, a theme of redemption. In the film this theme has got lost in a welter of dipsomania, suspicion and illicit romance.

W.
A well-meant film...

...a charming story

So Dear To My Heart


It is not what you want that matters but what you do with what you’ve got and even then you have to stick to it, and if you fail where you thought to succeed you must take your defeat like a man, and who knows but that your failure may not be turned into success.

After a good deal of thought I believe this to be the moral that So Dear to My Heart would teach our little American cousins. But whether it is that or some...
other that escaped me, one is left in no doubt at all that it is a moral film. Maxim follows upon maxim with unwearied persistence; from the pages of a pigeon-bound book, from an animated professionnal owl, from a nursery card game, from a sententious grandmother, from a tuneless blacksmith. And the vehicle for this spate of moralising is the story of a little boy and a black ram lamb. There is also a little girl. And a swamp in which the children get lost, and of course a heavy downpour of rain. And then there are the cartoons to point the moral: a sequence of Columbus on his way to America, of Bruce and the spider and some late Victorian scrap-book stuff out of the pigeon-bound book.

Technicolor comes into its own in the cartoon; one accepts the make-believe and the colour adds to the enchantment. Perhaps one is lulled by this into accepting more easily the colour of the live scenes, so that the colour of this film seemed better than usual. And the use of the cartoons is discreet; that is to say, they are not mixed up with the live action, but are interspersed as a commentary upon it. The Columbus and Bruce sequences may be a little frightening to the very young but are a nostalgic reminder of what Disney can do so well.

The music is frightfully jolly in an American way. The direction seemed rather uninspired though there was some nice play with a loft-ladder and a pretty shot of the grandmother through the spokes of a huge spinning-wheel.

Unfortunately the acting is not very good: in other words, it's really rather ham. Ham to the point of embarrassment when blacksmith and grandmother sit opposite each other and sing. And the children are so nasal in their speech that it is not always easy for unaccustomed ears to catch all they say. But the black ram lamb has my unqualified approval. He is a perfect natural actor with a wicked sense of humour and an astonishingly appropriate Baa which is a delight.

Indeed it is a well-meant film of what must have been a charming story. But perhaps it is a teensy weensy bit too soppy to be given an unqualified recommendation for anyone over seven.


The most interesting thing in the film was that tent poles were tethered to a horse to keep them erect. The mystery is heightened rather than otherwise, I think, by the fact that a sand storm was blowing at the time.

It is not necessary to say much about the film: you know the type of thing Randolph Scott plays in. It is, of course, quite unobjectionable and there is a fair amount of action though geared at a slower pace than usual.

There is good reason to believe that a long lost wagon containing gold is to be located in some shifting sand dunes known as the Walking Hills near the Mexican border. So a party of men, later joined by Ella Raines, sets out in search of the treasure. After a few fights, one of them between men armed with shovels, an unconvincing sand storm saves them a lot of trouble.

T.


We had Charles Boyer in Mayerling in 1935. We had Edwige Feuillere in Sarajevo in 1939. Now we have Jean Marais in The Secret of Mayerling in 1948. They deal with the same historical figures but each in a different way. Having seen the three films one knows nothing of the subject and personages with which they deal save that one film contradicts the other. What is the truth about Mayerling? Certainly it is unlikely that we have it here. A fantastic bias against the old Austrian-Hungarian Empire, the vilifying of the Emperor Francis Joseph, the misuse of modern terms like "Resistance" and "Workers" in a context which makes nonsense of them: these are not factors which make for truth in
the use of film. Our Hungarian friends now in exile in this country perhaps could tell us something of the facts of the case. They, however, would be dubbed "reactionary" or "fascist" by the makers of this film.

Perhaps I am making too much fuss about a second-rate picture. It can hardly hope to influence many in this country. It will not be shown widely enough. But it is a shocking thing to see the screen being consciously used to falsify history and to damage reputations.

Jean Marais acts with weary correctness. Dominique Blanchar, presumably the daughter of Pierre, is charming and individual. May she soon have parts worthy of her evident talents and honesty.

It is a sad thing when one sees films losing their national characteristics. This one could have been made anywhere. That is to say, it is no credit to France.

V.


I am glad I wasn't sent to Pointer College (U.S.A.). I am also glad I haven't got a daughter like Susan Abbott as portrayed by Betty Lynn. So when I was called up to watch the college career of both Susan and her widowed mother (who for rather unusual financial reasons contrived to be admitted to the same college) I expected that the experience would be one to be endured rather than enjoyed.

The film, however, is less fatuous than precedent might lead one to expect. This is due partly to the refreshing acting of Loretta Young and partly to a treatment of campus love which, by venturing below the surface, is not altogether unsuccessful, for all its limitations, in touching the heart. Some critics have been either repelled or irritated by this. But the mother makes the point that after all her daughter is approximately the same age as she herself was when she married. This rare and realistic admission, so far removed from the patronising attitude of so many parents is calculated to endear her to the younger generation.

Q. WHEN MY BABY SMILES AT ME.


Within the last twelve months the writer of this notice has graduated as a reviewer (of sorts) from Dream Girl through Family Honeymoon and You Can't Sleep Here to When My Baby Smiles at Me. It makes you think. This latest is a simple story with all the interest of a Victorian moral tale selected for an evangelical Sunday School prize. Subject: The Drunkard's Return or The Perils of Liquor in Show Business. Betty Grable as the ever-loving wife does all she is expected to do. Dan Dailey is a convincing "drunk". The other man who almost marries the divorcing but otherwise ever-loving drunk's wife is played with some charm by Richard Arlen.

Jack Oakie, June Havoc and James Gleason all help to return the ever-loving wife to her disappointing husband where the matter rests at present. Those who understand Jack Oakie will probably like him. Finally the chorus work is not graceful.

Although this is a Certificate A film, presumably because of the drunken effects, it might easily be very popular with children.

P.S. Baby = young woman, i.e., Betty Grable.

This film was made by Alexander Korda eighteen years ago. It is an interesting example of his work in France before he came to be the most notable and knowledgeable personality in the renaissance of British cinema. It is enterprising of the Curzon directors to have given us the opportunity of seeing it.

It is also interesting as a standard with which to compare some of the later French films. They have by no means maintained the level of artistic excellence which is here to be noticed. The copy used at the Curzon is not a good one. The lighting is at times distracting. The cast is not faultless. But, taking all these points into consideration, Marius is an outstanding piece of filmwork. The Marseilles background against which the story is set is captured faithfully and the characteristics of the people, their vitality, their vulgarity even, is marvellously reproduced. The attention to detail, material and psychological, makes the film a perfect study of milieu. The story of a young bartender who is torn between his longing to sail to distant parts and his love for Fanny, the daughter of the shellfish woman, is not without its objectionable elements. It has, however, the merit belonging to so many French films of this period, that it does not ignore the fact that God exists and that religion makes demands on one. Though the characters may violate the moral code, they accept it. Though they forget the claims that God has upon them, they do not deny Him. It is, in fact, a negative tribute to religion but how much better than the devitalised psychological case histories which so often serve as film material nowadays!

The acting of Raimu and Pierre Fresnay is a joy to watch. Charpin, too. What a comedian! We do not have them over here. The distaff side of the cast is not successful; or perhaps I am prejudiced by the odd fashions and the sly posturings put on for the occasion by Orane Demazis. She could have had both honour and Marius, but makes a melodramatic ending to a true comedy by sending him away when she could and should have taken him to church.

A film for discriminating adults who like to enjoy a little salt.


"Films de France" is a new distributing organisation set up in London under the direction of George Arnull. Its first film Au Grand Balcon augurs well for the future. It has been chosen for the reopening of the Rialto, Coventry Street, after renovations. A Gaia performance in the presence of the French Ambassador should do much to signalise the fact that not all French films are of the abysmal level reached by those shown at Venice this year.

Au Grand Balcon also serves as an interesting comparison with Marius, the eighteen-year-old piece we saw last week at the Curzon. They both have Pierre Fresnay as star and provide a useful study of the technique of that great actor. The older film shows him as a volatile, vivacious, handsome young Marseilais. The latter, in a story about the formation and development of a French airmail service, give him an opportunity to show a completely diverse character; a man who is inflexible in his determination to let nothing stand in the way of his plan to encircle the world with French planes, who allows no sentiment of pity or friendship to move him from his course, whose sombre disposition make men hate him until they realise the heat and depth of the ideal that is calling him.

The film is treated in a semi-documentary manner and is delightfully free from overstatement, or temptations to let side issues detract from the working out of the main theme. It ends on a note of restraint that is remarkable and rare even in French films. The chief pilot, having spent many years hating his callous boss, Carbot, is sent off on the first flight to Latin America,
realising that, all the time, the boss had been saving up his best man for the crowning achievement of the enterprise which sets the seal on the development of the line from the early days of fragile machines and frequent fatalities.

Fresnay as Carbot, the man of iron discipline and Marchal as Fabien, the leading pilot who misunderstands him, are an excellent team ably supported by a group too numerous to mention in detail. Perhaps one should pick out Jeannine Crispin for her part as Mlle. Maryse, the secretary, an unglamorous rôle of great importance to the story which she plays devotedly.

The photography is satisfying without being overwhelming and the sets have that air of actuality which is one of the best characteristics of worthwhile French films.

V.

YOU CAN'T SLEEP HERE.
Starring: Cary Grant and Ann Sheridan with Marion Marshall, Randy Stuart and William Neff.
Director: Howard Hawks.

The protracted, wise-cracking jangle which is the Hollywood symptom of the process known as falling in love, a triple wedding—German civil, American Protestant and French Catholic—a honeymoon apparently never—or at least not till the fade-out kiss—to be allowed even to begin to happen: these are the experiences of the male French officer (Cary Grant) and the female American officer (Ann Sheridan) who has been assigned to him for cooperation.

The only way he can be with his wife who is no sooner triply married to him than she is ordered with the whole of her outfit back to the U.S.A. is for him to go too as a G.I. bride (kinda). Much fun is dragged out of that situation.

All very funny by dint of hard work unless you happen to be funny about the reticences of marriage!

THE SECRET GARDEN. Starring: Margaret O'Brien, Herbert Marshall, with Dean Stockwell, Gladys Cooper, Elsa Lanchester.
Producer: Clarence Brown.
Director: Fred M. Wilcox.

It all happened in the days of carriages and pairs and it is based on a novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett. And the little orphan girl comes from India to live in Yorkshire, which means wind and rain and aunchback uncle and a crippled boy and a croaking raven and screams in the night and painfully synthetic Yorkshire accents. But it was all as if somebody said “Boo” and I never jumped a bit.

This is a film which would have been quite creditable thirty years ago. And I have no wish to deter the more unsophisticated schoolchildren from seeing it. I don't think it will make them dream and it has a happy ending. But when one thinks of the acting done in the past by Herbert Marshall (now with the advance of years developing a resemblance to Hilaire Marshall in his prime), Margaret O'Brien and other members of the cast, which includes Dennis Hoey and Isobel Elsom, it is pathetic that they should be involved in a throwback like this. The flabby handling of what might have been a good film is not enhanced by the occasional, uncalled for burgeoning into technicolor.

Q.

The December issue of FOCUS will carry
an interesting article on "Ealing Studios"
by Sir Michael Balcon
AN INSTRUCTIONAL FILM

ATOMIC PHYSICS

By C. W. O'HARA, S.J.

The writer proposes to give an account of a preview of the G. B. Instructional film on Atomic Physics, presented by J. Arthur Rank. The film is intended to be an authoritative account of the history and development of Atomic Physics from the beginning of the 19th century to the year when the Atomic Bomb fell on Hiroshima, and ends with an account by Sir John Cockcroft foreseeing how the new knowledge may be used in the future in more peaceful ways.

To compress into a film lasting ninety minutes the eventful and at times very unexpected results of the scientists' search into the hidden secrets of matter is unquestionably an ambitious programme. To achieve this in a way which will convey intelligence and interest to those on the one hand whose studies lie elsewhere and at the same time be informative to those who are scientifically inclined must have called for much hard thought and co-operation on the part of those who produced the film. It can be said at once that the producers have attained their end in a very satisfying way and that the film deserves to be popular in the genuine sense of that much abused word.

The film has an advantage over a book or even over a lecturer with his blackboard and coloured chalks in that it brings the apparatus and symbols to life in a way which is quite fascinating. To give an example. To see the elements walking into their places in the Periodic Table, to see the gaps and then later to see how the gaps were filled by such elements as Radium and Polonium gave a sense of continuity which one feels it is difficult to obtain in any other way, and yet is so vital if one is not to miss the wood for the trees.

