

deny that Marlowe was a pretty efficient sort of sleuth. Yet long after he had the case all sewn up, as they say, the audience (including your critic) was still groping to pick up dropped stitches.

The Big Sleep, based on a novel by Raymond Chandler and produced and directed by Howard Hawks, is a striking example of a type of entertainment now flooding the screen. Its highly complex plot-pattern of homicide, sadistic violence, and erotic suggestion is as formal and stylised as ballet. Everybody talks tough (and often wittily) and acts tougher; every few minutes the camera pauses gloatingly to look on while somebody is done to death or merely kicked in the face and punched in the kidneys; of the three women in the story, one (played by Martha Vickers) is a nymphomaniac, another (Dorothy Malone, as the girl in the bookstore) seems to verge on the same state, and the third (Lauren Bacall), though less vicious, is also far from being the type one would like one's daughter to emulate. And yet *The Big Sleep*, for all its hints of depravity, its violent action, and its determined pretence of realism, remains basically as artificial as a puppet-play. There are plenty of efficient figures in the cast, led by Humphrey Bogart, but there are no real characters in the story, for there just isn't time or scope for any true development of character to take place. There is incessant movement but (and here the ballet simile must be discarded) it is movement without real significance. With all its grave faults, I prefer a film like *Of Human Bondage*, because there at least some study of character is permitted and unpleasant human behaviour is not intended to be savoured solely for its own sake.

To the Editor—

Letters About Films

Sir,—It is with profound regret that I violently disagree with G.M.'s review of the film *The Diary of a Chambermaid*. My regard for his reviews has, up to now, been fairly high, but I must admit in this case he has sadly slipped. If I did not know him better I would say that he himself has fallen a victim to the "Culture-of-Hollywood" drug. Is the success of a film judged by its having a simple plot, normal stock characters, and a good, common-or-garden, everyday atmosphere about it? *The Diary of a Chambermaid* has none of these, but yet has a plot perfectly capable of being followed even if the more undiscerning of the audience have to wait till more film unrolls; the characters are unusually fresh, interesting and, without exception, very well acted, particularly the "sinister thieving valet," obviously the product of a great director—while finally its atmosphere is so amazingly out on its own that I can compare it with no other film that I have seen. And further, to add Freud to Chekhov, Edgar Allen Poe, and Elinor Glyn as possible co-authors of the script is lack of appreciation of a very unHollywoodish (or even Rankish) type of film. What I chiefly liked was the strange, weird environment in which the French city girl finds herself from the beginning; the aforementioned superb acting of Francis Lederer as the wicked valet, especially as, with the change of date, he tears off the "13me juillet" from the calendar, and the keeping of the spoils of the crime in his hat as he

buries his victim; the delightful poltergeist-like character of the Captain; the almost hypnotically macabre scenes up to, and after, his sticky end; the stark realism of the fight between the son of the house and the villain with its obvious end; and above all, the sheer poetry of the crowd scenes where the decamping villain is fighting to escape from the wrath of at least one person. But not a word of praise from "G.M."! Yes, he has certainly slipped badly this time. And, what is more, I would very much hesitate to assert that I was the sole misguided, uncultured, and uncritical moviegoer to thoroughly enjoy a remarkable film. May there be more of these film-oddities to confound our critics and make first-class entertainment.

P. T. EVANS (Wellington).

"ISLE OF THE DEAD"

Sir,—Permit me to add a note that may be of interest for your readers, to G.M.'s review of the picture *The Isle of the Dead*, in a recent issue. The setting, but not the story, of this picture is based on a series of oil paintings by Arnold Böcklin, a Swiss-born artist whose work is better known on the Continent than in English-speaking countries. Because his influence on German art was so considerable, he has been practically claimed as a German artist, and undoubtedly he has been held in the highest regard in Germany since at least the beginning of the century. The Galleries of Munich, Karlsruhe, Leipzig, and Basle (the city of his birth) in Switzerland are proud of specimens from his brush.

For a widowed lady he painted "Die Toteninsel"—the Island of the Dead—which evoked such admiration that he was called on to repeat it five times, each version differing slightly from the others, but all characterised by the mystic, sombre but elusive atmosphere that is reproduced in the main sets of the film in question. Böcklin seems to have derived his inspiration for this picture from islands in the north Italian lakes, where the formation of tall rock faces fronted by the shapely funereal cypress is frequent. The picture represents fairly obviously the mysterious bourne of all human souls; the best known originals were at Worms and Leipzig. It is to be hoped they survived the hazards of the war.

