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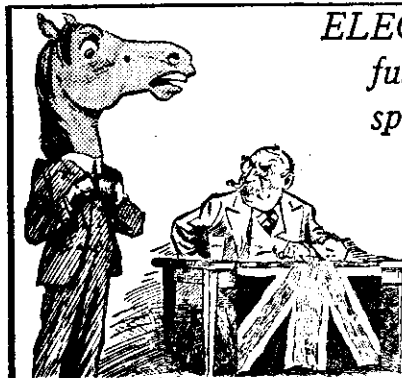
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## Film Reviews by G.M.

# SPEAKING CANDIDLY

## BLOOD ON THE SUN

(United Artists)

THIS is a remarkably good melodrama, all about an American editor of an English-language newspaper in pre-war Tokyo who discovered Premier Baron Tanaka's plan for world conquest and smuggled the document out of Japan. Though the film does not toe the historical line all the way, and indeed frequently wanders well astray, at least the basis of the story is factual, for there really was a Tanaka Memorial, a plan for the conquest of Manchukuo which its author promptly repudiated when it was published in 1927, four years before the conquest of Manchukuo took place.

The appearance of James Cagney in the starring role is rather a surprise, for he is not, and does not behave like, the conventional Hollywood newspaper hero. He does not wear his hat on the back of his head, especially in the presence of women, chew gum, put his feet on the desk, or do his most brilliant writing when drunk. Yet if the choice of star is surprising it is none the less welcome; nobody could make the editor a probable person, for the script writer has given him several of the attributes of Flash Gordon; but Cagney, an actor ideally combining brains and brawn, toughness and sensibility, makes him a more convincing figure than probably anybody else on the screen could have been. Cagney's timing is perfect; as he rocks almost imperceptibly from his toes to his heels there is a suggestion of coiled energy, ready to be released like a spring; he acts his way through the part as if he were an expert boxer, alert

and tense, not merely in the sequences demanding actual physical agility (e.g. the judo fights with the Japanese and the man-hunt through the docks), but also in his quieter moments, when he is making love to Sylvia Sidney or pitting his wits against the Imperial Secret Police.

It is this nervy, delicately-controlled but powerful performance that gives *Blood on the Sun* its distinction as a melodrama and contributes immeasurably to the suspense. It is, in fact, a performance of far finer quality than the story deserves. But the director also has a contribution to make, using his cameras and his cutting scissors to build up an atmosphere of sinister menace, and finally releasing the tension in a very exciting and convincing climax of physical violence which seems designed to prove that an American newspaperman is more than a match for any number of wily Orientals.

Sylvia Sidney, in her first appearance for a long time, adds something to the picture too, and so do a handful of "bit" players with their eyes pulled aslant and other make-up added to resemble such notable villains as Tanaka, Tojo, and Yamamoto. Miss Sidney portrays a half-American, half-Chinese girl of great beauty who is playing a game of patriotic double-cross so complicated and subtle that its purpose never seems quite clear to anybody, let alone the audience. At the end she comes out on the side of the Occidental Angels and against the Black Dragons, carrying the precious document out of Japan — but not before Baron Tanaka has ceremoniously committed hara-kiri, a newspaperman and his wife, and the aged anti-militarist Prince Tatsugi have been