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the best training available (army, navy, Marine Corps flying schools), he will graduate with only two hundred-odd hours of solo time to his credit. The balance must be built up either by paying for it (a staggering sum of money) or spending some years on active duty with these military units. And preference for airline jobs is naturally given to graduates of the military services.

The many other jobs Mr. Walker lists, ground and air personnel, dispatchers, radio men, stewards and stewardesses, mechanics on fields and in factories, technicians, ticket sellers, etc., are relatively easier to find; but the wide employment his book contends is imminent is naturally contingent upon an enormous expansion of the industry that is not yet apparent, despite the announced intention of the government to bring it about.

So the best way to get into aviation remains: to be a Christian "Aryan" of "excellent character" and moneyed background, and bend every effort to enter the military branches of American aviation.

ALVAH BESSIE.

## Fictionized Biography

A MAN NAMED GRANT, by Helen Todd. Houghton, Mifflin Co. \$3.50.

THIS fictionized biography of Grant is as shallow as it is long (594 pp.). The fiction element consists mainly in the creation of conversation between "Ulyss," as the author calls him throughout the book, and his family, fellow officers, or political acquaintances. One concludes that Grant never said anything worth repeating. There is special emphasis on tender domestic scenes which make painful reading because the Grant children talk so much like the Bobbsey Twins. We are also inducted into Grant's thoughts and feelings on any important occasions when he did not express them aloud. For example, we now know what he was thinking as he stood in a polling booth, marking his ballot for the 1868 elections, but we are apt not to care. He never comes alive, for all the intimate details which somehow reveal so little.

To understand the man we need to understand the period which produced him, and such understanding is almost totally lacking here. Although Jay Cooke, Jay Gould, and Jim Fisk are mentioned, there is no other indication that this was the age of the Robber Barons. Black Friday remains as incomprehensible to the reader as it evidently was to Grant. The explanation of the depression which engulfed the country at the beginning of Grant's second term reads like something Hoover might have said about 1929.

The first section of the book, which has to do with the battles of the Civil War, is more successful, in much the same way that a badly directed period picture is sometimes more interesting than an equally dull contemporary film. At least there are horses and costumes. The book has something else in common with certain Civil War films: its slanderous misrepresentation of the Negro people.

GALE THORNE.

## Vast Abstractions

THE MAN COMING TOWARD YOU, by Oscar Williams. Oxford University Press. \$2.

MR. WILLIAMS' *Man Coming toward You* is not the man you'd expect or especially hope for. Instead of a poet attempting to bring order and meaning into a chaotic world, we greet merely the chaos and go home again. The author sees and hears the same things we do: hunger, corruption, war, headlines, etc. But he sees them in huge blocks, devoid of any flesh-and-blood human being, so that the poems are simply a process of laying hollow bricks. We find only vast abstractions of man, myth, space, immensity, the everywhere, the all-around, etc.

This poet bends his energies toward the achievement of idea and feeling, not through a logical process of thought but through the unexpected conjunction of startling images. The method is valid. Unfortunately, in Mr. Williams' poems, one cannot help feeling a constant fakeness about the method, a sort of deliberate constructed place-finding for spectacular images.

Although there is no really satisfying poem in the book, occasionally a real lyrical cry rings out, something incredibly lost in the welter of pretensions. In "I remember the block party," there stands out:

How the boys romped and all the dear girls sang,  
And flowers drowsed upon the hair and wind:  
Ah, musical were jargon and harangue  
And mandolins and candy of the mind!

Intellectually, Mr. Williams' understanding of the world amounts to this: "Man already has reached an airpocket in the legend of the mind...."

Beware the poet who comes bearing vast abstractions.

RAPHAEL HAYES.

## Sights & Sounds

### "Foreign Correspondent"

Exciting war propaganda directed by  
The Great Hitchcock.

THIS film is the end-result of a long process. Walter Wanger paid several thousand good dollars for the rights to Vincent Sheean's *Personal History*, eventually ditched it. Subsequently there are alleged to have been at least three independent film stories written, thrown away. Finally, Charles Bennett, Joan Harrison, James Hilton, and Robert Benchley combined with the sometime great director Alfred Hitchcock to produce *Foreign Correspondent*. It opens with a sentimental dedication to "those recording angels who stand among the dead and dying" (the

correspondents) and ends with Joel McCrea standing in the BBC station, urging America to ring itself with steel as the bombs drop on London and the soundtrack blasts forth "The Star-Spangled Banner."