It was also satisfying to one's historical sense to see and hear the actual discoverer relating in his own words the new knowledge he had gained in laying bare the inner sources of the energy of the atom. To the writer who has heard J. J. Thomson and Lord Rutherford when they were lecturing at Cambridge, it was more than satisfying that those who come after will still be able to see and hear what kind of men they were. One could only wish that this had also been possible in the case of the Curies and even of Dalton.

And a word of praise and admiration must be given to the constructor of the mathematical equation which provides the theoretical explanation of the bombardment of Lithium by proton particles, and similar disintegrations. It is well done and manages to apply the Einstein Equation of energy without giving the audience a particularly violent headache. The film is intended to be instructional and it was good to see that the critical points were not slurred over; that an honest attempt was made to tackle the knotty points intelligibly. In particular, the tracking down of the neutron—which turned out to be such a vital factor in the possibility of the production of an Atomic Bomb—was well done, though it was a most difficult problem for the pioneers.

From the moral point of view, the less said about the Atomic Bomb the better. Nevertheless, from the point of view of pure knowledge of the innermost citadels of the atom, there can be no doubt that it is an achievement which would have taken much longer to find out had not the urgencies of war forced the scientists to find a solution. The film shows the effects of this knowledge when used at Hiroshima in 1944. One can only hope that in the future there will be no necessity that such knowledge need be applied in such a way.
The Message of Fatima

By C. C. MARTINDALE, S.J.

The story of "Fatima" is probably well known; and the forthcoming film will put much of it before our very eyes: it is, then, on the meaning or message of Fatima that I will try to concentrate here.

As for that story, our information falls into two quite separate masses of evidence: the contemporary accounts of eye-witnesses (1917), and the interrogations by Canon Formigao of the three children who saw Our Lady—Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta: and secondly, what Lucia put into writing partly in 1937 and more fully in 1941-42. From the former we learn that on May 13th these three small and quite ignorant peasants (Lucia was 10, Francisco 9, Jacinta 7) saw a vision of a "lady" who asked them to return there on the 13th of each month till October 13th: then she would tell them who she was and what she wanted. She did, in fact, ask repeatedly that the Rosary should be said daily; and that men must amend their lives and cease to offend God. On the 13th she said that she was "The Lady of the Rosary" and that a chapel must be built there in her honour. She also confided to them a "secret", and the children went through a real persecution from priests, parents and police rather than reveal it. Commenting on this later, Lucia said that the "Rosary was a very good way of helping people who did not know how to pray, to draw nearer to God": and also, that this "amendment of life" and the sacrifices it would involve was the essential part of Our Lady's message: when asked why she had not said at once all that she did later on, she answered that "everything necessary was said in 1917", i.e., that men must cease to sin: wars, she made it clear, were the result of sin and, if men continued to sin, still worse would follow.

But, as time went on, she began to speak to her confessors or superiors or the bishop of the diocese about a new theme hitherto untouched on, i.e., the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Our Lady; and at different times she also spoke about Russia and asked that the Holy Father, together with all the bishops of the world, should, on one definite day, consecrate Russia to Our Lady's Immaculate Heart. Finally she was ordered by her bishop to write down all that she might about her experiences and in 1941-42 she revealed the first two parts of the "secret", the third being kept in a sealed document to be opened only in 1960 (though they are now talking of the possibility of its being made known much earlier). These first two parts consisted of a vision of hell which lasted only for a moment: the second, an unconditional declaration by Our Lady that if Russia were consecrated to Her Immaculate Heart, Russia would be converted: otherwise, there would be still worse wars and that Russia would spread her errors through the world and destroy many nations. In the end, however, Her Immaculate Heart would triumph and there would be "a space of peace".

When examining any such narrative of an apparition or other preternatural occurrence, the Church always goes straight to the doctrinal and moral content of the story and treats relatively lightly the human words in which the recipient of the heavenly favour describes it—these depend, under Providence, on the ideas, imagination and language which are proper to the "seer". Hence the essence of these two great "revelations" granted to Lucia and conveyed through her to us is, after all, nothing really "secret", because we have always known of the existence of hell, and the devotion to Our Lady's Heart has been established in the Church for centuries. Our Lady neither wished to, or could, reveal any new truth: Revelation was closed with the death of the Apostles. But she could, and surely did, wish her chosen children to drive us to see deeper into what we already knew. It is therefore very important not to be diverted from.
The cameras used for the Fatima film received the blessing of the Church at the hands of His Lordship Bishop Craven. Fr. Hilary Carpenter, O.P., and Fr. Burke were present at the ceremony, on behalf of The Catholic Film Institute

the essence of what she did convey to us by what are truly "accidentals". During the first part of her message occurred the "miracle of the sun". Much could be said about that, but at best it was a "sign" pointing further than itself like the miracles of Our Lord themselves. In the second part, it would be possible to stop short at the subject of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and in particular at the practice of a "new devotion"—the Five First Saturdays, somehow parallel to the Nine First Fridays and their "Great Promise" which Lucia (who insisted that she could give only the "sense" of Our Lady’s words), echoed so closely.

We should surely see that what is offered us is the reinforcement of the belief in sin, and of the extreme results of unrepented sin, namely hell. And again, the extreme of holiness, namely the triumph of grace in the soul of Our Lady.

At all costs—by means of whatever sacrifice—we must fly from the former, and try to approximate to the latter. That sin leads to disaster even in this world, is certain. Thus we ought not even to fasten our imagination to the word "Russia" as such. I would not be disconcerted if, in 1917, Lucia had heard nothing about
Russia as such—indeed, the name would have meant nothing to her then, while during that first war it would have been the Kaiser who filled our imaginative horizon, and Hitler during the second war (save for the very far-sighted; and anyhow Lucia insisted that she had not been called to be a prophetess). But we can all of us, who are old enough, recall the wildly immoral consequences of the earlier war (though their real origin went far behind that!) and how no one admitted that they needed “conversion”. During the second war, such incredible massacres, calculated, psychological cruelties, organised mendacity were unleashed. The rack was nothing to the dislocation of minds. And since the second war—though it was not due solely or even primarily to Russia, nor are the “errors” now making the world miserable exclusively Russian ones—have men “amended their lives”? We cannot see it. We doubt whether there has ever been more opportunism in politics or corruption among politicians than there is now. We doubt whether Europe has ever been so unhappy; whether there has been more likelihood of Europe becoming an Asiatic peninsula, that is, a world in which Christian education and possibly the Christian priesthood have been made almost impossible.

It would not surprise me if Lucia’s final document drove us still further back to the very ideas of Satan and of God, and, though the “Prince of this World” (as Our Lord more than once named the Devil)—that “Liar and Father of Lies”, that “Murderer from the beginning”, cannot possibly conquer in the long run, who can tell what limits exist to his destructive powers between now and the end?

The Message of Fatima seems to me first of all incarnate in the two children Jacinta and Francisco. Jacinta, who seems to me a more sensitive and delicate a soul than Lucia (I am not talking of degrees of holiness), became almost too much obsessed by the thought of the loss of souls and of hell. But I hasten to say that among the many inaccuracies of which the various accounts of “Fatima” have been guilty, none is worse than the suggestion that Our Lady revealed to Jacinta that most—or any—of those who fell in war would go to hell. Lucia says explicitly that Our Lady never mentioned the fate of fallen soldiers. Still, this child suffered most terribly in her last illness; she died on February 20th, 1920; all of this she offered with perfect serenity for the conversion of sinners and the salvation of souls. She represents, so to say, one of the two “extremes”. The spiritualisation of Francisco is even more marvellous, to me at any rate. The little boy became absorbed by the idea of “consoling God” and His love for Jesus hidden in the Blessed Sacrament. Just before his death (April 4, 1919), he made his First and Last Communion. The little lad who hunted snakes and moles and frightened his mother by bringing them into the house found his life changed into one long prayer, though he too suffered most terribly and most gently. And little by little Lucia’s memories too became transformed. The Lady, whom they had described in the only words then at their disposal, material words, such as enable us in our turn to make the only sort of statue that we can, ended by being a Lady “all of light”—she was waves of undulating light: you knew what was dress, what was tunic, what were hands or face, by differences in that light which so dazzled them that they could not look upon it.

That, surely, is what we must pray for—light to see deep into the mysteries at the surface of which we mostly look. St. John, in his Apocalypse, writes of the “deep things” of Satan: St. Paul, of the deep things of God. Possibly it is because the Catholic Faith, in this or that country, has been too superficial, too much an affair of tradition, habit, nationalist feeling, that the enemies of the Church are having, at present, so easy a victory. Please God, there are depths also in the human soul, and that persecution itself may reveal to men that the Facts of Faith are more real than ever they had guessed. And exactly in proportion as the future of our own schools becomes so problematical, we in our generation must have a “deep” faith, not only for our own sake, but that in every home parents may be able to impart it to those who are to come after them.
Regional Catholic Film Societies

One of the reasons which induced us to change the title of our organisation was to enable our members in the provinces to form their own sections of the Institute more easily. The special function of the London office is to act as a national film centre in accordance with the directive of the Encyclical Vigilanti Cura and to be the office from which delegation to the International Catholic Cinema Office is most easily effected.

It is clear, however, that Catholic film action should not and cannot be restricted to one centre in the country. There are enthusiasts and experts in other parts of the country who can do much to help increase the influence of the Church in working for a sane and healthy cinema.

It is suggested that groups of Catholics be formed on a regional or diocesan basis for the purpose of film appreciation or study. Such groups could be entitled, e.g., the Birmingham, Manchester, Salisbury, etc., Catholic Film Society. If desired, they could (and we think should) be affiliated with the Catholic Film Institute. They should, where possible, have the direction of a priest, in accordance with the wishes of the Vigilanti Cura, but need not regard this as a sine qua non where capable lay leadership is available.

Aims and objects may be identical with or partly inspired by the aims and objects of the C.F.I. Or the regional society may decide to concentrate on one object only, e.g., the production of catechetical films, the production of religious news reels, or the development of film criticism. The regional groups will have to work out their own methods of procedure in accordance with local needs and opportunities.

Such groups could have space in Focus in which to report their progress and plans. The question of affiliation fees and membership rights and obligations will have to be gone into at a later date. For the present it would be useful to have the views of our regional members on this idea.

Ultimately we envisage a network of active Catholic film groups up and down the country all pulling their weight and helping positively to influence the cinema for good, with a central office for co-ordination and exchange of ideas. Such a plan is not impossible but it needs careful thought before we embark upon it. In the few years of our existence we have learnt many lessons by bitter experience. We can help you to avoid these pitfalls.

Film Competition

To encourage Catholic amateur cinematographers we have decided to organise a sub-standard film competition open to members of the Catholic Film Institute. Each member will be eligible to submit one film, silent or sound, on any subject he chooses. It need not, therefore, necessarily be a religious subject. Each film will be judged entirely on its merits as a film, whether silent or sound.

The films will be judged by a jury of experts to be announced later. Their decision will be final.

A Trophy will be awarded to the best film and diplomas to the next two in order of merit.

The Catholic Film Institute reserves the right to exhibit the prize-winning and any other films submitted in any way considered necessary.

Each film should be accompanied by a registration fee of 10/6. The last day for receiving entries is December 31st, 1949.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday, December 10th. The first part, for members only, will
be held at the Newman International Centre, 31 Portman Square, W.1, from 4—6 p.m. The second part, which will be open to the general public, will be held at Westminster Cathedral Hall, at 8 o'clock.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Not Enough Nightmares!

Marist Brothers' College,
Mount Gembier,
South Australia.

Sir,

"... In my opinion (Focus) is the very best Film Review of any kind that I have ever come across. You are doing a noble work and doing it very well. There is only one fault—'Q' doesn't have enough nightmares!"

DAVID H. CHANT.

Sheep and Goats

46 Wilkie Lane,
Hawkhill,
Dundee.

Sir,

Could you please get your Educational Panel to review more films of interest to others than teachers. That section is of great help to people who, like myself, are working on 16mm. Keep them away from the life cycle of a newt or rabbit, etc. ... all that is catered for elsewhere — but religious, social, historical, instructional films do need doing. You help us to sort the sheep from the goats, e.g., in that series of Cathedral films (could you not do all those that you have not already done? I see there is a new one on St. Peter's) and calling attention to such films as Life in a Monastery and Children on Trial.

PETER HASTINGS.

Discordant Note

Sir,

In the film Three Dawns to Sydney which is full of interest and charm, there is one discordant note. Many Catholics will regret that the director of the film thought it desirable to include a scene in which the Blessed Sacrament is exposed. A mixed audience of Christians, Agnostics and Pagans cannot be expected to treat this scene with the reverence it deserves. A priest, at the end of Benediction, raises the monstrance, containing the Sacred Host, and the very natural reaction of many of those in the audience, who have not the Faith, is "What is that?"; "Roman Catholic superstition"; "Popery"; "Hocus Pocus".

