

however, has attempted to fill out the whole of the original framework — a task in which only genius could have been successful.

There has been some transposition of events, and a certain amount of new material has been introduced. The author has followed some modern scholars in rejecting the myth which allowed the young shepherd to prevail against Goliath and has traced it to rumours fed from David's poetic imagination. This is an interesting theory, soundly based in psychology; but it would be more convincing if the Biblical story had not shown David consistently as a man of action who could fight and sing with an equal fervour. If Goliath is to be dismissed, much else should go with him: the conception of a young egoist with an over-heated imagination would have to be developed, and it would destroy the consistency of the whole legend.

In general, however, Miss Schmitt has been satisfied to fill in some of the gaps, to add a great deal of flesh to the bare bones of the Biblical narrative, and to link the main events in a more or less conventional interpretation of the central character. There is some excellent writing, and the characters move naturally in the setting provided for them. Nevertheless, at the end of 648 pages the reader may feel the hopelessness of a gallant venture. The economy and beauty of the Old Testament story are lost in a modern idiom, and only a new psalmist could recover them. —M. H. Holcroft

ART AND CRAFT

THE ART OF THE FILM. By Ernest Lindgren, Allen and Unwin Ltd., London.

IS the motion picture an art form? Expert opinion seems to be divided. Miss Lejeune, of the London *Observer*, whose standing as a film critic is recognised even in these remote and uncultivated regions, put the case for the negative with characteristic pungency just a year ago—

Either a mechanised entertainment can be an art or it can not. In my opinion it can not, and it makes no odds whether the further illusion of voice is added to the first illusion of movement in the still photographs of actors on the screen. It is not within the power of electrical engineering or mechanical contraption to create. They can only reproduce. And what they reproduce is not art, even though it may contain the individual work of many artists.

These are strong and persuasive words and it takes Mr. Lindgren about 200 pages to reveal the essential fallacy in that kind of reasoning, but *The Art of the Film* is a good deal more than the author's statement of faith. For the general reader, indeed, it will be the earlier chapters rather than the later philosophical speculations which will prove most interesting.

Mr. Lindgren has sub-titled his book "An Introduction to Film Criticism," and as a plain man's guide to the various processes of film-production—script-writing, photography, acting, editing, and the rest—nothing quite so lucid and systematic has been produced before. The author is, in fact, excellent both on analysis and synthesis. He manages to resolve the complexity of the modern film business into its individual techniques, explains these simply but comprehensively, and then by a judicious arrangement of his material shows the orderly integration of these processes. So far as order and method go, the only criticism that might be



ERIC LINDGREN
Chapter and verse

made is of the separation of the chapters dealing with film editing and the art of the film. It seems probable that both these chapters would have gained in effectiveness had they been dealt with in immediate sequence (or in combination) instead of being separated by about 70 pages dealing with sound, photography, film music, and acting. As it is, these two sections represent a certain reduplication of example and argument, since the author believes (along with Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Carl Dreyer and many others) that film art derives largely from the manipulation of visual images, i.e., editing.

The principal weakness of the book, however, arises from the same faculty for exposition which serves the reader so well in the more factual sections. Mr. Lindgren is so careful to cite chapter and verse that there is not nearly enough of Mr. Lindgren. There is hardly a single authority on the film who is not quoted, and quoted most carefully and appositely, but there is too much quotation. Mr. Lindgren, who has been actively associated with the British Film Institute for 14 years and who was the first Curator of the British National Film Library, has had enough experience to speak with authority. He is a good advocate, but he would be better as an expert witness.

The Art of the Film, however, is a first-class manual for those who wish to take an intelligent interest in the cinema. It is well printed and the illustrations have been admirably selected.

—Jno.

THE MULBERRY BUSH

THE GOVERNESS AT ASHBURTON HALL. By Neil Bell. Eyre and Spottiswoode.

THE essential silliness of this story is somewhat obscured by the flashes of realistic psychology and the carefully chosen period detail. The time is the Boer War; the place is Devon; the theme is—now what is it? Both love and mystery are entangled in a thicket of always-surprising incident. After those dinner parties—where everyone comments, with dullness and profusion, on Rhodes, on Kipling, on the jealous French and the misunderstood Boers—and all those literary allusions, plastered on with a trowel, the book just had to wind through a deathbed wedding and a double murder to its happy ending. All the time one feels Mr. Bell can do better, and his heroine, impervious to ghosts, ghouls and the incredibilities of the plot, is charming. —David Hall



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