Tuesday next, August 15th: First showing of an outstanding new British film, "THE COMEDY MAN" (dir: Alvin Boycott) starring Kenneth More; a film that will not be released theatrically in the US, and that we urge you to catch. More details on our new Bulletin, copies of which are available this evening.

August 8 1962
The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

Ealing Studios: Program #3

"THE WARE CASE" (Ealing, A.B.F.D., 1939) U.S. distribution by 20th Century Fox; Directed by Robert Stevenson; produced by Michael Balcon; screenplay by Roland Pertwee and Robert Stevenson from a play by George Plydell Bancroft; Camera: Ronald Neame; 8 reels

In time perhaps Robert Stevenson may come to be regarded as one of the best and least appreciated British directors of the thirties. He tackled an extremely wide variety of subjects (taking time off too to marry Anna Lee), and his work consistently displayed both taste and imagination. His later Hollywood films and specifically his most recent films for Disney, have maintained the good taste but imagination seems to have been supplanted by rather stolid workmanlike qualities. "The Ware Case" in any event, remains one of his most enjoyable British films, and despite being talkative and obviously of stage origins, it is always a film. Even when one is aware of the solution to the "mystery" - if one can call it a mystery in the accepted sense - it is a film to which one can return with pleasure for its sheer craftmanship and the joy of seeing such good performers handle such well-written lines so expertly. The murder scene itself is a beautiful exercise in economy and suggestion - had it been done by a "prestige" director it would doubtless be permanently cited in the film text books - and the trial scenes, presided over by dear old Francis L. Sullivan with his perennial pointing pencil - are suspenseful and not unduly protracted. Clive Brook, as a sympathetic rotor - and a very vague parallel to the kind of doomed aristocrat role that Pierre Fresnay played so well in "La Grande Illusion" - has a welcome chance to depart from his usual stiff-upper-lip Britisher, and lovely and graceful Jane Baxter is a joy to behold in anything she does. The rest of the cast too is full of fine cameos from Peter Bull, Ernest Thesiger and other of their fast vanishing ilk.

---------- Intermission ----------

"THE FOREMAN WENT TO FRANCE" (Ealing-United Artists, 1942) Dir: Charles Frend
Produced by Michael Balcon; Assoc. Producer, Cavalcanti; Screenplay by Angus McPhail, John Dighton and Leslie Arliss from a treatment by J.B. Priestley; Camera: Wilkie Cooper; Music: William Walton; editor, Robert Hamer; 8 reels

Early British wartime attempts to combine documentary or factual themes with an "adventure" approach usually came to grief rather badly, the end results being both self-conscious and heavily propagandistic - to say nothing of lagging behind the Hollywood equivalents due to the lack of British knowhow in handling special effects and miniatures for action sequences. With "The Foreman Went to France" & "Nine Men" however, Ealing finally established a good format for films that were both factual and exciting. Only occasionally do the miniatures in this film seem sub-standard, and so expertly staged and edited is the sequence of the plane's raid on the refugees that it was copied almost exactly by Hollywood that same year in "Eagle Squadron". The film is extremely well cast too. Clifford Evans, who seemed after "Love on the Dole" to be on the threshold of being a British Fonda, never became a big star, but remained an intelligent actor. Robert Morley's humor is welcome, but wisely disposed of early in the proceedings, while British comedian Tommy Trinder is always kept well in check. Constance Cummings is another star who never seemed too well used by either Hollywood or England, but who is always a pleasure to watch - and who is still very active on the London stage. With its fast pacing, interesting characters and tart, underplayed ending, "The Foreman Went to France" stills holds up extremely well as a piece of exciting and realistic melodrama, and dates far less than such contemporary (and now hopelessly artificial) films as "Paris Underground" and "The Pied Piper".

---------- William K. Everson ----------