When Our Lord hung on the Cross on Calvary it was perhaps natural for some of those who passed by to blaspheme and ridicule Him, for, as He said, "They know not what they do"; but there is not the same excuse for us to subject Him to a repetition of such mockery.

It is hard to see what good purpose can be served by exposing the externals of our faith to those who are not likely to know the love, reverence and devotion that faith in this mystery inspires in the minds and hearts of Catholics.

Yours truly,

L. BULLOCK-WEBSTER.

Children's Opinions

169 George Street,
Launceston,
Tasmania.

Sir,

The Catholic Women's League of Launceston conducts a yearly survey of children's opinions. You may be interested to know that this survey was very similar to the one conducted by your Educational Panel as regards the opinions of the adolescents. Undoubtedly special films will have to be provided for children if we wish to secure right thinking for normal good lives in the future. Wishing you every success.

GRETA GAFFNEY.
VISUAL AIDS FOR THE TEACHING OF HISTORY

By Our Educational Panel

LIBRARIES:
E. G. S. Tower House, Woodchester, nr. Stroud.
Wallace Heaton, Ltd., 127 New Bond Street, W.1.

FILMS

The Land of Drake. Silent film, 1 reel.
20 minutes. E.G.S. Film Library, Hire 3/6.

Beginning with maps and close-ups of the coastline of Devon, this film indicates the importance of Devon in Tudor and later history, through the lives of some of her famous sons—Drake, Hawkins, Davis, Raleigh. Where possible, glimpses are given of the birthplace and locality connected with the individual sailor and a further sense of reality is provided by the use of Elizabethan portraits. The well-known Millais painting of the boyhood of Raleigh is included and gives greater significance to views of the shores near his lovely Elizabethan home. Maps and diagrams are provided to emphasise the importance of geographical factors in making Devon men natural seafarers, practised in skilful sailing—the extensive seaboundaries, natural harbours and prevailing Channel winds. Careful preparation is essential if the class is to profit from this film and detailed and interesting lesson notes are provided to amplify the captions.

Suitability: 12+

Life of St. John Bosco. Sound film, 16mm., 2 reels, 1½ hours. For hire, apply Salesian Fathers, Battersea.

This film, made in Italy under the direction of the Salesians, portrays the life and work of St. John Bosco and his concern for the spiritual and temporal welfare of youth in Italy and eventually throughout the world. Emphasis is laid on the saint’s constant struggles against poverty, ignorance and mistrust and his work is traced from its beginnings with his group of high-spirited choir-boys to the full development of organised schools directed by the Salesian Fathers and the Congregation of Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians. The saint’s spiritual development is not indicated successfully—too often, spirituality appears as somewhat ostentatious and self-conscious piety and a frequent weakness of dialogue detracts from the personality of the saint as presented by the film. The child Giovanni reading the Scriptures to his companions in the fields, the vision received by the saint during his novitiate, the crowded deathbed scene would have been better left to the imagination. The synchronising of the English sound version with the lip movements of the Italian actors is skilful and the film is valuable as a survey of the foundation and expansion of one of the most important Orders of modern times.

FILMSTRIPS

Medieval Teaching. Common Ground, CGA 70. Hire: Wallace Heaton, 2/-.

In tracing the origins and development of the visual method of education, this filmstrip shows that films and filmstrips are merely the most recent step in what has been a long and continuous process of devising visual aids. Beginning with the Tower of Knowledge, a visual definition of the content of education, the different
storeys represent the different parts of the seven liberal Arts with the alphabet as the key to the Tower. Manuscript illustrations show lessons in progress—singing and reading, a geometry lesson with an appalled pupil watching the instruments of the master, details of the master's room and equipment, his clock, hour-glass, books and knife. Changes in reading and writing materials are shown, from the horn-book to the printed book, from wax tablets and pointets to slates and pencils. The manuscript and printed book illustrations provide a wealth of interesting material, for instance, methods of reckoning by counters being checked by the use of Arabic numerals, drawings of Saints with their emblems, early pictorial vocabularies, etc. This is a most useful filmstrip and has a companion strip dealing with toys and games.

Suitability: 14+.

Book Production in Europe. General History. Common Ground, CGA 90. Wallace Heaton, 2/-.

This filmstrip again, is a portrayal of development and can usefully be shown in conjunction with the previous filmstrip. The development of alphabetic writing is shown through clay-tablets, papyrus-rolls, wax-tablets, vellum and finally the invention of printing and use of paper. At each stage, interesting details of the book-making process are given, the making of papyrus from strips of the papyrus stem, the scribe at work illuminating his parchment, the printers selecting their letters, setting the type and printing and illustrating their books. Historic books provide the material of this strip, the Book of Kells, Gutenberg's Bible, Caxton's first printed book, the Authorised Bible and others. The difference between good and bad print and bindings is stressed throughout and magnificent die-stamped leather and gilt bindings are contrasted with the cheap, popular editions of Dickens. This strip is only one of five strips on Book Production, the others dealing in greater detail with paper-making, printing, illustrating, binding and publishing.

Suitability: 14+.

Pepys' London. Filmstrip, one reel, Common Ground, CGA 40. Hire as above.

An excellent filmstrip, based almost entirely on contemporary material and valuable for revision of Stuart political and social history. Interesting people are shown, Charles II, the Duke of York, Pepys and his wife, Nell Gwynne, and places such as Pepys' parish church, Whitehall and the Tower where he worked, Drury Lane and old St. Paul's, all of which are mentioned in his Diary. Old customs are illustrated and a graphic "Broad-sheet of the Fearful Summer" and vivid pictures from the river with its boatloads of fugitives introduce the plague and the Great Fire. This is a most useful filmstrip, full of incident, with teaching notes consisting of lengthy extracts from the Diary.

Suitability: 14+.


Less interesting than Pepys' London but again, useful for revision of Tudor and Stuart history from the Reformation victims through the days of Lady Jane Grey, Princess Elizabeth, Raleigh and Strafford. Certain parts of the Tower such as Traitors' Gate, the White Tower and the dungeons have an obvious melodramatic attraction and other parts can be 'connected with important events, but otherwise the succession of towers and buildings can have little real significance for the children. This filmstrip has most value for London children with opportunities for visiting some of the parts of the Tower shown here.

Suitability: 14+.


This strip begins with a plan of a typical medieval castle with its chief defensive lines—the keep and residential quarters surrounded by the outer ward, the outer wall with gatehouse, and finally the moat. The choice of a good strategic position for castle-building is shown—Harlech, Edinburgh, Caerphilly—and the military value of water—Bodiam, Hurstmonceaux, Conway—and it is interesting to
notice the number of Border castles which have been used as illustrative material. Castles of different types are shown, the variety of buildings contained within the curtain walls of Windsor, the spreading line of Chepstow and the comfortable, domestic appearance of Stokesay. The value of this strip can be increased if more important castles are related to historic events.

Suitability: 13+

ENGLISH HISTORY AND THE NATIONAL TRUST. Common Ground, CGA 119. Hire as above.

This film is particularly suitable for

Sixth Formers who should have something of the range of background knowledge which this filmstrip requires. The span of years extends from the building of the Avebury and Figsbury rings to the days of Kipling. The greatest work of the National Trust is shown to be the preservation of land or buildings which are worthy of preservation but which do not enjoy the reputation of more famous places of beauty or historic interest. Consequently, the places shown are on the whole, unfamiliar and form an illuminating survey of the aims and achievements of the Trust during half a century of existence.

Suitability: 16+

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### SOME FILMS REVIEWED

Note. Inclusion in this list does not connote positive recommendation. Films that are positively harmful are not included here. Readers are reminded to refer to the full reviews when assessing a film.

Category A. Indicates adults only; B, adults and adolescents; C, family audiences; D, particularly for children.

Reviewed in "Focus" (Vol. II, Nos. 8, 9 and 10)

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THE CATHOLIC FILM INSTITUTE
National Film Reviewing Office
(Affiliated with Office Catholique International du Cinema)

President: His Eminence, Cardinal Griffin
Vice-President: The Rt. Rev. Abbot Upson, O.S.B.
Chairman: The Very Rev. Hilary Carpenter, O.P.
Vice-Chairman: Arthur Leslie

AIMS AND OBJECTS
1. To further the cause of Christian culture by means of the cinema.
2. To encourage the development of Catholic criticism of films with the object of influencing, as far as possible, the type of films publicly exhibited.
3. To promote the organisation of discussion groups for the study of films.
4. To establish a library of films of Catholic interest.
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INTERNATIONAL FILM REVIEW

By His Lordship The Right Reverend Bishop Hogan, O.F.M.

The second number of the International Film Review, a quarterly publication of the International Catholic Cinema Office (12 rue d'Orme, Bruxelles) maintains a high standard. This particular issue consists of a series of French testimonies and is introduced by an encouraging message from the late Archbishop of Paris, Cardinal Suhard. It is difficult to select from articles of such uniform interest and excellence, but I found the contribution of Georges Rollin "When I was Cure d'Ars", very appealing. Rollin played the part of St. Jean Vianney in the filmed life of the Cure d'Ars (Le Sorcier du Ciel) due for release shortly.

Here we have a distinguished actor opening his heart to us and exposing the difficulties he felt when faced with the task of portraying the life—especially the inner life—of a Saint. He points out that to make a film of adventure is easy enough; to make people laugh is largely a matter of technique, but that it is impossible to bring St. John Baptist Vianney to the screen without the help of his particular spirit. Rollin goes on to tell us how he tried to acquire something of that spirit in the solitude and silence of a Retreat House. While it is not in mortals to command success, one feels that such conscientious and painstaking preparation certainly deserves it and we look forward with pleasure to the film.

M. Abel Gance, the producer of the film on the Passion of Our Lord — The Divine Tragedy — writes very beautifully about this film upon which he has been working for some time and encourages us to hope that it will justify the confidence and abundantly reward the piety and enthusiasm of its promoters.

The International Film Review deserves a wide circulation, especially in schools where the Cinema is taken seriously as a medium of education.
COVER PERSONALITY

GENE TIERNEY

The name Tierney couldn’t be anything but Irish—and a dash of Irish is no drawback to anyone who lays claim to that elusive gift—personality. Through her father, then, Gene Tierney is a Celt—and like so many Americans, she counts other European strains in her ancestry—Spanish, Swedish, French. Just to accent this cosmopolitan mixture, she came to Switzerland just before the war to get “finished” in Lausanne. Her younger sister, Pat, has never forgiven Europe for getting into a war just as she was about to leave for Lausanne for the same purpose.

Gene Tierney has just finished a term of picture making in London. Her arrival was celebrated by a cocktail party at the Dorchester at which she appeared in a trim grey suit, a severely tailored white silk blouse, no hat. She proved on that occasion that she has an easy manner, is natural, unaffected and a good conversationalist.

What’s new in an American “star” being launched at a cocktail party, you might ask? Nothing, I would answer. But there was something new about this descent upon London, for Gene Tierney must be the very first “star” to arrive complete with an eight-months-old daughter. “She’s too young to leave behind,” announced Christina’s mother. And so baby and nurse and all the rest of the nursery equipment settled down at the Dorchester. Mother Gene has been going out to work every day, and Christina has been joining the parade of perambulators in Hyde Park with her nurse. “She has thrived in London,” her mother told me delightedly. “And has put on quite a lot of weight.”

The other member of this family is Daria, aged six, and waiting her mother’s return in California. Their father is Count Oleg Cassini who married Gene’in 1941 and he contributes to the family budget by designing dresses and costumes for the movie industry—including those of his wife.

It might add some colour to this personality story if I could describe early struggles for fame and hanging round Hollywood soda fountains in order to catch the eye of some wandering talent scout. But it wouldn’t be true. For very soon after she appeared on the New York stage she was scooped up by the cinema industry and you have been seeing her at regular intervals ever since.

Some of her films are forgotten—some deserve to go into repertory. Like Laura and The Razor’s Edge. She’s ready and competent to play most types of rôles—from Western stuff to tragedy with an occasional comedy thrown in. She seems to be able to don nationality with her make-up—an Arabian girl in Sundown (1941); a Eurasian in Shanghai Gesture; a Polynesian in Son of Fury; not to speak of the degenerate poor white in Tobacco Road. (Miss Tierney may want to forget this—I don’t know.) But whatever rôles she plays she gives the impression of understanding what she’s doing.

