

and hiring an actress to do her growling Tessie swamped the country with "Tessie-ism." Just as it happened to, say, Milton Berle or Faye Emerson, this telegenic four-legger awoke one morning to find herself a celebrity—reproduced as a plastic toy, painted on children's T-shirts, featured as a hat of mink-blended muskrat with twin peaks shaped exactly like her own ears. Bobby-soxers gave up shredding Sinatra and went after Tessie; they paid her the ultimate accolade: they began to bark.

Despite its decided unevenness, this satiric flight into TV's future is amusing. Here are the ad agency's identical v-p's in identical clothes, the Other Network, the cutthroat situations that make life so refreshing along Madison Avenue. As for the life of Tessie's master, it is hell, salvaged only when a jealous performer (human) engineers a plot against the collie that rocks the nation. This hound of channel one is no literary relative of "The Hound of the Baskervilles" by a long shot; but she may be a symptom of TV to come.

—BERNARD KALE.

ALL SOULS. By Geraldine Symons. Longmans, Green. \$2.50. In 1844 Jacob Abercorn and his wife Lucy sailed from England to Australia to start a farm and a married life together. Thirty years later Jacob's son Tom was the first to take a steamboat up the Yangtze River from Shanghai to Chungking. Another thirty years, and Tom's daughter Sickie returned to England, to find again for the family the pattern of English life. It is a full span of experience traced across the century by the Abercorns on three continents and amidst more wars, floods, and famines than most families have actual knowledge of.

Miss Symons's novel of the Abercorns is strong in movement and change; but also it is weak where it should have a concurrent strength—in its depiction of character. The Abercorns seem like so many thin-paper patterns cut to paste upon the scenes, all words and postures and no real flowing blood stream, with none of the unpredictable vitality of humans. They get thinner as they go along, so that although Jacob might be an acceptable figment of some past history, Tom recedes further from credibility, and Sickie is altogether a concoction in two dimensions. What life there is in Miss Symons's book resides in the Australian bush and the Chinese hills.

—NATHAN L. ROTHMAN.

PROUD CASTLE. By Eleanor Mercein Kelly. Bobbs-Merrill. \$3. Ronald Farquhar met the woman who was to

influence his whole life when he was still in college and she but a girl of fourteen. She had a glamorous background. Her mother had been a brilliant and beautiful musician who had married a commoner in the face of her Hungarian royal family's tradition and had died in America still estranged from her people. The child, reared by her old nurse, was steeped in the lore of Hungary, its music, history, frivolity, and its dramatic political fervor. It was Ronald's task to win Gisela away from the demands of her proud family and to overcome her sense of duty to them—so that she would marry him.

This might have been a gay or stirring novel. Instead, it is—despite Mrs. Kelly's obvious familiarity with the setting—an indigestible mixture of goo and bad George Barr McCutcheon. Ronald adores Gisela in a pink marsh-mallow way, egged on by his mother's coos, tears, and tender smiles. His stepsister pines in secret for him, while Gisela, mouthing platitudes and pages of information on Hungarian history and folklore, marries her dashing cousin and attempts to carry on the family name. Ronald, skipping back and forth between New York and Budapest at her royal whim, woos her in a maudlin but moral fashion until Fate removes the faithless cousin-et-husband. "Proud Castle" will indubitably please a large audience, but this mawkish tale is not the answer to the reading public's discontent with the morbid or sordid novel.

—CHRISTINE NOBLE GOVAN.

ASYLUM ISLAND. By Hilton Brown. Macmillan. \$3. The imaginary Lassou is an independent Negro republic in the Caribbean. For the mixed company of inhabitants whom Lassou's creator brings to our attention the island is an asylum in both senses of the word: "Madhouse — no doubt; but also—refuge."

Hilton Brown's novel about Lassou is a reasonably amusing and occasionally exciting account of several weeks of assassination, voodoo, intrigue, carnival parading, and other extravagances all bearing on who is to become the island's leader. If one can protect it from comparison with such a masterpiece of this genre as Evelyn Waugh's "Black Mischief," "Asylum Island" rates as adequate entertainment.

Its chief merits are deft writing, a good pace, and a genuine feeling for the beauties and terrors of Caribbean life. Its defects are not-so-deft plotting, a lack of wit in the dialogue, and the failure to establish much of a

bond of sympathy between reader and hero.

