

(continued from previous page)

has grown up in the belief that he died of a weak heart and was Not Understood. This leads her to dislike her step-mother (Claudette Colbert) and to spend all her time mooning at the piano playing Debussy, because she thinks that this is what Daddy would like her to do. Dr. Lionel Barrymore, an eminent psychiatrist, takes a brief interest in the case, but isn't able to do much beyond admitting that there's something wrong with the girl; and the problem child becomes even more of a liability when, temporarily diverted from Debussy, she imagines she has fallen in love with her stepmother's faithful suitor, Mr. Pidgeon. The situation grows progressively complicated, and there's an awful lot of piano-playing, jealous tantrums, and psychological fiddlefaddle before somebody does what should obviously have been done much earlier: tells her straight out what was wrong with Daddy. Then she also gets it into her dear little head that stepmother's boy-friend is not her pidgeon, and everybody is more or less in the clear.

As even the above cursory examination reveals, *The Secret Heart* clearly suffers from such structural disorders as leaky valves and fatty degeneration; but it is remarkable what shrewd acting, smooth direction, and frequent injections of well-written dialogue can do to keep it beating, on occasions even with some liveliness.

Book Review

Challenge to Hollywood

TWENTY YEARS OF BRITISH FILM.
The National Cinema Series. Falcon Press, London.

IT is well known—perhaps almost too well known, because there is now some danger of smug complacency—that the British film industry is in a more flourishing condition to-day than it has ever been in its history; and that it now represents a challenge to the world supremacy of Hollywood which even Hollywood is beginning to take seriously. But the struggle to bring the industry to its present healthy state, and to create films which are "national" in the best sense of that now dangerous word (as Michael Balcon puts it), has not been easy. At least once the patient very nearly died, and even to-day a relapse, though perhaps not likely, could still prove fatal. Much will depend on the manner in which Hollywood faces up to the British challenge—one may be sure that it will not be refused—and on the ability of British film-makers to profit by the lessons which they should have learnt during the past 20 years.

The story of those two decades is told in the four essays and 100 illustrations from representative British films of the 1925-45 period, which comprise this attractive and intelligent survey, the first of a series dealing with the

development of the cinema as an art and as a form of social expression in a number of different countries. It is symptomatic of the heightened and more intelligent public interest now being taken in the film that books like these are being produced. The four writers in the present volume are Michael Balcon, one of Britain's foremost producers and directors and, though now under the wing of Mr. Rank, still a man with an independent outlook; Ernest Lindgren, curator of the British National Film Library (who writes on the early feature film); Forsyth Hardy, who discusses the documentary—"the distinctively British contribution to the cinema"; and Roger Manvell, research officer of the British Film Institute, who deals more specifically with the renaissance of the British feature. All four essayists look to the past, of course—and sometimes through rather rose-coloured spectacles—but they also look to the future, and their common viewpoint is well expressed by Manvell in his concluding paragraph: "British films must retain their national integrity without becoming merely insular; they must be honestly British without being dull as entertainment. The best cinema of other countries has been able to contribute a national art to motion pictures. Having taken our place alongside them we must continue to make pictures which justify the claim that the film is the most progressive popular art of the 20th century."

POINTS FROM LETTERS ABOUT FILMS

"I agree with Mr. Hayward that G.M. caters just for the few in his reviews, and not for the masses, and perhaps it would be better to have someone whose taste in films was more in keeping with what the ordinary person likes. However, I certainly agree with G.M. that Walt Disney is slipping. In fact, as far as I am concerned he slipped right out of the picture long ago. At one time I was mildly amused by his cartoons, but that was years ago."

—(MRS.) A. MARTIN (Lower Hutt).

"Many of your readers will agree with Phil Hayward that G.M.'s rather hysterical praise of mediocre Russian and French films is merely 'arty affectation.' I have seen Disney's *Make Mine Music* and *Song of the South*. Far from slipping I should say he was going from strength to strength. If G.M. takes note of Mr. Hayward's constructive criticism which I think reflects popular opinion, we may look forward to better film reviews in *The Listener*.

—"MILTON" (Auckland).

G.M. replies: The "mediocre" Russian and French films which I have reviewed in *"The Listener"* during the past four or five years consist of *"Battleship Potemkin"* (Russian), and *"The Italian Straw Hat"* and *"La Kermesse Héroïque"* (French).

NATIONAL FILM UNIT

THE National Film Unit's Weekly Review No. 306, released on July 11, contains the following items: "First Woman Minister," an interview with the Hon. Miss M. B. Howard; "Floods in Wairarapa," showing the flood waters and damage caused by the recent heavy rains; "Aid to Europe's Children," in which Masteron makes a special effort to help needy people in Europe; and "Crisis in South Island," dealing with the power crisis in the South and the work that is in hand to overcome it.

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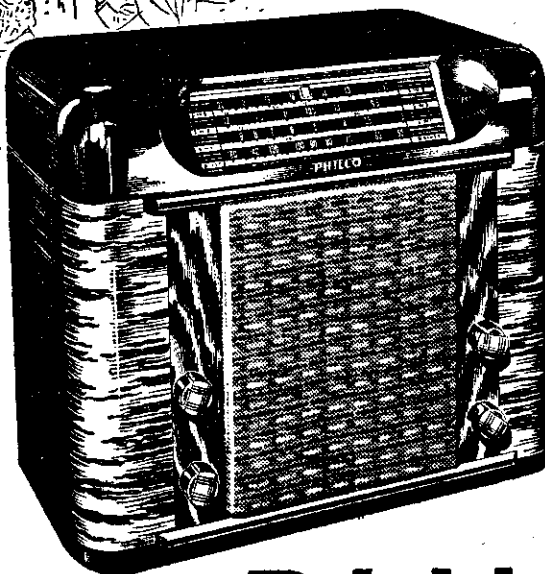
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