



## The FRANK SINATRA 20/- SONG FOLIO 3/- WORTH OF MUSIC FOR

Containing Full Words and Music of:—"Stormy Weather," "I Begged Her," "The Charm of You," "In the Blue of Evening" and six others.

**BUY YOUR COPY NOW! 3/-**

JUST ARRIVED—

AMERICAN COWBOY SONG BOOKS—  
GENE AUTRY'S COLLECTION OF  
FAMOUS COWBOY SONGS

(in 3 Books)  
Book 1, Book 2, and De Luxe Edition.

Price 4/- each Book, posted 4/3.  
(The 3 Books, 12/6 post free).

### ALL MUSIC SELLERS

Or Direct from the Publishers,  
J. ALBERT & SON PTY. LTD.,  
2-4, Willis Street, Wellington.

**The Pen with the Quality Nib**

SOLID 14-CARAT GOLD NIB  
— OSMI-IRIDIUM TIPPED  
Small wonder Mentmore Auto Flow gives such smooth effortless service. Price 24/6 each.

# MENTMORE

*Auto-Flow*

ENGLISH FOUNTAIN PENS

## Film Reviews by G.M.

# SPEAKING CANDIDLY

## THE CAPTIVE HEART

(Michael Balcon-Ealing)



THIS column again assumes the hues of red, white, and blue. But, compared with most of those from Hollywood, what vitality there is in British films these days! Not in all, of course; but almost inevitably you find it in those films retaining something of that documentary style which became a characteristic of the British feature during the war.

*The Captive Heart* is not a wholly satisfactory film, but it has enough of the documentary feel about it, enough honesty and vitality, to be absorbing and frequently moving. It is part fact and part fiction; and the part that is fact, reconstructed on the spot and dealing with the lives of British prisoners of war in a German *stalag*, is far superior to the part which depicts what happens to the girls they left behind them.

This approach is, in itself, an indication of the cinema's maturing outlook: it is not so long since one could have confidently expected the reverse method of treatment, so that the more lurid and novelettish situations would have been derived from the prison-camp setting, while the scenes of life back home would have supplied the more sober side of the picture. Yet from the first sequences showing the weary march into Germany of the soldiers captured at Dunkirk until the repatriation of some of them about four years later, the story is treated factually, quietly, and without rancour. There are no atrocities, no brutalities, no mass prison-breaks; even the manacled incident after Dieppe is interpreted as having been, in this camp anyway, rather a joke; and the most sensational event is a fight between a savage dog and a British private. Instead, the film gets its excitement and its emotional punch—and there is plenty of that—from such events as the arrival of the first Red Cross parcels, the reception of the news of the blitz on London, the staging of a camp concert, and above all, from the patient readjustment of the men to prison-life, their discipline, their talent for improvisation, their refusal to allow either their minds or their bodies to stagnate.

THE producer has dramatized his material by taking a cross-section of the prisoners and concentrating on their relationship to one another and their reactions to news from home. There is the Welsh private (Mervyn Johns) whose wife dies having a baby; the Cockney corporal (Jack Warner) with a wife and a little house in Hammer-smith; the Scots boy (Gordon Jackson) who wants to break off his engagement to the girl he loves because he has been blinded; the English officer (Derek Bond) whose captivity is poisoned by the belief that his wife is being unfaithful; and the Major, leader of the camp (Basil Radford), who keeps up the morale of his men with his unflinching optimism and good humour. All these types, and others, are well drawn—particularly, perhaps, the Major, the Cockney, and the Welshman—and their domestic backgrounds are skilfully enough sketched in at the beginning of the picture.

However, the frequent return visits which the camera subsequently makes to England, home and beauty, are not so successful. In most cases, though not in all, they somehow involve a break with realism and an approach to the world of the magazine story. This is especially so with the film's main subplot—the tale of a Czech escapee from Dachau concentration camp (Michael Redgrave) who takes a British uniform and the identity of a dead British officer and joins the prisoners-of-war. In order to maintain the deception and bluff the Gestapo he has to carry on correspondence with the dead man's wife and, of course, they fall in love by letter. I suppose this fictional situation is permissible, because *The Captive Heart* does not, after all, pretend to be a straight documentary; but once this situation is launched on its improbable course, it leads us ever deeper into melodrama.

*The Captive Heart* would have been a better film, though scarcely such a popular one, if they had found a less theatrical role and a less contrived story for Michael Redgrave to enact. I feel similarly that the ending, dealing with the repatriation and partial rehabilitation of the captives, rather lets down the rest of the film from the viewpoint of authenticity. All the loose personal threads are tied up a little too neatly; everything in the garden becomes lovely too easily. Yet no sooner have I written this than I realise what Hollywood would almost certainly have done in such circumstances, and I am grateful for very considerable mercies.

## TWO YEARS BEFORE THE MAST

(Paramount)



THIS is not the first screen version of a popular book which is several times more lurid than the original, but it must be one of the few which have added to, rather than detracted from, the social content. Richard Henry Dana's autobiographical account of a trip around the Horn in a sailing vessel 100 years ago was largely instrumental in getting a fair deal for American merchant seamen, but it was mild by comparison with this screenplay which hits the ship-owners between wind and water, presenting them as soulless money-grubbers who employed ruthless captains to treat their crews worse than dogs.

This, however, makes for adventurous entertainment if not for strict historical accuracy. When the schooner *Pilgrim* sets sail from Boston she carries aboard her half the tough guys in Hollywood—including Alan Ladd, Brian Donlevy, William Bendix, Barry Fitzgerald (in the cook's galley, of course), and Howard da Silva (excellent as the icily awe-inspiring captain). After beating around Cape Horn, they pick up a wholly unnecessary and incongruous passenger, in the person of a Spanish grandee's beautiful daughter, which results in a certain amount of beating about the bush; but for the most part *Two Years Before the Mast* is 90 minutes of shanghai-ing, flogging, murder, mutiny, storms, scurvy, and no beg pardons.