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slick wise-cracking of the average Hollywood comedy is often more honest and healthier than the sniggering suggestiveness and covert sexiness, derived from pseudo-Continental models, of so many British farces, particularly those of the Tom Walls era.

There is another angle of comparison. Although the movies have shown us a distorted view of American society, they have at least shown us a good deal of America. There cannot be many places in the States which script-writers have not at one time or another used as settings for stories. We have probably been into more parts of New York and Chicago via the cinema, than we would have visited if we lived there; we know what farms in the Middle West look like; we know some spots in Washington as well as we know the centre of Wellington; we have travelled from Massachusetts to Montana, from Louisiana to Arizona. And from time to time, in films like *Our Town*, *Dead End*, and *A Man to Remember*, we really have learnt something about how Americans live in those places.

British films have never done that for Britain, certainly not to the same extent. London—yes, we'd probably know our way round Scotland Yard, St. Paul's, Trafalgar Square, and we'd recognise 10 Downing Street if we passed it: those places are as familiar to us by sight as almost any place in New Zealand. Now and then we've been taken to Oxford or Bath, while innumerable travelogues and "featurettes" and rather fewer full-length films have drawn our attention to the Beauties of the English Countryside and the Stately Homes of Britain: but it is a picture-postcard acquaintanceship, and just about as satisfying. How often by comparison, have we been taken into the Welsh coal-mining valleys, or into the Black Area of Lancashire, or the slums of Glasgow or London? How often have we been among the crofters of Scotland and the tin-miners of Cornwall? Only rarely, in pictures such as *Owd Bob*, *Love on the Dole* and *The Stars Look Down*, or in occasional documentaries of the Grierson School have we really had the feeling of having visited some of the less showy places of Britain and of having got to know something of the inhabitants.

Since American films so greatly outnumber British films, it is to some extent understandable that we should have been introduced to more American "types" than English, Scots, Welsh or Irish. It remains true, however, that British film studios have been too fond of relying on the stock stage characters of London "bobby," Cockney, noble lord, illiterate charwoman, country gaffer, and effete parson with which to people their stories, while largely neglecting their country's rich resources of character and scenery.

On the acting side, the average British film is usually the equal, and often the superior, of its American counterpart, while on the technical side (which of course includes photography) it is likely to be inferior. But the real point is that British films—unlike those of France, Russia, and Germany—have never developed any distinct national "style." They have mostly been imitators of Hollywood, seldom innovators. For this reason I feel that any new attempt to set apart theatres sacred to British films is based on an unreal distinction, and is therefore likely to fail in the long run.

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