

THIS WEEK'S SIGNED ARTICLE.

Should Films Make You Think? Asks Gordon Mirams

JUST over forty years ago—on April 23, 1896—the career of the motion picture on the theatre screen began. A day or so ago I saw a preview of "Things to Come," the United Artists' picture written by H. G.

Wells and produced by Alexander Korda; and I believe that there could be no finer example of the screen's amazing progress during those forty years than this achievement from a British film studio, for it proves conclusively that nothing within the imagination of man is now impossible of realistic depiction on the screen.

And the mere fact that a writer who is confessedly a publicity man is allowed the privilege of saying that under his own name in the leading article of a journal like the "Radio Record" is in itself a rather striking testimony to the progress of the screen from being the most despised offspring of the entertainment industry to its most prosperous and vigorous son.

Even if I were not specially interested in "Things to Come" I honestly believe that I should still class it as the most astounding picture yet made. Some people may see in this statement the excuse for a glow of British pride.

Hitherto, while England has produced at least as many fine actors and actresses as America, on the technical side there has always been a lag.

After "Things to Come" that can certainly no longer be said. But here it is only fair to point out that Ned Mann, the craftsman mainly responsible for these technical miracles, is an American. Georges Perinal, the cameraman, is French; William Cameron Menzies, the director, hails from Connecticut; and Korda, the producer, is Hungarian. Which rather seems to make "Things to Come" a triumph for internationalism; and that, of course, is exactly as it should be with a film written by such a great internationalist as Wells about a subject of such international importance as the future of the world.

AOTSACTS

THE use of wireless sets in Otago schools is increasing.

MORE than 40 girls have made their debut at Christchurch dances during the past fortnight.

A LOCAL theatre company has appointed a special publicity manager in Dunedin, the first there.

NEW song from a Dunedin B station:—"The Harp That Once Through Tara's Walls."

"PASSPORT TO HELL," a book by Robin Hyde just published, is a story of John Douglas Stark, of Auckland, daring outlaw of the N.Z.E.F.

TUTANKHAMEN'S Cottage, the doll's house, the little castle, and Titanic's Palace, were some of the names given to Titania's Palace by Dunedin people.

DUNEDIN astronomer says world events can be foretold by a study of stars. Since 1900 there have been four minimum activity periods, during each of which there has been a war.

Introducing . . .



GORDON MIRAMS, M.A., Dip.Journ., director of publicity for the J. C. Williamson Corporation. Mr. Mirams, who was educated at Christ's College, was for a number of years editor of the film section of the "Christchurch Sun." He is considered something of an authority on films, and has contributed numerous articles to Australian and New Zealand papers.

much a drama of men and women as of all mankind. Wells himself has said that "Things to Come" is intended as entertainment rather than prophetic warning. Definitions of what constitutes entertainment vary; but if you call it being "entertained" to be interested and excited unremittingly for over an hour and a half, and to be made to think furiously then and thereafter on issues of such paramount present-day importance as peace and war, and war's aftermath, then "Things to Come" is certainly entertaining.

It is doubtful if anyone could sit unmoved through those opening scenes of Christmas, 1940 in Everytown (which looks suspiciously like London, and is obviously meant to), when ordinary men and women learn that the "next war," of which they have heard so much but have never bothered to prevent, has at last begun—and, as one would expect, without any "formal declaration." The sky above the white cliffs of Dover is black with enemy planes which pass in apparently endless formation toward their target. On several other aspects of the Wellsian imagination

there will probably be much healthy controversy; but at this point it must become obvious that to such form of aerial attack there could be no adequate defence—only retaliation.

Despite preparations, anti-aircraft barrage, and intercepting planes, some of the attackers must slip through to rain explosives and gas on the helpless men, women and children of Everytown (wherever it may happen to be).

No defence, only retaliation—and for years war rages throughout the world, becoming ever more primitive and ruthless—a war of exhaustion, followed by the scourges of famine and pestilence. Then, in the chaos that was Civilisation, petty war lords arise (direct descendants, apparently, in Mr. Wells's prophetic imagination, of our present-day dictators). Might is right: there is unceasing inter-tribal war: culture disappears; education ceases; scientific progress is impossible because the very resources of science have been destroyed.

But then from the skies comes a new race of air-men—the men of brains and culture who have survived the deluge of bloodshed, and in their hiding.

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Next week's signed article has been written by Robin Hyde. It concerns Walter D'Arcy Cresswell, the "poet of Castor Bay."

AOTSACTS

ONE Dunedin milk bar reports winter consumption of milk equal to that of last summer.

DUNEDIN'S quota to Titania's Palace totalled over £900, the city being second to Christchurch for large attendances.

SEVERAL big Auckland firms, anticipating advertising on the air being permitted shortly, have actually booked time on the air.

GOING up to a blue-jacket on a Devonport ferry last week, a child said to his parents: "Oh, look, mummy, here's a Popeye."

LISTENING to a broadcast, when "Hey diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow jumped over the moon," came on, a little chap said to his father, "Is that what makes the milky way, dad?"

A POLICE doctor in a Dunedin case, when cross-examined, admitted that he had acted for the police and taken down a man's statement.