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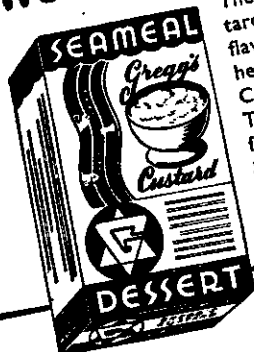
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Film Reviews by G.M.

SPEAKING CANDIDLY

A BELL FOR ADANO

(20th Century-Fox)



THOUGH there are undoubtedly moments when it is out of tune, I cannot agree with the American critic who dismissed *A Bell for Adano*

with the remark that it has a crack in it. There is far more good, well-tempered metal than bad in this story about Major Victor Joppolo, an American army officer of Italian parentage who is in control of AMGOT in a Sicilian town soon after the Allied invasion from North Africa. His task is to start life moving again in the battered town; to persuade the townsfolk to come out of hiding in the hills and, by putting some responsibility for civic affairs into the hands of promising citizens, encourage them to take the first faltering steps towards democracy. He also has to feed them, but soon finds, rather to his surprise, that what the majority of inhabitants want, even more than food, is the restoration of the town's great bell—the bell which, for more than 700 years, has been the centre of Adano's life.

Major Joppolo is, however, not as surprised as he might be by this desire, because his own Italian ancestry gives him a sympathetic understanding of the people's moods and basic needs. Yet this sensitive insight, while making him an ideal administrative officer for AMGOT, makes him a correspondingly bad soldier from the viewpoint of the military machine. He comes to be looked on as a sentimental nuisance by

his superiors; is finally relieved of his command. Before he goes, however, he has given Adano its bell; has restored the town's belief in human decency as well as its water supply—and so, if you like to put it in that rather stilted way, has won a victory for democracy.

* * *

THIS is a very simple story, without much dramatic incident, but it offers plenty of opportunities for character-drawing as well as for the expression of certain worthwhile ideas. Some of the opportunities are fumbled over or missed altogether. I have not seen or read the record-making Broadway play, but I have read considerable excerpts from the novel by John Hersey on which both play and film are based—enough at any rate to realise that Hollywood has almost completely eliminated the focal point of dramatic conflict in the original story. Fundamentally, this conflict is the old one between democracy and fascism. Major Joppolo stands for democracy, while fascism is represented by his arrogant, bellicose commanding-officer, General Marvin. Unfortunately, Marvin makes only one brief appearance in the film (looking, incidentally, startlingly like the late General Patton). He is never allowed to become the hated antagonist of Joppolo's liberal ideals that he should have been.

I have heard it suggested that *A Bell for Adano* gives a much too flattering impression of AMGOT in action, and that in reality and on the whole it was a

(continued on next page)

Academy Award Winner, 1945

STATION 22B displayed a good "news sense" the other evening. A broadcast announcement of the Academy Award winners for 1945 was picked up from a San Francisco station by 22B, and the main results were passed on to New Zealand listeners while the American station was still broadcasting the minor awards. Paramount's film "The Lost Weekend" (not yet released in New Zealand) almost scooped the pool by winning four major awards—it was adjudged to be the best picture of 1945; and to contain the best performance by an actor (Ray Milland, seen on the right as the drunkard in this version of Charles R. Jackson's novel), the best screenplay of the year (Charles Brackett and Billy Wilder), and the best direction (Billy Wilder). A previous Wilder picture was "Double Indemnity."

