

frailty, you are hard ones,' Stephen broke in. 'Who is here to cry. My love has made me effeminate? You will not bestow any mercy on the unfortunate, the unloved. Only a dead sailor can move us!'"

Into this rarified atmosphere comes Alexander's nineteen-year-old daughter, Adele, a stranger in their midst. Judging them by the rules of the outside world, she can only look on her father's household as people whom life has passed by. Her erratic father is a "mystery best not to be probed." But unwittingly Adele falls in love with Paul, thereby altering the destinies of this odd menage.

No Roman palace was ever built to give fuller rein to its depraved emperor's capacity for nonsense and mischief, for destruction and confusion. Yet visitors reluctantly had to admit that despite its affected elegance Newstead provoked memories of school-day studies, engravings of those temples of Zeus and Paestum. Some could even see Alexander and his classical symbols as subject for a painting to be entitled "Edward Gibbon Seated in the Ruins of the Forum." Of Senator Orville, himself, we find ourselves asking whether he is a poseur or genius, charlatan or benevolent patron of the arts.

"Among us the women never had a chance," says Alexander to his minion, Paul. This remark rather sums up the entire subtle commentary of the book. Certainly it throws light on that "male alliance" at Newstead which Norma senses but is too practical and unimaginative to recognize as relevant to the design of their lives. It is not until it is much too late that she discovers her mistake.

It is here we see how really hard Mr. Kelly has been on the women in his tale. Norma and Adele are made out to be dull if not stupid, their only real function a decorative one; they are seldom expected to know one poet or scholar from another. Mr. Kelly is exploring an enervated male world, a region where homosexuality is, for the most part, sublimated. Perversions, with the exception of an occasional nocturnal expedition to a secret revel or orgy, are confined to refined tastes in rococo paintings, exotic blooms, Renaissance vases, Dresden shepherdesses.

Still, we have only to turn to Alexander's own credo: "I am of another race that sings in its private anguish. I do not understand the laws. I am utterly lacking in the moral sense.—There is no beauty without a touch of strangeness in it—," to understand that Mr. Kelly may intend us to have fun, but that all the antics in his ironic comedy are far from mad or silly, after all.

Celluloid Moguls

THE DREAM MERCHANTS. By Harold Robbins. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 496 pp. \$3.50.

By BUDD SCHULBERG

IN TERMS of chronology, geography, and the number of its printed pages, "The Dream Merchants" is by far the most ambitious novel ever to be fashioned around the American motion-picture industry.

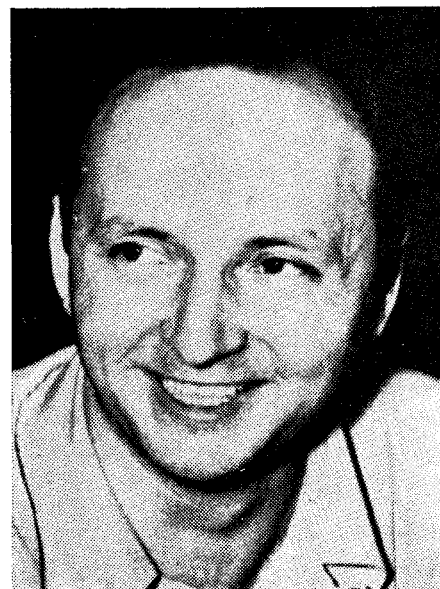
Like Cedric Belfrage's "The Promised Land," that informed but inorganic fictionalized history of Hollywood, Harold Robbins's second novel doesn't limit itself to any single character or phase of film culture but seeks its unity in the entire sweep of motion-picture development from the independent nickelodeon days of 1908 to the Wall Street-dominated, film-factory, giant-theatre-chain days of 1938.

Robbins has obviously researched his subject thoroughly—if occasionally with references slightly askew—and the pattern of his fiction closely parallels that of film history itself. For his principal characters the author has chosen a credible pair: Peter Kessler, the timid, gentle, hardware-store owner from Rochester who finds himself a film pioneer without quite knowing why or how, and his go-getting young partner, Johnny Edge, the boy "with movie making in his blood," who represents the aggressive, inventive, gambling element that hustled the flickers out of the shoe stores and the penny-arcades and into the resplendent movie palaces of the Twenties and Thirties.

The struggle of these partners, in the early days against the stand-pat policies and restrictive opposition of the Motion Picture Combine (as the author calls the Patents Company), in later days against the New York investors who once more threaten their independence, is in its essence a challenging, revealing story of American growth. Whatever his shortcomings, Robbins is to be commended for venturing into this unlit corner of industrial pioneering.

In so far as Kessler, Johnny Edge, the Greek theatre man, Pappas; the old film-maker, William Borden, and a number of others are quickly recognizable as actual figures in flimsy disguise, readers within "the industry"—as Hollywood likes to refer to itself—may take this book to their hearts as an affectionate inside job and a dignified answer to those callow novelists who dare to suggest that Hollywood is less than it might be.

Paradoxically, its verisimilitude is a source of weakness as well as



—Tec.

Harold Robbins—"an unlit corner of industrial pioneering."

strength, for while the upward climb of immigrant shopkeepers to positions of power in the industry of mass entertainment makes colorful history and entertaining reading, Mr. Robbins never quite succeeds in re-creating them as vital fictional characters. With the partial exception of Johnny Edge, these dream merchants are seen from the outside and characterized in such broad strokes as to qualify as types rather than individuals. Since they are drawn from actuality, they are true types and therefore help to create the flavor of authenticity that assures this book of a place above the Hollywood pot-boilers. Yet—to underline our paradox—the characters who are most "true to life" are the least life-like, an esthetic irony Henry James among others has called to our attention. It is almost as if the author were to say of Peter Kessler, for instance, "He's a conservative, small-town, family-loving, Jewish immigrant who—oh well, you know, he's really—," and then, catching himself, hurries on to the major steps in —'s career without buckling down to the novelist's job of developing a three-dimensional Peter Kessler for those who have never known a film mogul.

