

footlights. *Somebody Loves Me* verged I thought, on the depressing. I could feel infatuation in the air, but could not avoid the suspicion that Nobody really loved Anybody.

Bookshelf

PICTURE, by Lillian Ross: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., London. English price, 16s.

THERE have been many books on the technical problems and processes of film production, and from time to time producers, directors, or players have published their own personal narratives about the making of this film or that, but Miss Ross is—so far as I know—the first outsider to attempt an exhaustive script-to-screen study of one production and the people concerned in it.

I cannot quite agree with the publisher when he claims that "this is factual reportage of real brilliance by a mistress of that difficult craft." *Picture* is certainly brilliant—no film enthusiast should pass it by and no one interested in Life in Hollywood could fail to find it absorbing—but there is more to it than factual reporting as the term is still understood in the more conservative enclaves of British journalism. Miss Ross tells the story of *The Red Badge of Courage*—Stephen Crane's Civil War classic directed for M.G.M. by John Huston, then partially remade by the studio to give it box-office appeal—and it is obvious that her sympathies have been committed from the outset. Since she gave her time completely to this one assignment, attending conferences in New York, talking with studio people of all kinds in Hollywood, going on location with the unit, even attending sneak previews, it was perhaps impossible for her not to get emotionally involved. You can find opinion sandwiched in between the lines on any one of the 240 pages. But she doesn't openly express an opinion anywhere. It is good writing, sensitive writing by a woman of liberal and enlightened mind, but it is not factual or objective reporting. On the whole, however, it is convincing. One may not altogether agree with the book's implicit conclusion—that Huston's work was ruined in an unsuccessful attempt to catch the teenagers at the box-office—but the character studies are strong and consistent and the general picture of Hollywood and its neuroses is devastating. In that atmosphere of sycophancy, suspicion, and perennial hypertension it is not surprising that few good films are made. It is amazing that films are made at all.

Brickbat

I HAVE been hauled over the coals by an Auckland correspondent for describing the plot of *Bwana Devil* as footling and fatuous. "Stickler" writes: "It is possible the idea originated from the book *The Manasters of Tsavo* . . . where (on page 20) the author writes: 'Two lions, in December, 1898, succeeded in bringing the railway works to a complete standstill for three weeks.' This is a brickbat right on the bull's eye. What I should have said was that the film treatment was footling, etc. Those who saw the film would probably concede that."

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by SIR J. HUNT

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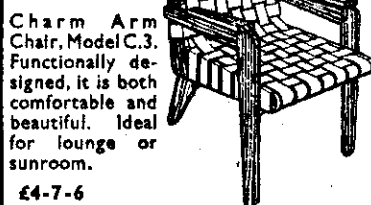
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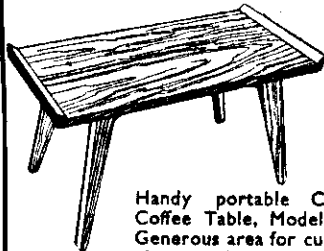
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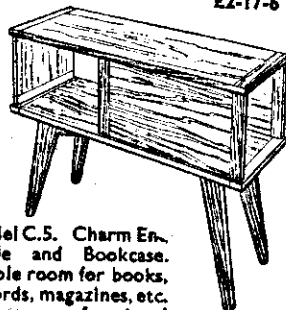
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