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Film Reviews by G.M.

SPEAKING CANDIDLY

OLYMPIA

(U.F.A.-Leni Riefenstahl)



HAVING missed several earlier opportunities, I have at last managed to see this German film of the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, which has now been released for general exhibition as part of the Aid-to-Britain Campaign. (It is being shown in Kerridge-Odeon theatres, all proceeds going to the

campaign.) At this late stage, detailed comment is probably unnecessary; but the film is all that I had heard it was—not merely an absorbing and detailed record of many events at the Games, of particular interest to followers of the various sports, but also a magnificent piece of film-making. One wouldn't, in fact, need to have a special interest in sport of any kind to be impressed and excited by sequence after sequence—by the superb photography, the clever use of slowed-up action to capture the poetry of motion, the close-ups of the athletes, the rhythmic cutting and the interplay of music which has the effect of catching the inner spirit of a contest as well as its outward appearance. This last-named effect is most notable in the filming of the Marathon; here is the very essence of physical striving and strain distilled into what I would, without hesitation, describe as one of the really great sequences of the cinema. What one sees here, and in many places throughout the film, is the difference between a newsreel record of mere actuality and a work of imaginative art.

I am sorry in a way that I did not come across *Olympia* before it was cut and edited into its present version; I imagine that it had a cohesiveness and a unity of pattern which is, to some extent, lacking now. On the other hand, it then had, one gathers, an objectionable propagandist element. Even as it now stands, *Olympia* is nearly three hours long, and perhaps the greatest tribute one can pay to it as a film, as distinct from a sporting record, is to say that the time passes very quickly. People are going in increasing numbers to see this unusually long production, which lacks any plot or stars and therefore has virtually no resemblance to the average movie entertainment, and they are clearly enjoying the experience. Just how much most of them enjoy it because they are interested in sport it would be impossible to say; but it is safe to suggest that many are also impressed, some perhaps for the first time in their lives, by this evidence that the cinema is capable of giving exciting life to something besides murder-mysteries and boy-meets-girl stories.

THE SEA OF GRASS

(M-G-M)



FOR two hours Spencer Tracy, as a cattle baron, tries to preserve the pasture-lands of the Western prairies from the attentions of the small farmers (led by Melvyn Douglas, an Attorney) who want to parcel the territory out for agriculture. Mr. Tracy has made a good thing out of his monopoly and doesn't hesitate to order intruders to be beaten or shot up; but he is activated, it would appear, by more than profit motive. There is, he declares, something Godly about Grass, and the mystic light of a nature-lover comes into his eyes when he looks at his waving acres. And, in the end, it would seem that God comes out on the side of the big herds. For, as the cattle-kings gradually lose their power and the homesteaders move in (backed by the Federal Government and the U.S.

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