Occasionally the person pushing the pram in Hyde Park has been Miss Tierney herself—and who will blame her if there was a camera man watching. She has earned her publicity as a film actress who puts her family first.

The film just finished and which has largely been shot in the streets of London is called Night and the City. It makes the 20th Gene Tierney picture since 1940.

Grace Conway.
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THE SACRIFICE WE OFFER

CATHOLICS AND THE CINEMA
By Freda Bruce Lockhart. A Reprint of The Tablet article.
Price 1d.
Christmas and the Cinema

"And behold an angel of the Lord stood by them and the brightness of God shone round about them... and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army praising God and saying: Glory be to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of goodwill."

In the light of these words, it is not pushing things too far to suggest that the feast of Christmas, which is the feast of spiritual light and sound, should have a special significance for those who endeavour to use the medium of the light and sound of the cinema, to focus attention on Christian thought, art and culture.

During such festive days as Christmas we realise that the Church is a spiritual theatre, in which all the year round, The Holy Spirit: The Divine Artist, is presenting to the world, soul-shaking and soul-awakening dramas. At this season the Church presents the mighty spectacle of The Incarnation and those who fail to be moved by it, are in a bad way.

Art is a hand-maid of religion and the theatre and the cinema can be her good servants. What are artistes but instruments of The Holy Spirit whose work (by appropriation as theologians call it) is to renew the face of the earth and to cleanse the human heart with the fire of Divine Love? And what are the theatre and cinema, but symbols of the Church, commissioned by Christ Our Lord, to teach all nations! And what is the purpose of art, if not to communicate Truth in a pleasing manner?

The cinema derives much of its power from the fact that it has been accepted by the man in the street and that it can teach, preach, reveal and enlighten in most attractive forms.

"We see God at present 'through a glass darkly', but clearly enough to reflect Him truly," writes Archbishop Roberts in the current issue of The International Review, "if we can but focus His gifts correctly. To do that is the aim of the priests and layfolk who pool their expert knowledge in the making and appraising of films."

General Booth said: "Why should the devil have all the best tunes?" We today may add: "And why should he have all the best films?"

P.S. FOCUS wishes all its Friends and Relations a Very Happy Christmas
LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

An Outline of the forthcoming films to be produced at Ealing Studios

By Sir Michael Balcon

The most difficult aspect of writing about future productions planned by a film studio is the risk of having to face people in a year or so's time and explain why the plans had to be changed. Production plans are always tentative. They are liable to be adapted to circumstances ranging from world incidents to the failure of the script to come up to expectations.

This is why I am always cautious when talking about any films which have not actually reached the stage of production.

I have in front of me a list of story subjects which we propose to make at Ealing Studios. There are far too many to be made in one year. Sorting them out for our 1950 schedule means taking a number of things into consideration. We have a number of directors and associate producers under contract and it is obvious that subjects must be allocated to them in relation to their own particular taste and style.

The subjects have also to be chosen with a view to giving the year's output a balance, not only in regard to a studio's own schedule, but also taking into account the subjects proposed by other companies.

In writing on our forthcoming productions at Ealing, I want to make it clear that the subjects dealt with are not necessarily going into production during 1950, and it is conceivable that circumstances may alter arrangements for those which are at the moment definitely scheduled.

Looking at these subjects, one interesting trend emerges and that is the preponderance of original stories as opposed to those adapted from novels, short stories or plays. This is not a new trend for Ealing but the continuation of a policy which we hope has met with some success in recent years. Films such as Hue and Cry, Passport to Pimlico and Train of Events have all been written for the screen. Our most recently completed pictures A Run For Your Money and The Blue Lamp and the film now in production, Dance Hall, are also original subjects.

During the past year or so, the emphasis has been on comedy. This was no coincidence but a predetermined plan which followed the realisation that humour had been lacking in British films and that audiences desired and deserved better fare. Thus Passport to Pimlico, Whisky Galore, Kind Hearts and Coronets and A Run For Your Money.

These pictures are all somewhat experimental. In deciding on a policy of comedy, we felt at Ealing that it was necessary to branch out into a less familiar form of humour than the conventional story starring and dominated by a comedian, and although the subjects themselves are comedies, they have not departed from the realistic approach to production so definitely associated with Ealing. The "formula" (a word which should not be used) is the humorous side of everyday life and the effect of unusual circumstances on real people.

During 1950 we intend to make more comedies of this description. One, again written by T. E. B. Clarke, who wrote Hue and Cry and Passport to Pimlico, is entitled The Magnet. Clarke again turns to children for this story of a boy who exchanges an invisible watch for a magnet. Overcome by a guilty conscience he tries to dispose of the magnet, but finds it by no means easy to do so. It eventually becomes the most famous magnet in England.
The Magnet which will be directed by Charles Frend, will offer a very good opportunity to a youthful actor, for whom we are at present making tests. The picture will go into production in the spring and will be followed by another comedy subject, again an original story, this time by Michael Law.

The second comedy has the title The Man Who Dropped His Rifle on Parade and it is intended as a subject for Alec Guinness who displayed his comedy abilities and his virtuosity in Kind Hearts and Coronets and has since played another comedy rôle in A Run For Your Money.

The Man Who Dropped His Rifle on Parade is a story of a meek little glassblower who prefers blowing the cornet and plays in the local brass band. He has three aspirations: to be a hero, to lead his band to victory in an annual contest and to win his girl from the saxophonist. The story shows how he achieves these ambitions.

These two comedies will follow our first 1950 production, Sacrifice, which has been written by Jack Whittingham and Paul Stein, and tells the story of a Battle of Britain hero unable to adjust himself to post war conditions. His rake's progress leads him into blackmail and to his own eventual murder after his wife has remarried, believing him to be dead. His wife and her second husband are deeply involved in their efforts to protect each other.

It is a dramatic and, I believe, a very moving subject, to be directed by Basil Dearden, who has recently completed our story of the London Police Force, The Blue Lamp. It will go into production as soon as we have completed Dance Hall, which is a story about four typical youngsters to be found in a palais de danse.

Later in the year, Robert Hamer (who made Kind Hearts and Coronets) will direct another picture for us, the subject of which is at present under discussion.

We are hoping that it may be possible to produce five films during the year, and if this can be done we already have two subjects in preparation, one of which is Back-Stage, the story of a repertory company, and the other a story of long-distance night lorry drivers. It is too early yet to say which is likely to be made first.

Looking even further ahead, we are preparing a story of the Clyde and also a modern smuggling story which is being adapted from a short magazine story "Brandy for the Parson", by Geoffrey Household. These will come into our 1951 schedule.

During the coming year, we also intend to produce another film in Australia, to follow Bitter Springs which we have just completed out there. The next subject is based on the well-known Australian novel "Robbery under Arms".

These forthcoming productions do not take into consideration the fact that Harry Watt, who made our first two Australian productions, is at present looking for a new subject to suit his own particular talent for outdoor stories.

The production of films is always a hazardous business and looking too far ahead is a risky thing to do. As I have said, I give this outline of our plans with a certain amount of trepidation but at least with the assurance that we shall be doing our best to maintain as high a quality as possible.

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SURREY
The powerful fascination of film is very largely due to a continuous flow—a never-ending, ever-changing output of double-feature programmes, which, if changed weekly, necessitate over one hundred new features a year. This astonishing flow (irrespective of countries of origin) has been produced for years, and the fact that there is a complete change of programme every week is now taken for granted. An industry geared to turn out so many films works under a constant strain—a fact that is sometimes apparent on the screen, it being rather difficult to produce two masterpieces every week until the end of time.

Even more important, this constant flow has a way of creating conventions and traditions very quickly, which most of us accept unthinkingly. Nowadays we are so very busy viewing all these films, either for business or pleasure, that we leave ourselves little time to consider why this ceaseless flow is necessary, and where it is leading us; if it is making any major contribution to life, or whether it is just a huge commercial cobweb in which we have become entangled; whether we have developed spiritually and mentally after years of cinema-going, and if not, why not.

The framework of civilisation is rotten. It needs re-making, and yet this colossal production-distribution-projection-consumption of films within the rotten framework does very little to improve conditions, being content to devote most of its energies to making unimportant films which distract our attention from the rotten framework, and really we haven’t much time to waste in this way, at least until we have done some spiritual rebuilding. Film also induces us to accept numerous policies which are not always sound; the star system, for instance.

Today, two generations have been fed on a diet of stars, and know no other. Film stars have become the magnets drawing us to the box-office. Usually we don’t care who wrote the story or what it is about. The stars are our chief concern. Stars under
contracts must be given suitable vehicles to exploit their particular charms. The characters they represent are of secondary importance. How often have you seen a star sink his or her identity in the part being played? Half a dozen times in as many years, perhaps. Invariably the star shines through the character being played, which is what we like to see, forgetting, if we have ever known, that this is dramatically unsound and deprives acting of its real meaning.

An actor of genius should lose himself in the part he plays. On the screen, it is the fictional character which must be lost if it gets in the way of the star’s familiar personality. For that reason we show no surprise when Miss X appears this week as a nun, last week as a chorus girl, and next week as a gangster’s moll. Alas, this does not reveal her virtuosity, for nun, chorus girl and moll are just transparent characters through which Miss X will glow as usual. We say, ‘‘How excellent she was in so-and-so’’. Rarely do we say, ‘‘The character of so-and-so was excellently portrayed by Miss X’’.

In the theatre, the play’s the thing; in the cinema it’s the star. But even though this system is firmly established the world over, it may well be found in the future it is all a dramatic mistake, and that if film is to do full justice to both characters and subject-matter, it will have to put the stars in their true places instead of studding them on top of stories like a lot of jewels which dazzle us so much we forget what the stories are all about.

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**International Film Review**

The new quarterly organ of the International Catholic Cinema Office—Towards a Christian Philosophy of the Film.

Number Three now ready. Devoted mainly to the Film in Britain.


Number Four to be devoted to the Italian Cinema. Ready in December.
GIVE US THIS DAY


There is a slight flavour of profanity about this title which, except for a hint—and that not an excessively broad one—towards the end, the picture does not substantiate. As the original story was called "Christ in Concrete" we can assuredly be thankful for small mercies. Anyhow, the full implications of the context of the film's title will probably be lost upon a large percentage of the audience. One wonders to what extent they were appreciated by those who chose the phrase.

The outstanding things about the picture are the acting of Lea Padovani and the fact that the Italian quarter of New York has been reproduced in an English studio. But I do not find myself able to share the enthusiasm of another member of the panel who was present at the press show. The film suffers from trite artifice from the start, when a man's progress along a corridor is prolonged to the sound of music which builds the scene up to a none too interesting climax. The dialogue is odd.

The story is of a bricklayer in Brooklyn, his work, his marriage, his home and the dire consequences of unemployment, culminating in his being buried alive in liquid concrete on Good Friday, one of the most distressing things I have ever seen on the screen. The final point, that a man is much more than an economic unit is admirable enough. So is the resolution not to run away from wife and work so as to seek consolation with another woman (a small part not too congruously assigned to Kathleen Ryan).

But for all its sincerity and unconventionality, the film does not realise its possibilities. That a tolling bell should have been selected as illustrative of Good Friday, the one day in the year when Catholic bells are silent from morning till night is in itself a very trivial point. But it is a symbolic pointer to a lack of acquaintance with the religion which is presupposed as the background of the characters depicted.

IN THE GOOD OLD SUMMERTIME


This is not the film for the critical and easily bored, but for those who are content with one which is innocuous without requiring it to be interesting, too.

The scene is set in technicolored Chicago in a not very convincing 1900. Judy Garland and Van Johnson are both employed in a music shop (where she puts in a bit of singing) and they fall in love, partly by correspondence.

What mostly enlivened the 103 minutes of running time for me was the sight of Buster Keaton dancing with Miss Garland, accompanying her on the harmonium and living up to his first name by precipitating himself on top of a violin and reducing it to matchwood—all with incomparable gravity.
**Prince of Foxes**

**Starring:** Tyrone Power, Orson Welles, Wanda Hendrix, Everett Sloane, Felix Aylmer. Presented by 20th Century-Fox. **Director:** Henry King. **Producer:** Sol. C. Siegel. **Certificate:** A. **Category:** A.

This is an excursion into the Borgia period of Italian history. But take heart, it is not an educational tour, simply a sentimental journey. It tempts me to have a stab at explaining the art of historical interpretation, but I forbear and leave the task to wiser men. The film is by no means a failure in this direction and as such is welcome. (In fact any indication that people lived before the 20th century is welcome.) There is lacking, however, a boldness of relief and sureness of touch which is the mark of distinction—it is too smooth to be real.

