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to the Twenty-Sixth Annual

NEW MASSES BALL

Friday Evening, December 3

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from Army Medical Department reports, university studies, clinical histories, and similar sources. The most important question, of course, the book does not answer: namely, what to do about it. War is already in the world, and the time has passed when an individual can salve his conscience by merely being "agin it." It must be fought, isolated, and crushed. But this book makes an excellent handbook of information for anyone who wants to know exactly what the conditions of modern warfare are.

W. S.

SALUTE TO YESTERDAY, by Gene Fowler. Random House. \$2.50.

In *Salute to Yesterday* Gene Fowler has written a novel which for its exuberant frame of reference, diabolical wit, and serious implication—the last of which he has not thoroughly realized—is not easily surpassed. But if Fowler is romantic and if his characters lean a little to the superb, he still remains in the mainstream of a long and generous tradition. Any tremendous undertaking, in perspective, tends to assume a mythical characteristic. And the occupation of the Far West was no small task. Little wonder, then, that the representation of that undertaking becomes, creatively, Paul Bunyanesque.

In this representation, however, the interplay of social forces escapes Fowler. The winning of the Old West was no mere matter of Indian versus covered wagon—with scouts, cavalry, brothels, and Indian agents thrown in for good measure. Nor were later days, when that conquest was being consolidated, solely a struggle between a past which was perfect and a present peopled by capitalists and their henchmen alone. In spite of these shortcomings, Fowler has written a good book replete with hilarious incident and biting comment.

N. M.

THE ABOLITION OF POVERTY, by James Ford and Katherine Morrow Ford. The Macmillan Co. \$2.50.

The principal expressions of poverty are here described in conscientious detail, and the reader will find interesting information in chapters on housing and slums, unemployment, floods, famines, accident and health hazards—and heredity. On this last subject the authors are extremely weak. In the light of the recent treatment of sixty-two girls in Kansas, it is dreadful to encounter an open advocacy of sterilization for so-called "higher-grade defectives." Not one word in the whole book about labor's own struggles to get at the problem of poverty; merely a patronizing suggestion that "laborers to be efficient must work with a will," must show "a coöperative attitude," get better "training" in "reasoning capacity judgment, and character." One is reminded of an equally solemn treatise on *The Philosophy of Poverty* in rebuttal of which Marx wrote *The Poverty of Philosophy*.

H. W.



Recently Recommended Books

- The Chute*, by Albert Halper. Viking. \$2.50.
The Writer in a Changing World, edited by Henry Hart. Equinox. \$2.
I Met a Man, by Michael Blankfort, Bobbs-Merrill. \$2.
Socialized Medicine in the Soviet Union, by Henry E. Sigerist. Norton. \$3.50.
The Romance of Russian Medicine, by Michael L. Ravitch. Liveright. \$3.
Russian Medicine, by W. Horsley Gantt. Harper. \$2.50.
Let Freedom Ring, by Arthur Garfield Hays. Live-right. \$2.50.
LaGuardia, by Jay Franklin. Modern Age. 35c.
Rehearsal in Oviedo, by Joseph Peyré. Knight. \$2.
To Have and Have Not, by Ernest Hemingway. Scribner's. \$2.50.
The Labor Spy Racket, by Leo Huberman. Modern Age. \$35c.
Famine, by Liam O'Flaherty. Random House. \$2.50.
Reconstruction: The Battle for Democracy, by James S. Allen. International. \$1.25.

SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

"Stand-In" and other films—The art of the camera—Concert highlights

IF it's satire you're after, if you like it piping hot and on the acrid side, then *Stand-In* (United Artists) is not your dish. Here, in the manner of Mrs. Wiggs scolding her pretties, Walter Wanger presents a picture of the motion-picture industry sufficiently exaggerated and off the mark to spare the feelings of all parties concerned, as, for instance, witness director Koslofsky, played by Alan Mowbray, who in his "great Rooshian masterpiece 'From Cradle to Grave'" used a real cradle and a real grave, and now demands real edelweiss for the St. Moritz set even if getting it will hold up production two months! His characterization is undeniably droll, but exactly whose ears is it intended to redden? Koslofskys don't exist any more, if ever they did, and von Sternberg, most fabulous of Hollywood's spenders hasn't directed a film for ten years. The other roles have been handled in much the same fashion. Though it is interesting to notice that even within the framework of so-called satire, uncompassed and weakened as it is, Wanger has thrown himself a lovely autobiographical bouquet in the role of Quintain, the producer, the only big shot on the lot who knows his stuff. An unconscious gesture perhaps, but providential.

To repeat, if you expected to find Hollywood with its hair down in *Stand-In*, call again in the distant future.

But if you like to sit in a soft plushy seat and meet a lot of your old friends like *Mr. Deeds Comes to Town* and *A Star Is Born*, looking, it's true, somewhat shopworn but still good for a faint tingle of warmth, that's another matter. If you can retain composure while over your head float the gentle ghosts of a thousand "timid souls" who discover "umph" in the last reel and make the despairing ingenue gasp with the fervor of that long-in-coming-but-oh-so-virile-when-it-arrived kiss, that again is another matter. This reviewer likes old friends even when they repeat themselves, and ghosts are the realities of his existence. He therefore found *Stand-In* a fairly entertaining experience.

