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Film Reviews by G.M.

BLOSSOMS IN THE DUST (M-G-M)

AS the Elizabethan epitaphist remarked

"Only the Actions of the Just Smell sweet and blossom in the Dust,"

but it is the actions of the unjust which provide the raison d'etre for all the little blossoms rescued, rather charmingly, from the dust by Greer Garson's Edna Gladney. Mrs. Gladney, as we are now aware, was the founder of the Forth Worth Children's Home and Aid Society, and laboured hard throughout her life to better the lot of the orphans and the fatherless. The dedication announces that the film is a true account (we suspect a highly technicoloured one), of Mrs. Gladney's life and work, and it also records the fact that Mrs. Gladney, aged 58, is still alive at Forth Worth, Texas. From this latter fact we conclude that Mrs. Gladney was, and is, a woman of remarkable endurance. Only thus could she have undergone a life as full of toil and tragedy as that depicted by Miss Garson and remained alive to witness M.G.M.'s telling of the tale.

For Miss Garson's life is thickly peppered with tragedies. First there is the suicide of her foster-sister. Then Miss Garson's marriage to the Texas flour-miller, Samuel Gladney (Walter Pidgeon), is followed by the death of their only child, and shortly after this (just another 500 feet), comes financial ruin and the death of Samuel. But inspired by his example, Miss Garson carries on her noble work, which involves not only constant attendance upon orphans and prospective foster-parents, but also frequent journeys to the Texas Senate to coin such epigrams as "There are no illegitimate children, only illegitimate parents," and (when accused of encouraging bad girls to have babies), "Bad girls don't have babies." So we come at last to a lonely Christmas Eve when Miss Garson, suffering from a surfeit of sacrifice, decides to go back to her girlhood home taking with her the only little orphan she ever loved. But inopportunely, two eager foster-parents arrive on the doorstep, and driven to make the Supreme Sacrifice by the photo of Samuel and the chidings of Family Friend Felix Bressart, she hands over little Tony and starts afresh with two less desirable specimens of orphenhood. With this final tragedy, the film finishes, but the evidence is that the noble Mrs. Gladney was driven on from sacrifice to sacrifice, and is probably being sacrificial still.

Yet, in many respects, the film is not as difficult to sit through as might be expected - nor quite as tearful. Miss Garson shines red gold and admirably throughout, and though baby motif is of course inseparable from the theme, it is used with relative restraint, and the infants, instead of being rosily exuberant in the Rubens manner, are petite and winsome, and all done in a pale apricot shade. But as we left the theatre we felt, like Gilbert's Pirate King, something of the impatience of one who had known only too orphan what it is like to be one.

SPEAKING CANDIDLY

STAND-UP CLAPS: Fantasia, STAND-UP CLAPS: Fantasia, Inc.
Man Who Came to Dinner, The Next
of Kin, To Be or Not to Be, How
Green Was My Valley, Sullivan's
Travels, Ball of Fire, Pimpernel Smith,
Alexander Nevsky, Sergeant York.

Alexander Nevsky, Sergeant York.

SIT-DOWN CLAPS: This Gun for Hire, Eagle Squadron, One of Our Aircraft is Missing. The Bride Came C.O.D., Nazi Agent, The Oppenheim Family, The Lady is Willing, Footsteps in the Dark, Bedtime Story. The Corsican Brothers, H. M. Pulham, Esq., Ladies in Retirement, Three Girls About Town, Dangerous Moonlight.

CAPTAINS OF THE CLOUDS (Warner Bros.)

LIKE modern Gaul was until a few days ago, Captains of the Clouds is divided into two parts—two very unequal portions, unequal in

dramatic value, in acting, in dialogue, in genuine (as distinct from Hollywooden), human interest, in photography, and in direction.

Imagine a first-class, up-to-the-minute American documentary about Canada's part in the Empire Air Training Scheme preceded by a backwoods girl-grabsvisitor drammer (circa The Trail of the Lonesome Pine), all done up in hackneycoloured, chocolate - box photography, and you have a rough idea of what this latest Cagney production is like. If our little man had come in about half-time. he'd have been tempted to stand on his seat to applaud. As it is, the fact that he can still applaud vigorously may be taken as indicating that the better half was, to coin a phrase, so much better.

The fact that Captains of the Clouds is in technicolour will probably make the first half more endurable for most filmgoers, but it is so hackneyed in every way that I can dismiss it by saying that James Cagney, Dennis Morgan, Alan Hale, George Tobias, and Reginald Gardiner are Canadian bush-pilots, each running his own rackety little freight-'plane, and after some disagreement on business and personal (Brenda Marshall). matters, they find themselves all together again in the R.C.A.F. Into this new environment (by a series of accidents which almost dislocate the Long Arm of Coincidence), are imported the dregs of the backwoods melodrama, on the erroneous assumption that the ordinary day-to-day activities of the Air Training Scheme and the Atlantic bomber ferry service need something to pep them up. Of course, they don't, and with the inevitable exception of Mr. Cagney, the male stars are forced by their new environment to behave like ordinary matter-of-fact humans.

I was somewhat startled to find that Warner Bros. had managed to ring in Air Marshal Billy Bishop, V.C. as an extra-he actually takes part in the acting, along with hundreds of trainees but the general impression with which one is left when the lights go up is that the Air Training Scheme is (at the moment) something more real and more important than Hollywood — stars, directors, box-offices, and all.



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