Orsini (Tyrone Power) is one of the accomplished young men in the entourage of Cesare Borgia (Orson Welles). He is given the task of ingratiating himself with the ruler of an Italian Province called Varano (Felix Aylmer). Varano is an upright old man married to a young wife (Wanda Hendrix). The impact of these two worthy characters effects a moral reformation in Orsini, so that when the time comes to betray them to Borgia, he refuses to do so and instead conducts a spirited defence of the citadel. The siege, by the way, is effectively portrayed. Despite apparent failure against the enemy all ends happily. There is a scene, though, that may well prove too strong meat for some, namely the pretended gouging out of the eyes of Orsini, and it is for this reason that I place the film in Category A. The acting of all concerned is uniformly good but particular mention should be made, I think, of Belli (Everett Sloane), the rascalling attendant of Orsini.

There is an element of tediousness at times, but on the whole, I think, you will find it a satisfactory evening's entertainment.
EVERYBODY DOES IT


Everybody does it. Does what? Not falling in love as I had feared, but everybody SINGS, or tries to, or learns to. Do you know what it means to live within range of an aspiring singer, within earshot of sudden and violent "Ah-ah-ah's" and "Mi-mi-mi's"? Then you will know just how Leonard Borland (Paul Douglas) felt every time his wife (Celeste Holm) shrieked her arpeggios, "mi-mi-mi-Mi-mi-Mi-mi-mi", in ever ascending keys. There is justification for blue murder here. But no! This is a light comedy, not melodrama, so it does not work out that way. Instead, as revenge, he learns to sing himself and beats her at her own game. Some voice! Some man! At his sonorous tones tumblers tremble and break, mirrors shiver and crack and plate glass splinters into a thousand pieces. That, briefly, is the lively motif of this film which affords us plenty of surprises and keeps us guessing and laughing to the end.

Maybe Celeste Holm did not quite deserve all the cart-load of bouquets she received after her recital but she did sing "I passed by your window" just about as sweetly as it could be sung; but there is no doubt that Linda Darnell earned all the applause she got in grand opera and that Paul Douglas was first rate as opera singer and comedian combined. And if he was good when drunk, he surpassed himself when overcome by stage fright. Anyone who speaks for the C.R.G., or has to preach a sermon, give an after-dinner speech, or sing in public, must have felt, at one time or another, just as he did on his first (and last) night in grand opera.

High praise is merited by the rest of the cast, but especially by Charles Coburn as Major Blair who provided us with many occasions for laughter. Lucille Watson was everything a mother-in-law shouldn't be and everything that she proverbially, traditionally and almost always is. The whole cast enjoyed themselves. Perhaps that's why the audience did too.

This is definitely a film for all sorts and for all moods. If you are feeling gay already, you will be gayer still for seeing it; and if you haven't laughed for months this will loosen up the wrinkles and get the laughing apparatus going. And were the Editor to introduce into his classification of films a category especially recommended for humouring mothers-in-law, this film would sure be in it.

G.

LITTLE WOMEN


Most women, I suppose, have read "Little Women" by Louisa May Alcott in their schoolgirl days and will wish to recapture some of the interest and sentiment which moved them then. I cannot tell how faithful the film is to the book. (Anyway what man would admit to having read a girls' book?) I imagine that in parts the situations and behaviour have been modernised. But the central character Jo (June Allyson), is, I feel sure, an authentic interpretation. Jo is the tomboy of the four sisters. She is vital and is labouring under some sort of complex in relation to her position in the scheme of things. No doubt all of us have passed through similar phases in life; but Jo, being of a downright disposition, is a clear-cut type: indeed a psycho-analyst could probably label her with dogmatic gusto. I have rarely seen a personality so convincingly portrayed and this for me was the most noteworthy feature of the film. Apart from Beth (Margaret O'Brien) who plays a difficult part effectively, the other characters are shadowy but none the less satisfactory.

In essence the film, and in all probability I should say, the book as well, is a character study. The story is about four sisters, members of a united and loving family who as they grow up feel the stress of love, loyalty and adventure. Obviously there is a certain
amount of sentiment displayed but fortunately it is not unleashed with Victorian prodigality.

The beginning is slow and many irrelevancies could well have been omitted. The ending is abrupt and unreal. But if you like a quiet film in technicolor about ordinary people, you will go out of your way to see this one.

T.

THE BIG STEAL

This film is adequate enough if you like a chase and suspense and get fun from seeing fellows mutually soaking jaws and throwing around their neighbours' furniture. Cause of all the trouble? A payroll of 2,000 dollars which has been stolen. Who dunnit? I'm not going to squeal. But I'll say this much . . . Robert Mitchum, William Bendix, Patric Knowles, Ramon Novarro are involved and there is a pretty (or supposed to be pretty) lady and the hero (?) marries the pretty lady (?).

This movie moves. It is well made. Acting is good.

E.

HOME OF THE BRAVE

This picture is certainly stolen completely by James Edwards who plays the negro soldier and plays it exceedingly well. Since the practical effects of the colour question in U.S.A. are not easily understood in this country, it is interesting to observe how thoroughly it enters into life across the Atlantic. The white man instinctively thinks of himself as superior to the coloured man, however much intelligence or friendship may counteract it. And the coloured man, while instinctively knowing himself as good as a white man, does not really believe that he can ever be treated as such.

This film is about a coloured man who was sensitive to the social discrimination to which he had been subject and from his school days trouble was gathering in his sub-conscious. The explosion came during an important mission in the Far-Eastern War and the story consists of the successful efforts made by the M.O. (Jeff Corey), helped by our friend the flash-back, to cure a neurotic paralysis brought on by the torture and death of his white friend at the hands of the Japanese. It is another psychological film, but original in its conception and handled with restraint.

There is some good photography, which shows clearly what a strong ally the jungle could be in the sort of warfare waged among the Pacific Islands. Altogether this film deserves high marks.

U.

THE FILE ON THELMA JORDON

The other day I met a man in the film industry who told me that it was his considered belief that children under 16 should be barred from the cinema on account of the influx of sadistic films which have invaded and are polluting our cinemas. This is a hard saying but it carries a lot of wisdom.

All intelligent parents should know that sadism is perverted sex and does more harm to the young mind because it is more subtle in its workings.

This is a sadistic film in which you see hardly a decent character; and in which violence, murder, passion, infidelity, lying, deceit, appear naked and unashamed. Such sadistic stuff which ends with a violent suicide should be labelled: Moral and Spiritual Poison. No man who warns his neighbour of danger (beware of the dogs—the dogs of Satan) can be called a prude or a prig. Such a waste, such a pity, that such a brilliant actress as Barbara Stanwyck should surrender her talents to this type of film.

E.
(The following reviews have already appeared in "The Universe" and are reprinted by kind permission of the Editor.)

Pursuit

Starring: Vivi Gioi, Andrea Checchi, Carla del Poggio, Massimo Girotti.  
Producer: G. Giorgi Agliani.  
Director: Giuseppe de Santis.  
Italian dialogue with English subtitles.  
Certificate: A.  
Category: A.  
Running time: 89 minutes.

This is the Italian film Caccia Tragica which won prizes in 1947.  
It is only for those who are prepared to swallow gangsterism almost neat, for there is no glamour, very little scenery and not much humour.  
It belongs to the serious, social-conscious school of Continental cinema.  
But it doesn't leave behind a taste of helplessness and depression like Shoeshine.  
The theft of a governmental grant of several million lire means ruin to all the members of an agricultural co-operative in the Romagna district of Italy.

Chase

The story is not too easy to follow at first (and I hope non-Catholics will appreciate that the man in a cassock is not a real priest but a masquerading gangster).  
But it soon resolves itself into a pursuit, by all the people of the neighbourhood, of the gang of thieves, which includes ex-collaborationists.  
Only last Sunday the critics on the radio reminded us that a chase is characteristic of the cinema.  
It has always been so, ever since the galloping horses of the sheriff's men in the early Westerns and the comic helter-skelter of the Keystone Cops.  
Here the pursuit is slower but none the less relentless, as bicycles and boats close in upon the quarry.  
And then appropriately enough the only music on the sound track is huntsman's music, the baying of hounds.  
I thought the small part of a sergeant of police the best piece of acting.

"Hammy"

The stars are a bit "hammy" to my mind, though Italian rhetoric and gestures enable them to get away with it more easily.  
Scenes of brutality and passionate love could do with pruning.

Yet the point is clearly made, that crime and illicit love are the enemies of happiness and security and that vengeance settles nothing.  
The happy ending, though satisfying both to morals and sentiment, is artistically dubious.  
The transition from greyness to rose colour is too abrupt, the change from realism to conventionality too sudden.

A word of reassurance to those who think of going to Rome in the Holy Year.  
This film deals with a section of the Italians at a particular date; they are not all so unattractive.  
Nor need travellers expect to be machine-gunned.  
Italy has had her very discreditable elements since the war.

But when I was there a few months ago, the impression I got was that the government is making a good job of governing.

TOKYO JOE

Producer: Robert Lord.  
Director: Stuart Heisler.  
Distributors: Columbia.  
Certificate: A.  
Category: B.  
Running time: 88 minutes.

Since I last saw Sessue Hayakawa on the screen in the 1920s the Americans have occupied Japan.  
It is explained in the course of this film that this is for the benefit of the Japanese themselves, to protect the small, good Japs from the big, bad Japs.

But some of them don't understand this, (That got quite a laugh.)  
Here is an interesting contrast between the Italian and the Hollywood approach to the post-war atmosphere in ex-enemy countries and incidentally to collaborationists.  
In the first case, impoverished peasants, crowded lorries and trains, and squalor; here a smart night club, a spacious house and expensive frocks.

When Joe Barrett (Humphrey Bogart) returns after the war to the night club he used to run in Tokyo he gets a shock.

The singer whom he had married (some of the publicity delightfully describes this as "being very definitely
entangled’”) had divorced him and become Mrs. Landis.

He announces that he is not interested in this divorce business; he doesn’t recognise it and proposes to win her back. Good for Joe.

But in order to stay long enough to bring this about he has to get a job in a freight airline.

And that brings him into touch with the big bad Baron Kimura Danshaku (Sessue Hayakawa).

After various adventures the Baron kidnaps Joe’s little daughter. (Imagine, by the way, the coy reactions of tough Joe when first confronted with his own seven-year-old child.)

In the end Joe and the Baron come to grips with their guns and though the Baron is killed, Joe is mortally wounded.

It was the best solution really.

I must admit that his wife would be happier with nice, considerate—and affluent—Mr. Landis (Alexander Knox) than with the incalculable, Bogartian Joe.

The picture has freshness and a number of good lines. But the sob stuff is plastered on too thick at the end.

And so when the film finally dissolved in a mist of tears, my eyes were bone dry.

Q.

THE INTERRUPTED JOURNEY

Starring: Valerie Hobson, Richard Todd, Christine Norden, Tom Walls, with Ralph Truman, Vida Hope, Alexander Gauge, Dora Bryan. 

The sort of story which many of us like to beguile a train journey has been translated into cinema in the kind of way in which British studios excel.

The makers of this picture would not put it forward as a masterpiece, and showing it to the critics at all seems to have been an afterthought.

But I consider it a job really well done, with clever though unobtrusive camera work, a good study of domestic tenderness not unmixed with disillusion by Valerie Hobson, and some good small part playing, especially Vida Hope’s subtle and superb hotel manageress.

A man leaves Paddington for Plymouth with another man’s wife. But he regrets it even before the train passes close to his own home and wife. With sound promptitude he pulls the communication cord, leaves the lady asleep in the train and walks home to supper.

But there is a terrible accident to the train as it stands halted, and a murder into the bargain. And a lot of other things happen, which held my jaded attention very well until the quite unexpected finish.

The morally unpromising beginning led to an ideal (if, alas, unlikely) end. I should like to expand that remark a bit, but if I did I should give away something which might spoil your full enjoyment of the film. And I should like you to enjoy it as much as I did.

Q.

MIGHTY JOE YOUNG


The cinema has been going back on its tracks a bit lately. So now we have the monstrous gorilla again.

Joe is a good gorilla when treated well, obedient to his young mistress, kind to children, brave and resourceful when the house is on fire.

But when a party of drunks stood him several bottles of whisky and applied a cigarette lighter to his paw, he got much tougher even than his Tokyo namesake and started the roughest of houses.

This story of an ape brought from Africa to star in a Hollywood night club is on two quite different levels, satirical farce on the one hand and on the other the naïve piling up of fantastic sensations.

At first I thought the photographic trickery a bit flickery, but later I suppose I got accustomed to it.