The drama inherent in the efforts of embattled independents bucking the Combine with bootleg product might have been presented more boldly while still remaining within the confines of historical accuracy. Perhaps in an effort to avoid melodrama, Robbins has failed to suggest the real violence of the clash.

That Robbins has put in ten years with the business office of a major film corporation seems to explain why
(Continued on page 27)

The War. Another of America's wartime leaders has published his story of World War II. "Global Mission" comes from no less a figure than H. H. Arnold, who was Commanding General of the Army Air Forces and a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. As our reviewer points out below, Arnold was always known as "Hap," and this gives a key to his personality, which was effervescent, earthy, and sometimes even downright undiplomatic—qualities which are well mirrored in his book of reminiscences. "Global Mission" deals primarily with our war against the Axis, but it is concerned also with Arnold's own war with the Army and Navy to secure a powerful Air Force. . . . The fourth volume in Samuel Eliot Morison's history of the U. S. Navy in World War II chronicles our two great Naval victories of 1942, Coral Sea and Midway. These actions robbed Admiral Yamamoto of his one chance for victory.

"Hap," General of the Air Force

GLOBAL MISSION. By H. H. Arnold.
New York: Harper & Bros. 625 pp.
\$5.

By ST. CLAIR MCKELWAY

AS THE Commanding General of the Army Air Forces and a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during World War II Arnold was unquestionably one of the most important figures in that war. This is his book; its virtues, as well as its faults, may be attributed to the fact that it was written by Arnold and by nobody else.

I have been told, on the best authority, that Arnold dictated a draft of several hundreds of thousands of words about a year and a half ago and then asked some of his former public-relations officers what to do with it. "Get a professional writer to make a book out of it," he was advised. A man who had been accustomed, throughout his career, to seek the best available advice and then to do what he thought best, Arnold got a non-professional writer—described in a foreword as "my good friend, William R. Laidlaw, formerly Lieutenant Colonel, Eighth and Ninth Air Forces"—to help him slash and whittle the mass of words that had been dictated. The words in the book, however, are clearly Arnold's own and it is equally apparent that the discursive and loosely organized manner in which his story is presented is also Arnold's own. Readers accustomed to the slick veneer that frequently is present in modern, ghost-written autobiographies of the great and the near-great, may be momentarily unnerved by its absence as they start to read this book, but I have an idea that they will miss it hardly at all, once they have accepted the fact that what they are reading is straight from the General's

mouth. Too much polish would have made this a less important book, just as too much polish would have made Arnold a less important man.

Arnold was a desk-pounding bel-lower and a catch-as-catch-can fighter. He lacked the dignity of a Marshall and the austerity of a Leahy or a King. While Marshall was Marshall, King was King, and Leahy was Leahy, Arnold was always and inevitably "Hap"—to the members of the Air Forces and to the general public. The ever-changing members of his wartime Air Staff were almost incessantly engaged in following along in Hap's tumultuous prop-wash, smoothing out, toning down, and polishing up the ragged edges of his undiplomatic and unorthodox methods of getting things done. They knew—and still know—that probably nobody but a man like Arnold could have got the things done that he managed to get done in that war. In the same sense, nobody but a man like Arnold could have written this book. His decision to do it himself was—like many of his wartime decisions—both pig-headed and sound.

In these days, with the Navy acting like a boisterous brat and the securely

separate Air Force like a patient old gaffer, it is hard to realize that Arnold had to fight like a boisterous brat himself to make the Army and Navy—and people in general—understand that we had to have a real Air Force in order to win the war. He fought so hard and so well on that line that the Air Force, these days, is actually embarrassed over—and is trying to combat—a popular illusion that we don't have to have anything but an Air Force. One of the most entertaining things about this book of Arnold's is the transparent manner in which, every now and then, he gets all wound up to hop into his old battles with the Army and the Navy and then seems to realize, suddenly and with a shrug and a grin, that those battles are over as far as the Air Force is concerned.

Arnold fought with no holds barred when he had an adversary, but he is no man to gloat over a victory or to kick an opponent when the opponent is down. Now contentedly retired on his California ranch, his job done and his superlative rank of General of the Air Force a permanent one, his present attitude toward the wars he fought with the other services, and also toward the war he helped fight with the enemies in Europe and Asia, is downright mellow. For the sake of history, if not for the sake of peace between the services, it may be a little too mellow. It is characteristic of the uniqueness of Arnold as an individual that when he no longer needs to be a diplomat he seems to have become one. He looks back on his brash, impertinent, and heroic past as if he were an affable patriarch. It seems to me that he skims too lightly over the real story of the scandalous inter-service wartime bickering and that he veils too heavily some of the facts of the real battles—the battle of the Pacific, for example. He knows—but he only intimates—that because of what the B-29's under LeMay were doing to Japan's industries and air force in the spring and early summer of 1945 there may have been no military necessity for the costly Okinawa campaign or even for our use of the atomic bomb. But, on these matters and on many others, he exercises a restraint which, in its cageyness, is engaging, but which, in most other ways, is disappointing. This book by no means tells the whole story of what Arnold knows about the high-level strategic planning and execution of World War II, but it is obviously all that Arnold chooses to tell. The chances are that the truth would enhance Arnold's place in history. But one is led to suspect that Arnold has no more respect for history, as such, than he has for syntax, as such. He seems content