One has the feeling that correction of these faults should have been a simple matter for a writer of Mr. Brown's skill and experience. It should have been easy for him to tighten up the plot; he might have been a little more spendthrift with the wit he undoubtedly possesses. As for his hero, Colin Strathdee, it is hard to imagine why it seemed desirable to make him a man who had fought by choice for Franco in Spain. There are readers who will have difficulty reconciling this with Strathdee's despising a political rival as a Nazi.

There are many others readers presumably who can discard the final objection without difficulty. They will find "Asylum Island" a generally diverting if not especially memorable book.

—VANCE BOURJAILY.

MR. BYCULLA. By Eric Linklater. Harcourt, Brace. \$2.50. Eric Linklater has a gift for realistic fantasy which is revealed at its best in this short but exciting novel. Mr. Byculla, the chief character, is the mystery man supreme. Presumably his real name is McKillop, presumably one of his great-grandmothers had been a temple prostitute in Southern India. In any case he has an extraordinary acquaintance with the philosophy and ways of the Thugs, who at one time terrorized India, basing their murders on religious grounds.

He is a strange man with strange tastes in all things; Londoners, naturally, do not take to him. Stranger still is this man's patronage of Dr.

Lessing, a London psychiatrist whose patient he becomes, whom he baffles with such dreams as no psychiatrist in London or elsewhere has ever heard. Dr. Lessing is a mild, kind, pathetic sort of character with a double-timing wife who carries on with a young man acquitted of a murder charge but still under a cloud. There is also Sir Simon, a retired official of the British Empire in India.

Mr. Byculla, for purposes which it would be unfair to the author or his prospective readers to reveal, ingratiates himself with all who participate in the story. There is an undercurrent of growing horror, with Mr. Byculla well in charge of operations, pulling the strings unbeknown to the others. And Mr. Byculla is such a kind man! This is a subtle story, a thriller designed in true British fashion on understatement.

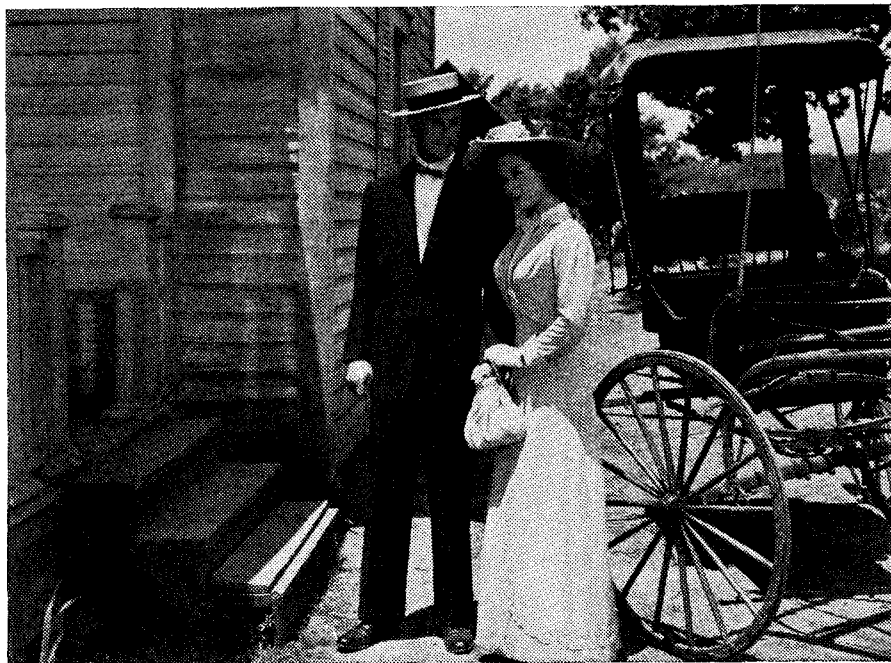
—JOHN COURNOS.



—From "Asylum Island."

SRL Goes to the Movies

CALICO AND REALITY IN HOLLYWOOD



William Lundigan and Susan Hayward—"no artificial tinsel."