On no account be persuaded to take the younger children “to see the monkey”. If they are anything like I was at their age, they would howl with terror.

And there is always a section of the adult audience which resents (more than anything else apparently) fights between animals, faked though they are.
THE SEARCH


Ivan Jandl runs away
... but still scared

Gloom is of the devil and is ugly. Darkness is from God and bears its own beauty. It precedes creation. It is the prelude to light. Often enough, it has been a mirror through which men have seen Truth.

*The Search* is not a gloomy film but it is a dark one; it tugs at the heart, yet through it there shines the radiance of Truth and Beauty... we see “displaced” children (the human wreckage of the late war) so bruised by suffering that they can neither cry nor laugh; they tumble from cattle trucks as though squeezed dry of all spirit and feeling; they shamble along broken roads with broken hearts, for they have been robbed of their natural rights: home, love of their parents and the joy of
living; only when they see the Red Cross wagons lined up to take them to the U.N.R.R.A. camps do they appear to be really alive; then they break loose from their ranks and flee like hunted hares among bomb-ruined houses for safety because to them, Red Cross wagons mean gas-chambers! They are caught, but it takes them time to realise that the U.N.R.R.A. officials are friends who will not beat them. One sensitive boy of about eight years (superbly played by Ivan Jandl) has become so psychologically empty that all he is able to say is "I DON'T KNOW". To watch Montgomery Clift reconstruct this boy’s life is a unique experience; with patience and adroitness he teaches "Jim" to talk, to feel, to think; a warm affection, devoid of sentimentality, develops between them and the day comes when Jim’s face, once as dead as a mask, becomes radiant with smiles, and he begins to laugh and to learn and to ask questions; but it is a poignant moment when Jim wants to know what “mother” means (he learnt the word from a young American visitor) and then enquires about his own mother. Steve (Montgomery Clift) is hard put to it, but he handles the problem in a way unknown to many psychiatrists. “What an actor that man is,” I heard someone behind me whisper. This sequence in which “Steve”
reconstructs "Jim's" life is (surely) one of the most powerful yet delicate things ever screened.

The emphasis of the film is on the story and the acting, with the result that we are compelled to suffer with these waifs of war and to cry out against the brutality of war; we wander from camp to camp with Mrs. Malik (Jarmila Novotna) in search of her child and feel her emptiness, her loneliness and desolation; we are moved by the warm humanity of people like Mrs. MacMurray (sensitively played by Aline MacMahon) and the American soldier (Montgomery Clift), officials working for U.N.R.R.A.

Clift's charity, his self-sacrifice, humour, tact and patience; Aline MacMahon's greatness of heart, her pity, sympathy and understanding; the profundity of Mrs. Malik's love for her child (she will never give up the search) are among the beautiful qualities which shine through the darkness of this film and proclaim the truth that not all men are beasts.

This may not be a great film but Montgomery Clift, Jarmila Novotna, Aline MacMahon and the small boy, Ivan Jandl (a born actor, with charm, grace, intelligence, good looks) give to it a quality which is greater than greatness—Truth.
ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET THE KILLER

Starring: Bud Abbott and Lou Costello and Boris Karloff.
Running time: 85 minutes.

This film is a combination of thriller and comedy, the latter of a type peculiar to Abbott and Costello. The comedy unrelieved by the thrills—not the other way about—would be unbearable. As it is, the combination of the two make this a fair picture, if you’re in need of thrills coupled with light relief. The plot is somewhat complicated and involves several murders, though none of these appear on the screen, but become known by the sudden appearance of the corpses in unlikely places.

The action all takes place at a resort called the Lost Caverns Hotel. At the beginning a criminal lawyer is murdered because he is about to publish incriminating memoirs. Everyone of his former clients in the hotel try to pin this murder on to Freddie (Costello). He is dubbed a moron by this lawyer in the opening scene, and one could hardly think of a better epithet. A series of murders follow, as the victims are all supposed to have some sort of incriminating evidence. In most of these Freddie discovers the body. Finally a recorded voice bids Freddie meet him in the caverns at midnight. Here amid the usual stalactites and stalagmites, Freddie wanders, having lost his pal Casey and the police, as a decoy to the murderer who wants a blood-stained handkerchief which Freddie is supposed to have. He is rescued from drowning in the nick of time, and returns to the hotel for the dénouement by the police inspector, who discovers the murderer by the mud on his shoes after the adventure in the caverns when several attempts were made on Freddie’s life.

The acting is competent without being outstanding. Boris Karloff is the obvious villain of the piece, who equally obviously is not the murderer. The identity of the murderer is not clear till the last moment and he turns out to be someone quite unsuspected.

THE CROOKED WAY


The first two minutes of this film were sufficient to make one feel inclined to settle back and close one’s eyes in slumber for a while. The Americans have discovered amnesia again and we are treated to quite a dose of it for a start. The only thing to commend it, is that considerable restraint is shown, in that we are not treated to a display of so-called modern psychology. After having shown us why the rest of the film has to be there, so that the victim of the amnesia can find out his past, it drags along for the next hour to its inevitable conclusion.

The story is complicated; so complicated that it is quite impossible from the film alone to understand who is who or why they do what they do. Impossible situations arise which could be solved quite simply, but which have to be resolved along the most tortuous path imaginable. The coincidences also would tax the belief of even the most credulous. The characters are stereotyped and unnatural—Eddie Rice who must be good, even though he was a gangster, because he went to the war and won the silver star for gallantry. Ellen Drew clinches the matter when she tells him passionately, “You’re good, Eddie, you’re good!”. So that’s that.

Vince Alexander must be bad because he suffers from nerves and takes a medicine for them. He is original in that he does not bite his nails but cuts them and spends all his time looking tough and telling everyone else to do his dirty work for him.

Petyo who is a prize character, has a cough and a cat. This is sufficient to make him a real character and adds that little touch of art which just about paid to any chances this film may have had.

The gangsters are typical gangsters, lounging about doing nothing until it is time to beat someone up which they do with great skill. The detectives are
most entertaining is the glimpse of the ordinary man in the street going about his job in time of war. The public house scenes are good and we see quite a number of familiar faces in the small parts, notably A. E. Matthews, David Tomlinson and Margareta Scott. The senior officers of the Navy and Air Force are too ludicrous for words.

THE VELVET TOUCH


This film can certainly be described as a good example of the film-maker's art. It runs smoothly, like a well-oiled machine, the fruit of a vast experience. It should be popular with the cinema-going public.

The story is of a murder committed in the heat of the moment by an actress who fears that her producer is impeding her development. She finds the crime pinned on someone else, who leaves her way clear by committing suicide. But conscience triumphs, the confession is made and the first performance of a new play and the last performance of her career is given with the detective in the wings waiting to take her away. Weak spots are the killing which looks as if it might just leave a bruise and a flash-back to show the events leading up to the murder which drags rather painfully. Rosalind Russell gives an excellent performance, but no one else has very much to do. Sydney Greenstreet is just Sydney Greenstreet, but he has no opportunity of showing his detective ability or any other talent he may possess. It is, in fact, Rosalind Russell's picture.

One thing worth remembering is, to me, a new wisecrack. When your producer has been a little more than usually self-congratulatory, nothing more seems required than to say: "Don't look now, Gordon, but your ego's showing".

U.
L'AIGLE A DEUX TETES


I take this filmed version of Cocteau's play to be an essay in satire, the romantic Rutania to end all Rutaniases. Viewed in this way the film presents no problems. It does not even seem disturbing that the self-provoked assassination of his lovely and loved queen by the self-poisoning anarchical lover should end the story and, as one of the characters says, lay the foundations of a subsequent legend. I don't think that this effort of that often distorting genius, Jean Cocteau, can do any harm to any reasonable being. Even the most liberal minded of us must, from the very outset of the film, be aware that here is a situation and a group of individuals not to be met with in life. Granted that, then almost anything can and does happen.

There is an air of madness about nearly everyone and everything in the story: the veiled young queen whose husband had been murdered on their wedding day ten years before, dining now alone with his memory; the grotesque archduchess, the tense and sinister lady who accompanies the queen on her solitary drives and submits to Victoria-like formal conversation (Edith, do you like the show? Yes, ma'am, if it is not too close); the double plotting minister of police; the ridiculous old courtier who is hopelessly in love with his queen and, above all, the romantic anarchist with the strange resemblance to her husband—there is not one of them who makes a three-point landing this side of sanity.

As always in the French films one sees over here, the acting is superb. Edwige Feuillère as the queen is beautiful and animated. Her diction is crystal clear and lovely to the ear. It was for me a pity, though, that her two fingered acknowledgment of salutations always recalled the days of the good old G.I.'s and the "Hiya Toots" signal—but, no doubt, even that was part of the satirical scheme. I liked this film and was amused by it.

UNE SI JOLIE PETITE PLAGE

(Such a pretty little beach)


Swift Comment—Yves Allegret and Il Penseroso

The accidents of this film are good and beautiful; the substance is false and ugly. Distinguished photography, clever direction, sensitive acting, all the tricks of suspense, are used for no better purpose than to drown us in a philosophy of gloom and despair. You might say, without being accused of exaggeration, that here we have the apotheosis of misery. The story is about a young man called Pierre, admirably played by Gerard Philipe, who murders a lady singer who seduced and degraded him and then returns to the place of his childhood where he was most unhappy and hugs to his heart all the miseries of the present and past. He lives in an hotel where all is gloomy: gloomy people (mostly) and gloomy memories; it rains all day (never seen such buckets of film-rain!), and "une si jolie petite plage", such a pretty little beach, is a long black line of slithery mud (which no doubt to an existentialist is the bliss of misery!). To blacken things up a bit, Pierre bumps into a soul-mate, all in black, called Marthe (sensitively played by Madeleine Robinson) and the two of them have a lovely time, lapping up the philosophy of misery which accepts the premise that life is gloomy but you can't do anything about it and under the circumstance, lust (it is more than suggested) can be no great sin.

I shouldn't be surprised to hear that there is some sort of existentialist message wrap up in this gloom. You will not be surprised to hear that Pierre shot himself when all alone, on the lonely beach (such a pretty little beach!) in all the rain, amid all the gloom.
ENTRE ONZE HEURES ET MINUIT

Starring: Louis Jouvet, Robert Arnoux

The Rialto, Coventry Street, London, re-opened with this thriller which does thrill. I admired it as much as I admired The Third Man and that is saying a lot. You may argue that it lacks (in plot, anyway) the clarity of The Third Man, which is true, but the (apparent) lack of this quality follows from the nature of the story, about a Police Inspector (faultlessly played by Louis Jouvet), who, while investigating the murder of a barrister, Gonzales, runs into another victim, this time a notorious gangster called Vidauan who has been killed by the same calibre shots as Gonzales. To his utter astonishment the Inspector realises that Vidauan is his double, whereupon he assumes the personality of the murdered gangster and by devious routes tracks down the murderer ...

A critic is not a reporter; it is not his job to give away the story; I merely add that this is an original story with a surprise ending and that the direction and acting are high class.

E.

AMERICAN PROTESTANT FILMS

Religious Films Ltd. were kind enough to invite a representative of the Catholic Film Institute to see two new productions of the Protestant Films Commission which they are distributing.

In this country it seems to be only definitely anti-Catholic societies which like to label themselves "Protestant". But there is nothing of that sort about these films, though the word is displayed in the credits. There is not a single reference, direct or indirect, to Catholicism. Nor is any denomination mentioned, but the religious local colour is that of the American equivalent of our "chapel" rather than "church". The background is clearly not the Protestant Episcopaliansm of the Anglican Communion in America. I imagine that it is Methodist.

The films, therefore, are not likely to be shown in a Catholic hall or school. Nor will they be distributed to the commercial cinemas. But though our interest in them is in consequence academic, it is none the less real. We are necessarily intensely interested in the way in which any religious body is using films for the purpose of spreading Christian teaching.

And the first thing which strikes one is the professional standard of the pictures. Prejudice, which runs for about an hour, though shown in 16mm., had been reduced from 35mm., with the technical advantages involved. Those who are accustomed, I don't say to great films, but to the typical "second feature" about a family in the Middle West would not be tempted to make odious comparisons or to turn up their noses at this "religious" film as being amateurish. It is adequate as entertainment, while it incidentally exposes and condemns, analyses and seeks to rationalise group prejudices such as those against negroes, Jews or "dagos".

My Name is Han which is considerably shorter, adopts the technique of documentary-with-commentary, instead of the fiction-with-dialogue form used for Prejudice. The speaker is a Chinese pagan whose wife and family are Christian. Their outlook seems foolish and incomprehensible to him until the mission medical service cures his daughter of an injury received in an accident.

