

SPEAKING CANDIDLY

IT ALL CAME TRUE

(Warner Bros.)

AFTER having had to sit through a deluge of noisily sentimental music played on the theatre's Grand Organ (sic), and a deplorable short-feature in crude colour about the Mounties, we came to "It All Came True" with some excuse for hoping that our expectations of this film would do just that. After all, it had been advertised as "the Year's Must-See Hit," and it was written by Louis Bromfield; and although the former was hardly a valid reason for optimism, we are still innocent enough to be influenced sometimes by advertising. In this case, however, our high expectations were not altogether sustained. Not that "It All Came True" is a poor film or that it is entirely lacking in distinction. On the contrary it contains a good many bright ideas very brightly carried out. It is just that there is nothing particularly outstanding about the general effect. Nothing, in fact, to justify that "Must-See" slogan. Of Louis Bromfield's part in it I cannot speak, but I beg leave to remain sceptical that what we saw is exactly, or even fairly remotely, like what he wrote.

"It All Came True" is a fairy-tale done in the modern manner, about how a wicked gangster was reformed by a mother's love (somebody else's mother). Humphrey Bogart is the gangster, and I must say I do enjoy the way he talks out of the corner of his mouth and looks through you with those cold eyes of his. Ann Sheridan, who helps Mr. Bogart to find his soul, is also good to watch, though for a rather different reason. The story's claim to novelty lies largely in its setting—a very old-fashioned boarding-house in a backwater of New York City where Una O'Connor, who is Ann Sheridan's mother, and her partner (who is Jeffrey Lynn's mother) maintain a collection of antique failings and eccentricities and try to defy time and the bailiffs. To this museum of the 'nineties come Mr. Bogart, who is seeking a hide-out from the law, and Mr. Lynn, who is in Mr. Bogart's power. It is not long before the kindly ministry of the two old ladies melts Mr. Bogart's icy heart, assisted somewhat by Miss Sheridan's warm presence. He soon removes the threat of the bailiffs; and then, in order to put the place on a paying basis and also establish the reputations of Miss Sheridan and Mr. Lynn as a song-writing and singing team, he turns the boarding-house into a night-club with an authentic Naughty 'Nineties atmosphere. The gangster's redemption is complete when he takes the rap that he had prepared for Mr. Lynn and blesses the union of Miss Sheridan and Mr. Lynn. And so the fairy-tale all comes true. Oh yeah?

As the daughter of the house with a quick tongue, high spirits, and a throaty voice for singing her sweetheart's songs, Ann Sheridan has no lack of opportunity to demonstrate her well-known "oomph"; but Jeffrey Lynn is a trifle calf-like as her lover. It must be because he has a good profile that this young man is getting so many important parts: so far his acting hardly

justifies them. Several excellent character-players are in the supporting cast, helping to give the film its peculiar flavour of thick sentimentality mixed with whimsy and toughness.

"THE RAMPARTS WE WATCH"

(R.K.O.)

FOR their first full-length picture, the "March of Time" people chose the title of a treatise by a certain Major Eliot, "The Ramparts We Watch: A Study of the Problems of American Defence." The film, however, is little concerned with the outward and visible signs of American defence, such as "flying fortresses" and battleships; it deals almost wholly with the events leading up to America's entry into the last war, and the sentiment which favours intervention in this one.

As plainly as they can, the editors of "Time" and "Life," who shaped the idea, say that America has no business being neutral. The film opens with a shot of waves washing over a rock carved with the figures 1620 (consult history books for reference) and then proceeds to take a presumably representative American community, many of its members foreign born, and trace the effect on them of growing war sentiment. When the Armistice has been celebrated, with toasts to a brave new world and the spirit of democracy, we move on to 1939 and 1940, to find that these same Americans are just as pro-British and anti-German as ever they were.

The film is made up partly of story, partly of snippets from newsreels, pieced together in familiar "March of Time" style. The highlight is undoubtedly the extract from the German film "Baptism of Fire," which the Nazis took as they swept through Poland. One gets the impression that this must have