In between there is everything but the kitchen sink. Much of what there is is indisputably exciting, for Hitchcock can direct. The literally smashing climax of the film comes when a transatlantic flying boat is shot down by Nazi anti-aircraft guns in mid-ocean. It's terrific. Effective use is made, early in the film, of the interior of an old Dutch windmill, where the newshawk, hot after an assassin of one of Europe's great, almost catches him. Here Hitchcock recreates the mood of danger and suspense he has so brilliantly shown us many times before. He makes wonderful use of inanimate objects, such as machinery, and innocuous sound effects, such as the creaking of the old mill and the whistling of the wind.

But not all the skillful technique of Mr. Hitchcock nor the Wanger bankroll can disguise the fact that *Foreign Correspondent* is just another in the series of pro-war, anti-democratic films. Today, when a people's peace movement is rising in America, Mr. Hitchcock does his bit for British imperialism by painting a picture of the British peace movement as a toy in the hands of a Nazi agent. Disregarding the patent fact that national betrayal has been accomplished in Europe by the real fifth columns of the upper classes, in governments and out, he points a warning finger in exactly the wrong direction. The men of Munich who brought about the sequence of events and the balance of military force which have resulted in today's London catastrophe have not been screened here; nor is there a hint of international treachery by international business men. Instead there is slander for the peace-loving people and a gross distortion of reality. And even real foreign correspondents will smirk at Wanger's idea of how they get their jobs and how they perform them.

There is one performance in the film, and it cannot be overpraised. That is the performance of Albert Basserman, German refugee actor, as the Dutch statesman, Van Meer. Mr. Basserman is a great actor and he steals the entire picture from the battery of stars: McCrea, Laraine Day, Benchley, Marshall, George Sanders, Eduardo Ciannelli, E. E. Clive.

#### "OUR TOWN"

Somehow or other we missed the film version of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* when it was in its first run. Now it is in the neighborhood theaters, and it will give you a pleasant hour and a half if you are not allergic to an overdose of sentimentalism. For Wilder had very little to say about smalltown life in New England in the stage version, and Sam Wood's direction of the film loses a good deal of what he *did* have to say.

On the stage the action was projected unrealistically, almost without props. It was

curiously effective because what was there was delivered by a cast of very fine performers who had nothing to work with in the way of accessories but their own bodies. The trick photography that has been utilized in the film somehow destroys the illusion.

Martha Scott, who played in the original production, reveals in the film that her place is in Hollywood. She is an enormously talented young actress, with an almost painfully sensitive face and real passion in her. Frank Craven is less effective as the narrator here than he was on Broadway; something of his ingratiating presence was lost in the transfer to the celluloid. Fay Bainter and William Holden should be mentioned for sincere and intelligent performances as mother and son, Philip Wood for a moving bit as the drunken organist.

It is a curious thing how an intelligent writer like Wilder, who is able to catch the echo of homely speech, can for moments give you the semblance of human life and death, but none of its substance. The fabric of his story is very thin, no matter how much you may temporarily admire the warp and woof. It is simply the difference between a writer and an artist.

#### "FLOWING GOLD"

Julie, I mean John Garfield, is on the run again in Warner Bros.' adaptation of Rex Beach's action story of the oil fields, *Flowing Gold*. That boy can't seem to keep out of trouble. This time he has killed a company stooge in self-defense and is on the lam. As tough a nut as ever came out of the Bronx, or is it Brooklyn, John works slinging pipe, earns the friendship of heart-of-gold Pat O'Brien, and wins the heart of his Group Theater colleague, Frances Farmer.

Fanny looks wonderful in riding pants; she even looks wonderful when she falls, first belly-first, then the reverse, into a mud puddle. I'd say that in this picture Miss Farmer has turned in about as good a job as she has ever done on celluloid. For somehow she cannot make the most of her great beauty and her indisputable talent on the screen. You feel that at any moment she is about to yell, "For Pete's sake, take that damned camera away!"

This is frankly an action picture, and there is a good deal of interest in the spectacular business of watching men grub for oil, watching the derricks at work, the oil blow-off, the inevitable fire and explosion. The Law catches up with our hardboiled friend Garfield, but he has Miss Farmer for moral support. He's been typed so many times now, and he's learned so many Hollywood tricks (and unlearned so much that he learned with the Group) that he'd better watch out or he's likely to turn into a Charles Bickford.

For Hollywood, all oil promoters are swell guys whose workers just love them (and get rich when the oil comes in).

But I say, see this one for the derricks. They're terrific.

ALVAH BESSIE.

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