

## FACE TO FACE

(R.K.O.-Radio)

THOUGH the idea sounded interesting, going to see *Face to Face* was very much a shot in the dark—one that, I'm glad to say, was not too far off the bull's-eye. The film brings together Conrad's *The Secret Sharer* and Stephen Crane's *The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky*, reputedly one of the best things Crane ever wrote.

*The Secret Sharer*, directed by John Brahm, is the story of how a young ship's master (James Mason) on his first voyage in his first ship gives refuge to a man (Michael Pate) fleeing from the law and risks his ship to give him a chance to start a new life. I gather the original story suggests that the other man is the captain's other self, and there is some such suggestion, not too heavily underlined, in the film. Mr. Mason's moody, preoccupied style is exactly right for the captain. This film is well made without being brilliant; the atmosphere is strong and the climax very effective.

In *The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky* the local crack-shot (Minor Watson) gets very drunk and terrorises the town with a couple of guns, while the marshal (Robert Preston) is away being secretly married. The climax is the wild man's meeting with the marshal, whom he intends to shoot, and his bride (Marjorie Steel) as they come from the train. This most agreeable piece is notable for its small town atmosphere and characters—quite a collection of them—good acting, and imaginative direction and photography. It was probably made before *High Noon*, with which it will certainly be compared; and while it hasn't the tension of that masterpiece it has enough for its purpose, for here the gunman is a part-comic character and the real menace is the whisky galore. There is much light relief, too, in recurring shots of the marshal and his bride on the train which are cut into the wild man's rampage to provide effective contrast. Bretaigne Windust directed.

I saw *Face to Face* twice, and at the second viewing many of the reservations I'd had, especially about the Conrad story, disappeared. Perhaps I had just been jaded; but I'm tempted to think that, having something of the depth, concentration and integrity of its literary original, it's a film that will grow on you.

### BELOW THE SAHARA (RKO)

WATER BIRDS (Disney-RKO)

*BELOW THE SAHARA* is a record of an expedition to Africa by Armand Denis. Everyone who likes looking at wild animals should enjoy it, though they may be disappointed that some sequences are rather unfinished, and here and there may be put off by a golden-haired beauty thrown in to attract, or distract attention. Tom Stobart, who filmed most of *The Ascent of Everest*, had a hand in this one also.

*Water Birds*, another Disney real life film, is full of beauty and interest and excitement. Even the editing of part of the film to show birds dancing to light classical music is, unlikely as it sounds, quite successful. A lukewarm lover of nature in neat doses, I found these films a bit much when seen together at the end of a day's work, but they are worth seeing.

N.Z. LISTENER, MAY 21, 1954.

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