Böcklin specialised in landscape and mythological subjects, and many of his pictures have elements of mystery and solemnity—the Sacred Grove, the Villa by the Sea, Vita Somnium breve, the Pan, to name a few. They are usually relieved by bright light or soft colouring, and few can study them without the feeling that the secret of life can never be finally plumbed, but that somewhere on his canvas the artist has disclosed some of the key thereto. It has been claimed that his knowledge and use of colour were unsurpassed by any painter of the later 19th Century, to which period he belongs. He was much influenced by Italy and Italian art, and died in Italy in 1901.

C. R. H. TAYLOR (Wellington).

NATIONAL FILM UNIT

THE whole of the National Film Unit's Weekly Review No. 293 (released on April 11) is devoted to some special angles on the National Symphony Orchestra. The film shows how children are being taught to appreciate good music, with the conductor, Andersen Tyrer, explaining the meaning of certain passages of a musical work. The full orchestra is also heard in the Hebrides Overture from *Pingal's Cave* (Mendelssohn) and "Handel in the Strand" (Grainger).



The modern antiseptic; deadly to germs; yet so safe that, in emergency, it could even be used in the dark.

RECKITT & COLMAN (NEW ZEALAND) LTD.,
Pharmaceutical Division, BOND ST., DUNEDIN.
D.54

"BABY GAINS STEADY 8 ozs. WEEKLY"

Writes Mrs. Hancox of Johnsonville.

Johnsonville, Wellington.
27th July, 1946.

Messrs. Salmond & Spraggon Ltd.,
Dear Sirs,

I am writing to thank you for the sample of "Lactagol" you sent me a little while ago and also to say how beneficial it has been for breast-feeding. Since taking the sample I have had another in the same size and two larger tins.

I took the "Lactagol" three times a day for a short time and then gradually reduced the doses till now I take one teaspoon a day. I find it very beneficial for baby and as a tonic for myself it is marvellous.

My little daughter weighed 6 lbs. 4 oz. at birth and now at 2 months old, weighs 10 lbs. 8 oz. The first three weeks we were home she gained in the first week 10 oz., the next 14 oz. and then 12 oz., and now she has been gaining steadily 8 oz. a week.

Yours faithfully,

(Mrs.) I. P. Hancox.

LACTAGOL ensures breast-feeding.

LACTAGOL

Sold by all chemists.

Prices 2/6, 4/9, 8/6 (Economy size).

E. T. Pearson & Co. Ltd., Mitcham, Surrey, Eng.

FREE SAMPLE

Lactagol Ltd., Dept., L10
Box 997, Wellington.

Please send me free sample of Lactagol, together with useful booklet for expectant or nursing mothers.

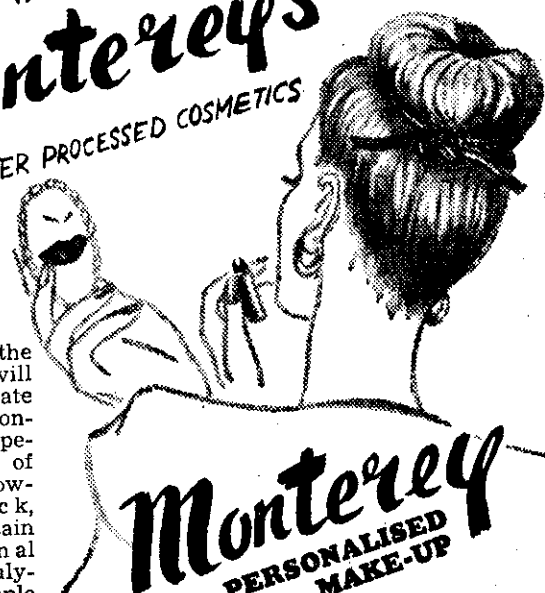
NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

3-74

YOU—ARE THE WOMAN FOR
Monterey's
NEW • SUPER PROCESSED COSMETICS

And you are the one who will really appreciate the subtle tonings and superior fineness of Monterey's powder, lipstick, rouge. To obtain a personal make-up analysis, with a sample of powder and lipstick, fill in coupon, post to Monterey, P.O. Box 210, Christchurch, with name and address and 9d in stamps.



Mark your colouring with an X

COMPLEXION	EYES	HAIR
Very Light	Blue	BLONDE
Light	Grey	Light <input type="checkbox"/> Dark <input type="checkbox"/>
Medium	Green	BROWNISH
Bronze	Dark	Light <input type="checkbox"/> Dark <input type="checkbox"/>
Dark	Black	BRUNETTE
Black	Black	Light <input type="checkbox"/> Dark <input type="checkbox"/>
Black	Black	REDHEAD
Black	Black	Light <input type="checkbox"/> Dark <input type="checkbox"/>
Black	Black	Black <input type="checkbox"/> Red <input type="checkbox"/>

Wilfrid Owen Ltd.,
104 Victoria St., Christchurch,
and Sydney.

M.74