As I have already implied there is nothing in these films to which Catholics could take objection. And there is no smugness. The "white Protestants" are not whitewashed any more than other groups when it is a question of prejudice. But there is no suggestion that the Christian life is something which transcends respectability and kindness. I was not conscious of the same degree of dynamic evangelicalism so noticeable in connection with the other American films God of the Atom and God of Creation, which I saw last year.
RED, HOT AND BLUE


This is the type of film that the Americans can put over so much better than we can. It is a light piece of nonsense, quite enjoyable and free from any suggestion of suggestion. It moves, perhaps, at too high a tempo for an English audience and with a degree of noise that even an American audience might find a little distressing. Betty Hutton sings one or two numbers which not only bear some relation to the story but are less like the wails of a love-sick animal with indigestion that are usual in this kind of film. I do not wish to appear carping in my criticism of this happy, slapdash affair if I suggest that it could have done with more light and shade in the beginning and a somewhat neater and less boisterous ending.

The story, for what it is worth, is of a girl who wishes to gain recognition as an actress. Thus she courts publicity, much to the anxiety of a minor but well-balanced producer, Victor Mature, to whom she is engaged. She is thought to have witnessed a murder and so is kidnapped by the friends of the murdered man who want evidence as to the assassin. Needless to say, she is eventually rescued by the aforementioned, well-balanced producer.

STREETS OF LAREDO


This is an unpretentious piece in technicolor, pleasing to the eye but making few demands on the intelligence or emotions. Where the streets of Laredo come into it I couldn’t for the life of me make out. The set-up is mostly barren, rugged country, much used by horses in a hurry. The film could only be considered satisfactory as a secondary feature, a sort of make-weight.

Macdonald Carey, William Holden and William Bendix are three bandits who specialise in hold-ups. The latter two, for their own purposes, join the Texas Rangers; they like it and so remain on the side of law and order. Carey, however, has got a bad streak in him. There weren’t any psychiatrists in the bad old days so he just has to be shot dead in the end. Mona Freeman keeps wandering in and out supplying love interest.

EAST OF JAVA


Take a liberal measure of physical violence, an equal dose of song and dance, add a big splash of sex, put it in an Eastern setting and shake, and you will pour out the third-rate mixture as before.

Shelley Winters is described as playing “a sexy cafe singer”; she does. Macdonald Carey and Frank Lovejoy frequently hit each other hard on the jaw. In between whiles they make passes at Miss Winters. Helena Carter is a Clean American Girl who gives Miss Winters an opportunity to wisecrack through tears.

The gentleman introduced as Liberace is a pianist of considerable technical skill, who has evidently been added to the mixture to give it an unusual flavour. To the riff-raff of the water-front cafe he plays dreamy extracts from the works of Chopin; a more discriminating audience of business men and their wives he oblige with the latter part of the Liszt Concerto in A major, a “piano solo” in which he is accompanied by a magic orchestra, later revealed as a small dance band.

Not even his effervescent fingers can raise this film from the gutter to which it belongs.
FILMING IN FATIMA

The astonishing response to the request for donations to enable us to make a film about Fatima imposed a big responsibility on the film unit which set out from London in September. We had a twofold task: to make a film as professionally perfect as possible, and to imbue it with a certain spiritual quality which would enable it to transmit something of the message delivered by Our Lady to the little Portuguese Shepherds 32 years ago.

As to the first requirement, we were fortunate to have the technicians who made such a moving picture of Visitation to help us with Pilgrimage to Fatima. Those who have seen Visitation will testify to its photographic excellence as well as its deep religious understanding of what was required. There need be no fears about the Fatima film on this score. As to its message, the rest of us said our prayers and offered our Masses, and perhaps also the sickness with which most of us were inflicted, in order that it might have the fullest blessings from above.

In order to remove any misunderstanding as to what we are trying to say with our Fatima film, let it at once be grasped that we are in no sense attempting to re-enact the story of the Apparitions. Though we have used children similar in size and appearance to Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta in a few scenes in order that you may know the kind of children Our Lady chose to deliver her message to, it would, in our view, be monstrous to try to reproduce the details of the Apparitions in dramatic form on the screen. We are using the documentary method of filmmaking to bring home to you something of the spirit of Fatima as it is today, with its evident atmosphere of prayer and pilgrimage. We shall try to show you the results of the Apparitions in terms of the growth of convents and seminaries, the devotion of peasant and plebian, the concentration of spiritual effort at the Cova da Iria.

The country around Fatima is most primitive, in the best sense of that word. There is dignity and content among the peasants who are for the most part independent of the trappings of civilisation and all the better for it. One felt that a motor car was a rather ill-bred intrusion into a way of life that is both close to God and close to the earth. We captured pictures of church and college building that can be little different from the methods common in the Middle Ages when the great cathedrals were built: stone, quarried in the district, cut and carved on the spot, hoisted into position without the aid of modern mechanical contraptions; scaffolding that looked crazy and insecure, made out of sap-green pine trunks, up and down which the builders moved their loads with ease and grace; great marble pillars being polished on the floor of the basilica before being moved into position to support the baldachino; workmen moving with beautiful rhythmic gestures that expressed their interest in and skill at their craft.

The sanctuary domain is at present being entirely reorganised. It is probably a unique film, therefore, which we have been enabled to take. The visible evidence of the demands for prayer and pilgrimage which Our Lady made are in the course of being answered. Building is going on on all sides: shelter for those whose life is to be permanently dedicated to prayer and adoration at Fatima itself; the Missionary College which will train its future priests under the shadow of Our Lady's Basilica; the Retreat House in which priests will come to renew, near to the place of the Apparitions, their spiritual life in quiet retirement; the Hospital where the many sick who come to Fatima seeking fortitude or release from their pains may find some shelter and medical care. "By their fruits you shall know them," and life at Fatima at this moment is the fruit of the response which Portugal has made to the message delivered to Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta.
We had the benefit of generous cooperation from all and sundry at Fatima. The Sisters of the Dorothy Convent, the Sisters of the Sorrows, whose special contribution to Fatima is Perpetual Adoration, the Dominican Sisters; all aided us in our efforts to secure an authentic picture of Fatima. The parents of Francisco and Jacinta, Senhor and Senhora Martos, so dignified and gracious in their old age and enduring the terrible purgatory of constant intrusion into their home and life on the part of pilgrims and sight-seers with astonishing sweetness, did all they could to help us get the pictures we wanted. The sisters of Lucia placed their time and their homes at our disposal for the exasperatingly slow business of film-making. We assured them that all they were enduring at our hands was to be reckoned as offered to Our Lady of Fatima in order that her message might be the more efficiently broadcast, and they smilingly assented to further importunities on our part. We have recorded the characteristic sounds of Fatima, the carillon, the singing of the pilgrim hymns, the sounds of the shepherds' flutes, the ox-cart bells, the sound of the curious windmills which crown all the hills around, and in addition we have taken the trouble to secure music which is truly Portuguese. Much remains to be done, of course, before the film is ready for viewing. The business of cutting and editing, the writing of the commentary, the recording, will take us well into the New Year. It would be a suitable thing if we could manage to have the première on May 13th, the anniversary of the first of the six appearances of Our Lady.

The time has not yet come to express our thanks by name to all those involved in the making of the film, but it will be understood if I say at once how very grateful we are to the technicians who served us so loyally and generously at Fatima and who put all personal considerations of comfort to one side in their determination to see the film through. To them and to all our anonymous helpers, our best thanks and good wishes.

J. A. V. B.

PENNY A DAY FOR 240 DAYS’ FUND

IF one fourth of the Catholic population in England and Scotland contributed a penny a day for 240 days The Catholic Film Institute in England would be able to set up a production unit.

It was the pennies of the Catholic population in France which made possible the making of the film Monsieur Vincent.

Kindly send donation to:


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Regional Catholic Film Societies

As we go to press we have not had much response to our suggestion with reference to regional film societies. We hope this is indicative only of deep thought as to ways and means. It takes a lot of planning and it is tiring and often unrewarding labour, but if the Film Apostolate is to come to anything in this country we must have a wide coverage of interest throughout the provinces.

Film Competition

Our notice last month was, as will be appreciated, too late to enable people to make many films this year. We hope and expect that the keen amateur will have already a number of films to his (or her) credit, which he will wish to send to us to view.

Next year, if this competition indicates a sufficiently high level of interest, we shall be able to insist on completely new films made specifically for the C.F.I. Competition.

Annual General Meeting

We remind readers and members that the Annual General Meeting takes place on Saturday, December 10th. The first part, open to members only, takes place at the Newman International Centre, 31 Portman Square, London, W.1., from 4 to 6 p.m. The second part, open to the general public, takes place at the Westminster Cathedral Hall, at 8 p.m. We are arranging for interesting and well-known film personalities to speak at the evening session.

Film Study Group

In connection with Andrew Buchanan's scheme for the production of non-commercial films for humanitarian and religious purposes, it is proposed shortly to organise a film study group. The courses will be open to members of the C.F.I. who wish to devote their talents in this direction for non-profit-making ends in the use of film. Details will be published later. In the meantime, any person willing to undergo a period of training of this kind should write to the Secretary, C.F.I., 20 Ovington Square, London, S.W.3. It should be clearly understood that we have no intention of accepting students who have any ambitions in the commercial film world. There are other methods of training available for them.

Fr. Young's Film Show

We are grateful to Fr. Young whose film show for the Institute realised a clear profit of £15. Fr. Young screened his own film of the funeral of Archbishop Amigo, with scenes from his lifetime; Crucifers to Walsingham; a film about the Vatican and his own new coloured film of Lourdes.

Film Talks

On November 16th, Fr. Burke gave a talk on film strips to the Brentwood Teachers' Guild. His Lordship Bishop Beck was in the Chair.

On November 20th, Fr. Declan Flynn, O.F.M., gave a talk to The Fisher Society, Cambridge, on "The Church and the Screen".

SUBSCRIPTION RATE

Hitherto there has been no charge for postage on copies sent to subscribers. Now, however, the increased size of FOCUS has added to the costs of printing and we are no longer able to continue paying postage on subscribers' copies. The subscription rate is, therefore, being raised to 7s. per annum and all new subscriptions and renewals will now be charged at this rate.
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

Sir,

In the November issue of Focus under the heading of "Institute Notes" you put forward a suggestion for the setting up of Regional Catholic Film Societies.

In this suggestion one can see an attempt being made at last to spread the influence of the C.F.I. which has perhaps so far been mostly confined to the London area. So now I feel that an opportunity has arisen for all those Catholics throughout the whole country who are interested in a Catholic Film Apostolate to take immediate action.

But in taking this action we are rightly cautioned by the words of the Editor of this magazine to walk warily and carefully so that helped with the accumulated experience and the guidance of the promoters and organisers of this magazine we may avoid wherever possible the pitfalls and bitter experiences which we must expect and accept in our journey.

However I take this suggestion as a Call to Action and I intend to accept its challenge. So may I appeal to those other readers of this magazine who reside in this area to communicate with me with the view to forming our own Regional Catholic Film Society.

Sincerely yours,

EDWARD J. HIGGINS.

95 Cartside Street,
Langside,
Glasgow, S.W.2.

November 5th, 1949.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Sir,

The fact that a number of readers have written to you kindly about my work leads me to think that perhaps there may be others, not prone to writing to editors, who may feel the same way. For all such I have a warm place in my heart. And so I hope I shall not be thought to be unduly aping one of my betters if I send them through your columns my heartfelt wishes for a Merry Christmas.

Yours faithfully,

Q.

THREE DAWNS TO SYDNEY

Sir,

I was very interested to see the letter under the heading "Discordant Note" in November's issue of Focus.

Three Dawns to Sydney, in my opinion an excellent little film, had, so far as I can remember, two incidents bringing in Catholicism.

In the first, which took place in Sicily, we were shown a young peasant girl praying in front of the usual hideous statue of Our Lady, and this episode ended with a quick glimpse of a singularly unattractive crib.

Later we had the scene, mentioned in Mr. Bullock-Webster's letter, showing Benediction on Christmas morning in an Australian church. I quite agree with his remarks as to the questionable desirability of showing the Blessed Sacrament exposed, but, apart from that, as the whole point of the shot was to show how universal was the Feast of Christmas, why were we shown Benediction? Why not a shot of the end of Mass on Christmas morning, showing people visiting the Crib?

I feel quite sure that a large number of non-Catholics imagine the external devotions of the average Catholic to consist solely of prayers before a statue of Our Lady, usually hideous.

How I long for the happy day when in a film we shall see a character enter a Catholic church, take Holy Water, genuflect before the altar and then kneel down in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

Yours faithfully, D. HOLLEY (Miss).