DEEMS TAYLOR in introducing "Of Men and Music" (Twentieth Century - Fox), one of the week's new films, unknowingly sounded the keynote of two others now starting their national rounds—"T'd Climb the Highest Mountain" (Twentieth Century-Fox) and "Molly" (Paramount). He had been meeting, he said, with a group of musical artists and had discovered that not their artistic genius alone but their human qualities as well accounted for their greatness.

It happens, unfortunately, that beyond personally having discovered the magnetism of his musical friends—Rubinstein, Heifetz, and Mitropoulos among them—Mr. Taylor had no opportunity to inject their personal warmth into "Of Men and Music." A company of scriptwriters took that job in hand and to a large degree muffled it. But more about that later.

Notable at this point is the fact that the two other Hollywood presentations were more successful in projecting the charm of their characters, the ardor and piquancy that make them convincingly real—and reality is a product by no means mass-produced in the valleys near Los Angeles.

There is no artificial tinsel, for instance, decorating "T'd Climb the Highest Mountain," an adaptation of Corra Harris's novel "Circuit Rider's Wife." It smacks of Georgia's bright

red earth and it is dressed in the simple calico befitting the wives of dirt farmers in patched dungarees. Even the Technicolor is becomingly subdued as director Henry King, an old hand at capturing authentic local color although usually in more bombastic screenplays than this—i.e., "Lloyd's of London," "Twelve O'Clock High," and "The Gunfighter"—unfolds a one-year span in the lives of an itinerant minister and his city-bred wife in the rough Blue Ridge hill country. His objective as drawn for him by Lamar Trotti's script is obviously not to triumph in converting Mossy Creek's atheist into a full-fledged member of the minister's "Amen Corner" but merely to portray the informality with which this thoroughly endearing circuit-rider tries to do it.

The Rev. Dr. Thompson thereby emerges not as a sanctimonious wonder-worker but as an entirely credible young man who, having chosen the cloth as his calling, refuses to forego the pleasures of racing his strawberry mare against the town gadfly's or of matching his own strength against the prowess of the local field workers for twenty-five cents a throw to benefit the church's Christmas-toy fund.

There is no lack of spiritual faith in the Rev. Mr. Thompson; he is resolute. But neither is he a stiff-collared spellbinder. He is a warm, realistic, understanding pastor capable on the

one hand of cajoling his congregation into remembering their marriage vows and on the other of keeping their faith secure in the midst of a devastating epidemic.

As it probably was not in the Harris novel, "T'd Climb the Highest Mountain" is a series of vignettes strung firmly together by the locale and by the confession of the minister's pretty wife, who doubles as narrator, that learning to match the faith of her husband—even learning to endure it—was a monumental task. But each vignette is so neatly turned that the film is never marred by chopiness. Through a combination of wit, compassion, and stark drama a handsomely-rounded character materializes to illuminate the handiwork of which both Lamar Trotti and Henry King well may be proud.

The leading players are equally rewarding. Susan Hayward brings the minister's wife to life with a quiet dignity that contrasts sharply with all her earlier roles and that at least in this observer's opinion is a long cut above the alcoholic of "Smash Up," with which she attracted major attention as an actress. William Lundigan's minister is an expert creation. Frank Tweddell again distinguishes himself, this time as a hard-working horse-and-buggy doctor, and the rest of the supporting players, including Gene and Kathleen Lockhart, Ruth Donnelly, and Rory Calhoun in roles that are more pat, are effective.

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"Molly" is the screen debut of the Molly Goldberg radio and television family. It is far from an auspicious debut if brisk storytelling and an ingenious plot are still among the measures of a gratifying picture. But it glows with the honest, hearty spirit that Deems Taylor found in the high places of his own special world. Molly (Gertrude Berg) is just what you imagined her to be if you never saw her on the stage or through a video picture tube—bustling, tireless, and entirely lovable. So are her husband, Jake (Philip Loeb), the much-put-upon Uncle David (Eli Mintz), and the forthright Tante Elka (Sara Krohner). They are the core of a typical, earnest, and ingratiating Jewish family, and the triteness of the romantic dido Mrs. Berg with the aid of scriptwriter N. Richard Nash has devised for them probably won't be too damaging.

But the further screen adventures of the Goldberg clan will have to boast more than the transparent conniving of the philosophical Molly trying to save an old flame from luring a young moth into marriage—if the family ever is to approach the