

each of the characters. For although the Finns are fanatical nationalists, they are equally fanatical individualists. And no matter how fiercely the flame rages, it never dispels the veil-like mask of mysticism. Ellen's pre-sentiments and visions are as real as Markku's ambition to manage not only his family but destiny. Ristina's resignation, as she accepts a lifetime of expiation, is as overwhelming as Joska's insane fury. No matter how brutal the epic passages, they do not bruise the delicacy of the lyric ones.

There is only one suggestion. The average American starting in on Kenneth C. Kaufman's excellent translation may—and probably will—be confused as to chronology and geography as a Finn might be if he tackled "Gone with the Wind" without being given a single date or a definite locality or an idea as to what all the fighting was about anyhow. For it is not until the reader has reached the last page of "Sun and Storm" that he discovers a translator's note giving the few essential facts. It might be well, in subsequent editions, if this note were placed—or, at least, its existence indicated—at the front of the book.

Glamour Girl of the Eighties

MAUD. Edited and arranged for publication by Richard Lee Strout. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1939. 593 pp. \$3.50.

Reviewed by AMY LOVEMAN

THIS is the diary of a minx if there ever was one. It is the journal, or rather succession of journals, kept from April, 1881, to May, 1895, by Isabel Maud Rittenhouse of Cairo, Illinois, who counted her beaux by the dozen, kept the "courtin'" ones and "marryin'" ones both on the string, generally tried to reform them, and confided to her journal, in the romantic fashion of youth, the attentions of her admirers, their protestations of affection for her and her own candid reflections upon them, the sundry pursuits and emotions that filled her days, and the triumphs and disappointments that came upon her. Isabel Maud, or Maud as she was known to her intimates, made some reputation for herself as a painter (she worked from the nude when that still caused a whispering

and a rustling in the parlors of her Middle-Western town) and as an actress whose charms on the amateur stage were sung by the local press and adored by her suitors. She was sweetly serious with her lovers about Temperance and startled herself by carrying off a prize for a novel. She went to parties galore, danced and coquetted, and brought despair on hearts of all ages. At twenty-nine we leave her engaged to a most admirable young physician after a courtship which has been interrupted by an engagement to another man, still, as at the moment, when she made her first entries in her diary, in a dither of excitement over love, and romance, and popularity.

The remarkable thing about Maud is that, despite evidence of real abilities (she had often been told that her mind was a powerful one), she seems to have matured very little in intellect or emotion during the fourteen years in which she kept her diary. In 1895 she is recording the same girlish raptures over her lover, the same flirtations (coquetries her day would undoubtedly have called them), the same enjoyment of the same kind of parties, the same romantic thrills as she did in 1881. Perhaps because her experience was all of a pattern, it did not ripen her. At any rate her journal is very much of a piece. It is far too long, and would have profited enormously by rigorous editing and ruthless cutting. It contained the possibility of an outstanding book, for its material is fresh, lively, and authentic. But it lost its chance at notable distinction by failure to discard a vast mass of repetitive incident and to strip the important of clogging detail.

Nevertheless "Maud" will delight those in the long line of readers who have rejoiced in the annals of a young lady's entrance into the world from the days of Evelina on. And the book is excellent Americana. From it emerges a picture of that period, so near in time, so distant in manners, when sighing swains read poetry to their lady loves or listened to their singing, when only after a long acquaintance they ventured to call a girl by her first name, when they asked the permission of her hand in marriage of her parents, and when propriety demanded the refusal of jewels as presents but approved the gift of a plush-framed thermometer. It is an engaging portrayal of the life of a well brought up young woman in mid-West America in the eighties and nineties of the last century. Even at this late date Maud has the power of charming.

The International Brigade

MEN IN BATTLE. By Alvah C. Bessie. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1939. 354 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by JAMES BENÉT

THE story of the Spanish War of 1936-39 has been told often, but it has rarely been told well. So much has been said about its effect on the world's politics, and so many glittering analyses of why and what and who it was have been made, that people hardly can remember that there was for three years a terrible, bloody war. Alvah Bessie, who went to Spain as an International volunteer early in 1938, has told the story of the part of the war he saw, the two big actions of that year, the retreat to the sea and the offensive of the Ebro River, as the Lincoln battalion generally, and he personally, experienced them. And the chief thing about his book, anyone who was there will tell you, is that it is truthful.

When Bessie joined the brigade, after a short training period, he was shocked at the appearance of the already world-famous Lincoln Battalion. There were a hundred filthy, lousy, ragged, bearded, and exhausted men, lolling in ditches and talking, in foul

language, what was clearly treason. They said they wouldn't go back into action, that they were going to desert. When the time came they went back and fought like the crack troops they were, so brilliantly and bravely that military observers marveled. Yet, "who ever heard of the Fifteenth Brigade doing anything right," they used to say. That was the characteristic of the American volunteers, and for anyone who wishes to study such a curious phenomenon Bessie has written an excellent book. It is worth repeating that every word he has written is true.