THE DIVINE TRAGEDY

Sir,

I am very pleased to see the evident interest you are taking in the important work we are preparing.

I thank you very much for having dedicated such an important part of your October number and for the exceptional way you presented it to the English public.

We hope to be able soon to give you further details for other articles.

Sincerely yours, ABEL GANCE.
GEOGRAPHICAL FILM STRIPS
By Our Educational Panel

For the adequate teaching of geography, visual aids of all kinds are essential—pictures, diagrams and maps, films and film strips all play a vital part. Besides stimulating the interest and focusing the attention of the pupils they also help them to form accurate mental images, impressions and ideas and to analyse as well as to synthesise geographical data. The type of visual aid employed by the teacher in any given lesson should depend primarily on the purpose of the lesson, although sometimes, on account of the limitations of supply, the relative availability of one or other form of aid has to be the predominant factor of choice. For those subjects which require careful and systematic study, such as the correlation of factors of geographical background, or the interrelation of man and his environment, the film strip is a most effective aid to use. Not only can a strip embody, in simple and easily used form, pictures, diagrams, maps, statistics and sometimes summaries of information, but it can be projected at any speed required by the progression of the lesson. Obviously, however, supplementary material from films, descriptive literature, specimens, actual visits if possible and blackboard sketches is required.

Several useful geographical series of film strips are available:

FOR SALE

"Common Ground" (G.C.), E.S.A.,
Four series: Primary, Regions of Britain, Regions of the World, Industry, complete with text-book; 15/- each.

"Visual Information Service" (V.I.S.),
168 Battersea Bridge Road, London, S.W.11.
Assorted Subjects; 4/- to 10/- each.
Notes available for some strips.

FOR BOTH SALE AND HIRE

"British Instructional Films", Mill Green Road, Mitcham, Surrey.
Assorted.


FOR HIRE

L.C.C. Film Library, Stockwell Department, London, S.W.9.
Free to London Teachers.
Liverpool Science Centre, Pleasant Street, Liverpool.
Free to Liverpool Teachers.

Methods of using film strips in teaching geography vary. Sometimes they serve as an introduction to or as a preliminary survey of some subject, more often they provide material for definite class-teaching and discussion though on occasion they form useful means of summary or revision. At one time a whole strip is used, at another a few pictures suffice for a lesson and the same film strip serves different purposes with children of different ages or at different stages of the school course—all according to the particular need of the moment. Some illustrations of these points are contained in the reviews which follow.

"FARMING IN THE NORTH" (V.I.S.) serves as a General Survey of the agriculture of Finland. It illustrates the development in a somewhat unfavourable geographical environment, of an up-to-date agricultural economy with a variety of arable farming and cattle-pig rearing, organised successfully on co-operative lines. Despite their number the sixty-seven pictures are well chosen to show how man has triumphed in naturally difficult circumstances. This is the general impression given to children of 13+ years by showing the pictures in succession with brief appropriate commentary. The strip could, however, be also used with Grammar School pupils of from 15 to 18 years, taking its main sections—Geographical Background, Settlement, Agriculture, Pastoral Farming and Trade as subjects for more detailed consideration.
“NORTH CHINA”, “CENTRAL CHINA”, “SOUTH CHINA”
(C.G.) (Ref. Nos. C.G.B. 364, 366, 365, respectively) are very useful for definite Teaching.

“North China”
After a brief introduction which touches on the outstanding factor of the geography of the country, namely the toil against adversity, this strip gives a quick view of the transition, in relation to geographical factors, of conditions of life across North China. Linked together by the treacherous Hwang Ho, the inaccessible, infertile and sparsely inhabited mountains of the west give place to the less farms with their nomadic peoples, the western hills with their beautiful scenery and well-cultivated slopes and finally the fertile plains of the east. In these low-lying lands there are all varieties of crops, particularly wheat and small villages and large cities such as Peiping.

“Central China”
This strip shows the centre of this vast country to be a land of even greater contrasts than the north. The bleak unpopulated Tibetan Mountains and desert plateaux are vastly different from the great plains of the Yangtse. In the latter, the cradle of civilisation and culture and the source of agricultural wealth, are the great cities of China, the centres of industry, trade and transport.

“South China”
This part of China is also shown to be a land of contrasts by scenes of the wild western mountains and plateaux and the fertile but often-flooded plain. All are united by the great Sinkiang River which empties into the sea at Canton. In this plain, the most densely populated region of the country, where every available portion of land—and water—is overcrowded with people and the soil overburdened with products, the staple foods are rice and fish. Here there is less evidence of the effects of landward invasion than of seaward infiltration, especially in such cities at Hong Kong.

These three film strips are too comprehensive to serve either as introduction or as general survey of the geography of China. They are divided into sections each of which is suitable for one or more lessons, adaptable according to depth of treatment, for Grammar School pupils of ages ranging from 14 to 18 years:

N. CHINA. (45 frames). Introduction, Western Highlands, Lowland Agriculture, People.
C. CHINA. (40 frames.) Western Mountains, Red Basin of Szechwen, Lake Basin, Silk, The River.
S. CHINA. (45 frames.) Western Mountains, Agriculture on the Plateaux, Towns and People, Agriculture in the Plains, The River, Hong Kong.

All contain much matter for oral teaching, discussion and individual or group work. The notes accompanying each strip give as introduction a general account of the region. This is followed by commentaries on the pictures in which salient geographical points are indicated. To some are attached questions which stimulate observation and thought. A useful bibliography is appended.

One would welcome a fourth strip of this series dealing with China as a whole, a vast, densely populated country of continental proportions emerging late from centuries of eastern isolation into a world of western economics and politics. Such a strip would not only unify and supplement the three already produced but would provide an invaluable basis for discussion of China’s position and problems today.

“MOUNTAIN BUILDING”
(V.I.S.) This film strip like others concerned directly with Principles of Geography, is best used as a Conclusion after the upbuilding of mountains has been explained and a simple form of classification arrived at by means of rapid blackboard sketches. It is only when these fundamentals are understood that the pupils can adequately consider the different types of mountains, differences which cannot be detected in pictures by the untrained eye. The strip comprises forty-nine good illustrations of the whole process of mountain-building from their formation by folding and faulting, accumulation and denudation to the final stages of pene-
WHALING
British Instructional Films, Sale 12/6. 26 frames.

This film strip gives a detailed account of a whaling expedition. It begins with a very good map of the Antarctic Regions. It goes on to give pictures of the “look out”, the harpoon, the firing of the harpoon and the taking on board of the whale. It finishes with pictures of the flensing process and obtaining of the oil.

On the whole the content of this film strip is good.

Suitability: 12-14 years.

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE
(Color.) 21 frames. B.I.F.

This consists of diagrams except for two photographs of Greenwich. Diagrams show how latitude and longitude is calculated and the network of lines put on the globe. The film strip is good but children should have some knowledge of latitude and longitude before it is used otherwise it might be confusing. Also it assumes some knowledge of geometry—the measurement of angular distance.

Suitability: 12-16 years.

SOME FILMS REVIEWED

NOTE. Inclusion in this list does not connote positive recommendation. Films that are positively harmful are not included here. Readers are reminded to refer to the full reviews when assessing a film.

Category A. indicates adults only; B. adults and adolescents; C. family audiences; D. particularly for children.

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THE CATHOLIC FILM INSTITUTE
National Film Reviewing Office
(Affiliated with Office Catholique International du Cinema)

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AIMS AND OBJECTS

1. To further the cause of Christian culture by means of the cinema.
2. To encourage the development of Catholic criticism of films with the object of influencing, as far as possible, the type of films publicly exhibited.
3. To promote the organisation of discussion groups for the study of films.
4. To establish a library of films of Catholic interest.
5. To encourage the production of films calculated to demonstrate the Christian cultural heritage of Europe in its arts, crafts, religious life, agriculture, architecture, etc.
6. To establish when and where possible Repertory Cinemas where films of permanent interest and value may be seen.

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"The establishment of such an Office will involve a certain sacrifice, a certain expense for Catholics of the various countries. Yet the great importance of the motion picture industry and the necessity of safeguarding the morality of the Christian people and the entire nation makes this sacrifice more than justified."

Hon. Secretary:

Rev. John A. V. Burke, Blue Cottage, Sumner Place Mews,
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Please return completed form to The Hon. Secretary, Catholic Film Institute, 20 Ovington Square, London, S.W.3. Kindly make cheques, etc., payable to The Catholic Film Institute.
BOOK REVIEW

Film User Year Book, 1949. (Current Affairs, 19 Charing Cross Road, London, W.1., 10/6.)

We notice this book late in the year. For this we make a qualified apology based on the fact that it appeared towards the middle of the year.

There is not space to deal with all the good things to be found within the covers of this 256 page book but the following titles of articles may indicate its value: Factual Films in 1948, by John Shearman; Entertainment Films, 1948, by John Montgomery, the Editor of the Year Book; Visual Aids in 1948, by Frank Farley; Film Strip Developments in 1948, by Ian Carter; New Equipment of 1948, by Bernard Dolman. In addition to these most informative and well-written articles there are sections dealing with the technical side of projection from every angle that could be of interest to the amateur film user as well as to many who consider themselves skilled in this medium. The reference section is remarkably complete.

The one fault I have to find with a very useful book of film reference is that the print is so small in the reference section as to be painful to read. This is a sacrifice demanded by the completeness of the book and its very reasonable price. Perhaps a higher price and a larger font could go together. It would not be expensive at 15/-. All schools and colleges and film societies should own this book.

J. A. V. B.

A Christmas Gift

GIVE your friends a subscription to FOCUS. It is a gift which will remind them of you for twelve months.

We shall make your gift as personal as possible. When the first copy of FOCUS reaches your friend, just before Christmas, it will be accompanied by a greeting card.

For our address see page 2.
COVER PERSONALITY

JOAN GREENWOOD

There are all too few screen actresses who have individuality and a marked personality. It is the most distressing thing about the cinema that, after a generation of film-viewing, one's memories of actresses seen over the passing years leave one with a general impression of features, actions, voices which might belong to any one of a hundred screen stars. It is the tendency of the studio, both in Hollywood and Pinewood, to erase individuating characteristics in favour of a type. Only the better and stronger actresses can stand out against the process. There are many British players who have suffered extinction in this way.

Joan Greenwood is one of the fortunate few who start off with the advantages of a personality that impresses one at once across the glamour of the screen. Whatever the part may be, however small, one is aware of her as an outstanding personality. The special quality of her voice, a low, husky one, but capable of considerable variation, is what strikes one at first. She has a way of speaking her lines that gives them a significance often far beyond their obvious meaning. Trite phrases gain new value when she uses them. Then, too, her manner of using her eyes, her expressions, are refreshingly different from the run of stereotyped simpers that do duty with so many stars.

Like many another good actress, Joan Greenwood has not been well served by the parts that have been allotted to her. There has been an improvement lately, notably in Whisky Galore and Kind Hearts and Coronets, but one has painful memories of her efforts to instil conviction into that most unconvincing of efforts The Bad Lord Byron, and the amount of work she put into the pedestrian version of Graham Greene's The Man Within, a film spoiled mainly by uninspired direction in addition to an inability to understand the mind of the author. Joan Greenwood's pathetic and tender study of the country girl in the latter film still has power to please the mind in retrospect.

Her part in The October Man, with John Mills, is another one that catches the imagination, also her work in a film that, for some reason, never had the success it deserved, They Knew Mr. Knight: a slow-moving story and a little novelettish, but well played by a team of actors including Mervyn Johns and Nora Swinburne among whom Joan Greenwood yet stood out.

Saraband for Dead Lovers had a certain quality of distinction in spite of its lack of success with the critics. Again, perhaps, it was the team of players including Flora Robson and Françoise Rosay, that imparted the air of distinction. Nevertheless, one still recalls Joan Greenwood's work in the part of the ill-fated Duchess.

Before she went into films in 1941, she had experienced the hard training of the London stage. It is, perhaps, a better thing for screen players to start with stage experience rather than to retire to the stage when their screen rôles are falling off, as is the case with a number of British stars today. The stage equips the player with a certain poise and self-control which is invaluable to the film player, no matter how different the media may be. It is doubtless due to her stage training that Joan Greenwood owes her special characteristic of poise and assurance in her film rôles. She is back again on the London stage as these lines are written.

In addition to the films already mentioned, she has appeared in John Smith Wakes Up, He Found a Star, My Wife's Family, all 1941; The Gentle Sex, 1942; Latin Quarter, 1945; Girl in a Million and The White Unicorn in 1946 and 1947.

JOHN VINCENT.
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