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with a pair of the moustaches which the Kaiser later made infamous—and, when the camera moves out of doors, the scenery is most beautiful. And the director (Frank Launder) has made the most of his opportunities. I don't think Stewart Granger was an ideal choice as Hugh Davin, the leader of the boy-cotters. He managed to achieve a fairly good accent—and to maintain it—but in my eyes he was a sight too tidy for an Irish crofter, and too well-dressed. But if this is not entirely an accurate picture of the Ould Sod and its inhabitants I hope no one will boycott it for that reason. Faith, and would not that be carrying coals to Coventry?

SONG OF THE THIN MAN

(M-G-M)

KNOWING well that the admission may draw hoots of derision from the followers of George Sanders and other present-day screen sleuths, I must confess that I have a sentimental affection for the Thin Man. He dates from my own salad days—more accurately, my ham-and-salad days—we have both grown a little thinner on top, and a little less thin elsewhere. I might almost say that we have climbed the hill together were it not that I reject the implicit suggestion that we are now coasting down the other side. At least, I reject it on behalf of William Powell. As an actor he is still gaining altitude, and even in a trifle like *Song of the Thin Man* he keeps on a high level. And I might say the same things of Myrna Loy, though it would be honest as well as polite to concede that time has not smudged her silhouette.

But *Song of the Thin Man* certainly is a trifle—and like most trifles, rather a confused mixture. Such song as there is is strictly in the modern jive idiom and in several places the dialogue would require annotation to make it completely understandable to the average New Zealand filmgoer—it even has the Thin Man nonplussed. But there is the old familiar deftness in Powell's acting, that patina which derives as much from time as from timing and there are the same allusive jokes: Powell picks up a razor-blade at the scene of the crime, "But... no, of course, it's ridiculous," he soliloquises, "it couldn't possibly have been Somerset Maugham."

On the whole I think it would be fair to say that the Thin Man has had better assignments than this, and that if *Song of the Thin Man* is a little flat in places it is not his fault, or Myrna Loy's. I certainly enjoyed the film, in spite of the prominence given in it to the lunatic fringe of modern music.

The Quality of Greatness

Sir,—Some weeks ago, a correspondent protested against Jno.'s harsh review of *The Long Night* (a protest which, incidentally, I hasten to support.) As the correspondent pointed out, a good film had been damned. I feel that with his review of *The Best Years of Our Lives*, Jno. has erred in entirely the opposite direction. He has, in my opinion, invested a film with a quality of greatness that it does not possess. I know that I shall find little support for my view that *The Best Years* is unnecessarily long, exceedingly boring and wholly superficial. Upon the evidence of the awards tagged to it, the praise of

critics, the adulation of the public and, most important of all, the receipts at the box-office, it is obviously a notable film. To my mind, it is the same American Way of Life, the same symbols of democracy and freedom and the simple virtues triumphant, made all the more acceptable to an un-American audience by such a skilled director as William Wyler. Admittedly, the film has some very fine moments, the situations are often of universal application and appeal, and for anyone who has experienced home-coming after long separation, the atmosphere is real to the point of becoming painful. But do let us be honest. *The Best Years* is not a great film—not when you get beneath the surface gloss.

W. COLGAN (Auckland).

Sir,—I wish to register my disapproval of the way the Film Reviews are conducted in *The Listener*. You give overseas pictures anything from six to 12 inches of space, but what about our own New Zealand-made film? Sometimes you publish two inches in very small type, more often nothing. Why is this? Our own film is good, interesting, and educative. Please cut down on overseas productions, and put our own film in its place—at the top of the page.

READER (Wanganui).

(This week the Film Unit publicity paragraph did not arrive in time, but *The Listener* has frequently given prominence to the unit's work in its news columns—see page six.—Ed.)

No Encores From Schnabel

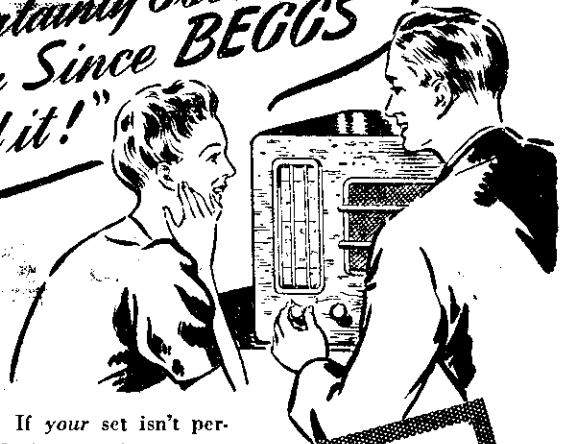
A WRITER in *The Listener* a few months ago expressed the opinion that New Zealand audiences were given to indiscriminate applause. Hand-clapping, he thought, resolved itself into a sort of tug-of-war or endurance test between audience and performers to see how many encores performers could be persuaded to give. But there are artists—few of whom seem to have been to New Zealand—who make a practice of never giving encores, and the pianist Artur Schnabel, whose recordings are frequently heard in NZBS programmes, is one of them.

Schnabel told an overseas magazine recently that he played simply for the sake of playing. "It is really my desire not to play in public at all," he said. Last month, at the age of 65, he gave American audiences a tantalising sample of the music he plays and loves best—piano works of Beethoven, Schubert and Mozart. He employs no agents.

Schnabel said he was never exploited. His parents were very good in that way. He took lessons for only seven years, still hated to practise and seldom did—"I practise in my head." His teacher, who was a close friend of Brahms, took him along several of Brahms's famed walks in the Vienna woods, but Schnabel still loves to discount the press-agent story that Brahms discovered him at his first recital, and praised his genius. Schnabel says: "The only thing Brahms ever said to me was, 'Are you hungry, boy?' before we started eating, and 'Have you had enough?' when we finished."

Artur Schnabel will be heard in recorded recitals from 1YX on Monday, March 13, at 8.0 p.m., 2YH on Wednesday, March 17, at 9.50 a.m., 1YA Friday, March 19, at 2.30 p.m., and 4YO on Saturday, March 20, at 10.0 p.m.

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