Pinchos Horn
Alvah C. Bessie

In his determination not to exaggerate or distort, Bessie has discarded most of the literary conventions that give a narrative pace and climax. The book, as one reads it at first, seems flat, as if he should have developed and explained the incidents that he clearly and briefly describes, perhaps built a little more of a "story" out of the characters there. But the final result of his method is to let the ugly broken bones of history stick up in all their horror through the level surface of his description.

James Benét spent over a year with the Loyalists in Spain.

BOOK PREVIEW*

The Vampire Art

BY

MARGARET FARRAND THORP



From the RKO production "Of Human Bondage."

WHEN Adolf Zukor had the notion of raising the motion picture's standing by presenting films of "Famous Players in Famous Plays," importing the four-reel "Queen Elizabeth" made by Sarah Bernhardt, and starring James K. Hackett, in "The Prisoner of Zenda," he started a fear which is still rampant, the fear that the movies are a vampire art battenning on the drama and the novel, on music and the dance, draining away their artists and their audiences, leaving them mere crumbling shells. So cheap, say the fearful, and so readily accessible are the young art's palaces, that anyone may contract the vicious habit of movie attendance and awake one day to find his taste for true theater gone. More ominous still is the foreboding that young people who spend their time at the pictures will gradually cease to read. Soon, it is predicted, they will think that reading requires too great an effort; they will prefer to absorb their necessary ration of romance, adventure, and instruction through the painless medium of the screen. The evenings which used to be devoted to curling up with a good book will now be spent in the foul air of the local Alhambra or Garden.

In the early days of antagonism to the movies as the great enemy of reading the case for the book was always presented on moral grounds. Books are ennobling; movies debased. Books instruct; movies present children with idle and vicious ideas. Nickelodeons were places from which the young needed to be saved, like saloons and poolrooms.

Then the movies began to mount the ladder of prestige. As they screened important novels and successful plays they began to take on the respecta-

bility of the originals. Teachers and parents were reluctantly impressed, but immediately they developed a new fear: might not the child who had seen a classic on the screen think that he knew all about it? Might he not feel it quite unnecessary to read the book?

That fear, too, is melting, melting because it is becoming perfectly obvious that the more children go to the movies the more they want to read books. The quickest way of interesting your pupil in a biography or a history or a novel seems to be to connect it with some picture he has recently seen or is about to see.

For a long while the teachers were wary of accepting their own evidence—it looked too easily pleasant to be true, but they are being borne down by a mass of steadily accumulating facts. A high school teacher in Memphis, for instance, has it on grateful record that Ronald Colman in "If I Were King" set her seniors to reading and learning by heart the ballads of François Villon. New Orleans school children were plunged into an orgy of research on local history by the opening of "The Buccaneer." A Superior, Wisconsin, high school had its whole sophomore class reading and re-reading "A Tale of Two Cities" before the picture came to town, selecting the scenes they thought would be filmed and discussing the changes it would be necessary to make in putting them on the screen. The Cleveland Public Library reports that when "David Copperfield" was about to appear on the local screen the demand for the book was so great that they bought 132 new copies. That brought their total up to 550 and before, during, and after the run of the film the shelves were bare. Cleveland's 51 copies of "Les Misérables" had been growing dusty, but when the film came to the city they went into steady cir-

ulation. The same thing happened with the 40 copies of "The Count of Monte Cristo," the 83 of Somerset Maugham's "Of Human Bondage." The story repeats itself for book after book and city after city. One cites Cleveland only because the librarians there have been pioneers in taking the movie into partnership and because they are zealous and interested in compiling figures.

And the library is not by any means the whole measure of the movies' power. Films can make people not only read books but actually buy them. Look over the book counter at Woolworth's or in any drugstore. There beside Popeye and Mickey Mouse and Snow White are editions of "Tom Sawyer," "The Prince and the Pauper," "Treasure Island," "Kidnapped," "Captains Courageous," with new "classics" added as they are screened. Publishers of both high- and low-priced editions find it good business to learn what standard books are being filmed and to issue reprints, illustrated more often than not with stills from the picture. Publishers of higher-priced editions engage in the same practice. Random House prepared a special "Romeo and Juliet" with comments by Norma Shearer ("Juliet") and Professor William Strunk, academic adviser in the production of the film. Dodd, Mead published a film-illustrated edition of Shaw's "Pygmalion." While "The Life of Emile Zola" was in the theaters Doubleday, Doran reissued Matthew Josephson's "Zola and His Times," the Three Suns Press got out a special edition of "Nana," and Consolidated Book Publishers issued two editions of "Nana," one a replica of the original Paris first.

Another "first" was issued by Twentieth Century-Fox when they produced "Jesse James," a replica of the first dime novel in the famous series. The only variant was the back cover, which

*The following article will constitute part of a chapter of "America at the Movies," by Margaret Farrand Thorp, shortly to be published by the Yale University Press.