Old Films Are In Demand

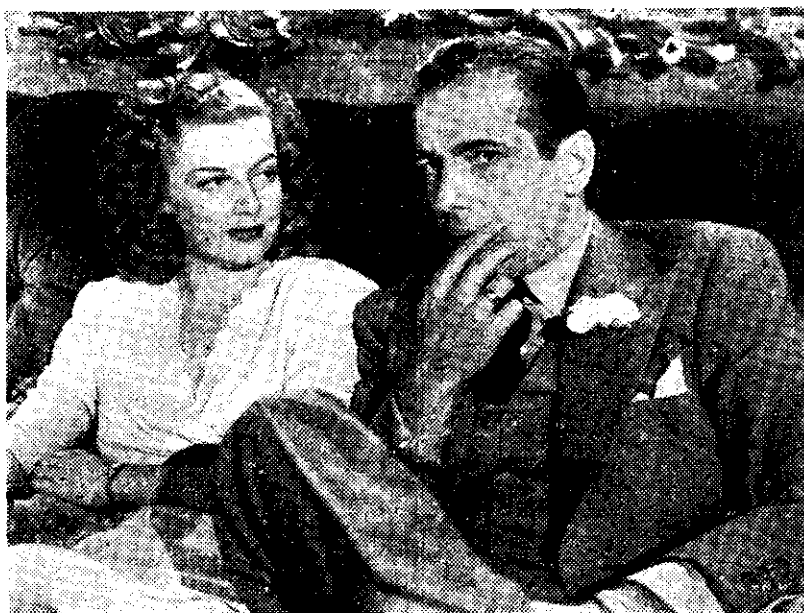
Old films, travelogues, newsreels and foreign productions are no longer relegated to the dustbins in Hollywood. They are salvaged, for the war in Europe has stopped directors obtaining local colour. Truck-loads of old film are being sorted out now and tagged as if they were museum ware. They will keep, though, and far better than films made and developed before ten years ago, which went yellow in no time, unless kept in cool, aired vaults alongside a large piece of camphor. Old film also used to be destroyed and sifted out for nitrates, but now it is anxiously examined to see if it has the lions of Trafalgar Square on it.

One studio department head has mile upon mile of views of the city of Bath, England. "If the London Government shifts, it will probably go to Bath," he explained. "And the Stock Exchange will shift to Oxford," he added. "We've gone strong on Oxford. We've got a mile of it, complete with quadrangles and accents, for, if we ever need it, we shall need it darn bad."

In normal times the studios keep enough "library stock" in the vaults to last five or six years.

Eiffel Tower shots have been about used up, stuff from the Thames is running low, and Warsaw views, pre-war, are unprocureable.

been severely cut, as it is hardly a record of horror, and in its present form is not likely to have filled the neutrals with overpowering terror. However, it contains interesting glimpses of the German war machine in action, one sequence, taken from the nose of a dive-bomber hurtling perpendicularly down at a railway junction, being particularly effective.



MODERN FAIRY-TALE: Ann Sheridan and Humphrey Bogart in "It All Came True," by Louis Bromfield

One American critic accused "The Ramparts We Watch" of "pulling its punches." I imagine that that is hardly fair. The position rather is that it is impossible to maintain the tension and high-pitched interest of a "March of Time" short for the whole length of a feature film.

MOUNTAINS AND FLAX

THE propaganda-cum-documentary shorts which the Miramar Film Studios have been turning out lately are becoming distinctly interesting. A recent release, for example, covers the linen flax industry and its place in New Zealand's war effort.

Britain appeals for linen from flax, New Zealand decides to grow it. The fields are shown, the factories in Christchurch turning out the processing machinery, and a woman fitter stretching fabric over the wings of an aeroplane. It is well done, concise, illuminating, and photographed without unnecessary trickery.

But—and this is the "but" the Miramar studios will have to face up to—it reveals through one flaw in its simple directness the great disadvantage under which Miramar persistently labours. The short is just progressing satisfactorily—the material adequate yet restrained, the commentator not as nasal as usual, the camera well placed, and a small corner of New Zealand properly cast in its patriotic role—when Mt. Tapuae-nuku suddenly appears snow-capped across Cook Strait.

It is a splendid photograph of a splendid piece of New Zealand scenery. But why did it have to appear as a jack-in-the-box surprise? It had nothing to do with linen flax. The brief coastline shot of the plant growing wild was all that was necessary. Can Miramar never resist the temptation to "sell" our scenery at every opportunity?

LESSONS IN MORSE

(18)

The following is a draft of the eighteenth of the series of Morse signalling lessons for Air Force trainees broadcast from Stations 2YC, 12M and 2YC at 10 p.m. on February 17, 18 and 19:

WHEN listening to Morse stations on your radio receiver, endeavour to pick out a station which is sending slightly faster than you are able to read comfortably. Although you may miss many letters or even groups consisting of two or three words, don't become disheartened. Just keep at it, and eventually you will find you are able to copy the whole of the transmissions. When you get to this stage, select another station which is sending a little faster, and so on.

Practise consistently. Don't do two hours' practice to-day and then an hour next Tuesday and call it three hours' practice for the week. It is much better to spread the three hours' practice over six daily practices.

Write legibly, using block letters. Practise writing any letter which you find you are transcribing in an ambiguous or slovenly manner. Remember, someone has to read the messages which you receive, and time must not be wasted in referring doubtful letters back to the receiving operator for amplification.