Gene Towne and Graham Baker, that well-known team of gagsters, in their synthetic but glittery way, have managed to furnish Clarence B. Kelland's *Satevepost* story with lively lines and glib nuances. The manner in which these gentlemen work their wonders to perform is worthy of more analysis than this review permits. Undoubtedly facile and clever men, everything they touch shrivels up with lack of belief. Partly because of the reputation their capers have given them, partly because of their self-publicized lack of interest in anything but "the old magoozalum," to quote Mr. Baker, it is next to impossible to see anything but complete cynicism in their approach. And their work substantiates this feeling. You experienced this com-

plete lack of sincerity in *You Only Live Once*, which was saved for serious consideration only by the drive and intense convictions of Fritz Lang and the work of the cast. And you get the same thing in *Stand-In* but to a greater degree.

In *Stand-In* a young unknissed, mathematical wizard, Atterbury Dodd (played by Leslie Howard), leaves for the coast to save Colossal Pictures from the clutches of a certain Mr. Nassau. Nassau (C. Henry Gordon) specializes in ruining independent movie companies by conspiratorial methods, and then buying them back for his home outfit at a tithe of their true value. Each time a studio falls by the wayside, its crew is out in the street. Jobs are scarce. Soon, slow starvation!

Mr. Nassau almost has his nefarious way. Everything depends on Colossal's last film, "*Satan and Sin*." If it's a dud, they're all lost. A sneak preview reveals the audience's preference for dead fish, if they must choose—but was it absolutely necessary? To prevent Mr. Nassau from taking possession, Atterbury closes the studio gates, convinces his men of the dignity of labor, and prevails upon director Quintain (Humphrey Bogart) to make a gorilla the star of the film. Success is assured and the previously mentioned "umph," umphs.

Now, this is the point. Taken by themselves, Atterbury's words on the significance of workers' lives in the scheme of things are sufficiently gratifying for one to leap out of his seat and split the frigid atmosphere of a Radio Music Hall first night. But within the context of *Stand-In* they ring false. It's the Towne and Baker boys again. The old tongue in the cheek. "Now we'll get this kid, top efficiency man in a Wall Street holding-company to pull a sit-down strike himself. You get it. What a twist! We'll even dignify the

working class if it'll work." It's all very unfortunate because Towne and Baker have a faculty for copping off any number of spontaneously amusing lines, wherever one cops them off, and we should be grateful. But the price they exact for them is much too high. One can never forget that *Mr. Deeds*, with all its moving sincerity, managed to be entertaining also.

ROBERT STEBBINS.

FRED ASTAIRE's first starring film is *A Damsel in Distress* (R.K.O.-Radio). He is ably assisted by George Burns and Gracie Allen who make perfect stooges for Mr. Astaire's straight playing. There isn't much of a story as usual, but the dancing numbers are so well performed by Fred Astaire, and George and Gracie, that it doesn't matter. Mr. Astaire's "drum dance" is the outstanding thing in the film.

I wish it were possible to say that *Ebb Tide* (Paramount) was at least entertaining, or even that the technicolor was pleasant. But it is neither; and even Francis Farmer's presence doesn't help the film any. The actors are all first-rate, but their acting isn't. Oscar Homolka, who was last seen in *The Woman Alone*, Lloyd Nolan, Barry Fitzgerald, and Ray Milland make up the rest of the principals. The story is supposed to have been based on a tale by Robert Louis Stevenson, but it is a very free adaptation.

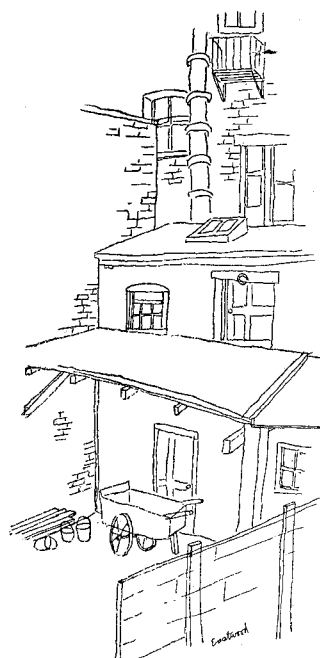
Merry-Go-Round of 1938 is merely an enlarged vaudeville show with bad songs and some occasional comedy by Bert Lahr, Jimmy Savo, Billy House, and Mischa Auer.

PETER ELLIS.

THE FINE ARTS

THE critical battle of a decade ago over art for art's sake, non-communication and non-intelligibility today centers in the relation of the document to the work of art. With real events looming larger than any imagined happenings, documentary films and still photographs, reportage and the like have taken the place once held by the grand invention. Over this issue the battle rages, with what fury can be stolen from the actual battles of the world. Yet, in effect, it is an unreal battle, since the division between art and document is fictitious; for in the hands of workers with creative vision the document possesses the added plus of aesthetic significance, while above the work of art possesses besides form the factual content of the document. The films *Heart of Spain* and *Baltic Deputy* prove the point.

In the fine arts, the falsity of the proposition that a document is not art is demonstrated in the exhibition of photographs of "Changing New York" by Berenice Abbott, current at the Museum of the City of New



Eastwood