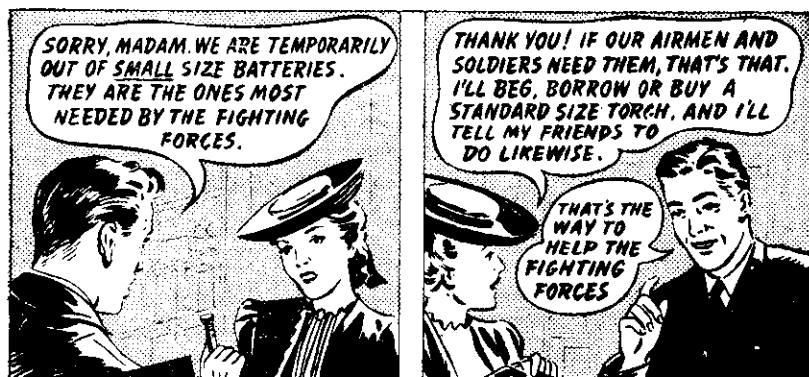


(Continued from previous page)  
for Charles Laughton, and for being good fun; *Tennessee Johnson*, for Van Heflin, and for being the best sort of historical drama; *Love on the Dole*, for its acting, its humanity, its appeal to the heart as well as to the head; *Keeper of the Flame*, for its strong suspense and its much-better-than-average story; and *I Married a Witch* for its tonic qualities and Rene Clair's direction.

My research among the files reveals that, out of a total of 83 visits to the cinema during 1943, we—that is, the little man and I—showed our appreciation sitting down 27 times (as against the 12 stand-up claps); through 32 films we just sat and took notice; and on 11 occasions we were almost prone with boredom. But only once did we so far forget our responsibility as critics as to walk out. That, I imagine, would just about represent an average experience for a year's picture-going—12 outstanding films, 27 pretty good ones, 32 just average, 11 duds, and one fair cow.

If you ask me for my choice of The Most Outstanding Film of 1943, I hesitate momentarily between *Mrs. Miniver* and *Love on the Dole*, and then vote for the latter. Both were films of Britain at war—in the one case at war with the Nazis, in the other at war with poverty and an economic system that was out of joint. But whereas *Mrs. Miniver* was a warm-hearted and moving tribute by an American studio to a small section of the people of Britain (and within those limits I believe it was a true enough picture), *Love on the Dole* was an equally warm-hearted and I would imagine even truer picture, by a British producer, of a very much greater section. In fact, a story of *The People*, in the Ma Joad sense.

Yet with the exception of these two films, and a few others, 1943 has been a poor year in the cinema. Even some of those that have got into our list of the Ten Best would not have been accounted really outstanding by the standards of other years, and certainly the competition would have been keener and my choice correspondingly harder. I am afraid that four years of war are having their effect on the film industry; it has not re-adjusted itself to the situation. It looks back, rather than forward, and I believe is losing touch with the mood of the people.



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