

BOOK REVIEWS

CINEMA QUARTERLY. Vol. 1, No. 1. (Edinburgh: Stoddart & Malcolm, Ltd.; 2/-.)

Readers of Fr. Allaert's article in our last issue will welcome this new quarterly. Its policy, as outlined in this first number, is to represent the interests of the spectator, and so strike a mean between the popular movie magazines which aim at the cultivation of Star-worship in the interests of the Trade, and those periodicals of intellectual coteries whose interests are confined to technical virtuosity at the expense of wider issues. *Cinema Quarterly* recognises that the medium is not the whole of an art, and that while technicalities cannot be ignored, a work of art cannot be adequately appraised apart from its content. Whatever may be thought of the efforts to create 'abstract films,' it remains a fact that, in the concrete, a film is not 'pure celluloid' but a work of art which bears a message. The message of the contemporary cinema is not infrequently trivial, sometimes worse. 'Hollywood in particular,' says the *Quarterly*, 'has developed a habit of distorting and falsifying the facts of life to create a world of its own which is so far removed from reality that anything its films attempt to say is utterly worthless. . . . Whatever else *Cinema Quarterly* stands for, it stands for sincerity. With all the vigour it can muster it will attack the empty masquerade of sham sentiments and false emotions that is the stock-in-trade of most commercial movies.'

All criticism which does not fear to get to grips with the content of an art must in some measure be a criticism of life; a criticism which is ethical and even metaphysical as well as aesthetic. Such criticism, if it has not the background of a Catholic *Weltanschauung*, cannot, for us, be completely satisfying. But that is no reason for the Catholic to pass over *Cinema Quarterly*. Sound criticism, whatever the critic's personal views on life, secures not only authentic enjoyment and eventually, it is to be hoped, better movies, but fulfils an almost apostolic social function. It strips the work of irrelevancies and reveals it as a work of art to be praised or blamed. When the public has learned not to doff its intelligence at the cinema door and has become more exacting in its requirements, we shall not only have better entertainment, but shall be able to feel less anxiety for the Cinema as a cultural and moral force. It is criticism that ensures that the opposing interests of Art and Prudence shall coincide; and it is this that should make such

Blackfriars

enterprises as *Cinema Quarterly* welcome, not only to the film-goer, but to the apostle and pastor.

Particularly encouraging in this connexion are the *Quarterly's* reports of the rapid progress of the Film Society movement in Great Britain. Other features include reviews of outstanding 'Films of the Quarter,' of amateur work and sub-standard films, and of cinematographic literature, besides general articles. Two of these are of permanent importance as contributions to the study of the complex problem of film aesthetic. In the first, Mr. Herbert Read applies his general aesthetic theories to the film, and should certainly succeed in convincing those who are still sceptical that 'instead of doubting the aesthetic possibilities of the film as a medium, we should rather doubt the artistic capability of man to rise to the high opportunities of this new medium.' But he takes courage from the conviction that the present supremacy of the technician must soon give place to that of the scenario-writer: 'When the film has exhausted its technical élan, then it must inevitably return to the poets.' Mr. Paul Rotha, on the other hand, argues that the essence of film-technique lies in the selective, dynamic creativeness of the director, whose 'distinct individual dominance' all films demand, but seldom realise.

Pending the appearance of a good Catholic film-bulletin in England, we welcome the promise of a translation of the bulletin of the *Nederlandsche Filmliga*, to appear in subsequent issues of the *Quarterly*.

V.W.

ESPRIT. Revue Internationale. Edition Française. Octobre, 1932. First year, first number. (76 bis, rue des Saints-Pères, Paris, VII. Yearly subscription: France, 65 fr.; postal union, 75 fr.; other countries, 80 fr.)

This new review seems full of promise and is to be recommended to those who would be in touch with an alert and vigorous body of continental writers. The contents are grouped under four sections. *Chroniques*—to register the more important movements of our time, spiritual, artistic, political scientific, financial, and so on. *Œuvres*—to investigate them freely and correlate them. *Les Événements et les Hommes*—to test them as they work out in practice in every sphere of life. Lastly, and perhaps most worthy of attention, *Confrontations*—to establish a relation between the ideas for which the review stands and the thought of other groups, the seizing on the least affinity to establish conversation.