

THE SCREEN

The Mysterious Disappearance of President Stanley in "The President Vanishes," at the Paramount.

THE PRESIDENT VANISHES, from the novel by an anonymous author; adapted by Lynn Starling; directed by William A. Wellman; produced by Walter Wanger and presented by Paramount. At the Paramount.

The President.....	Arthur Byron
Mrs. Stanley.....	Janet Beecher
Chick Moffat.....	Paul Kelly
Alma Cronin.....	Peggy Conklin
Sally Voorman.....	Rosalind Russell
D. L. Voorman.....	Sidney Blackmer
Roger Grant.....	Douglas Wood
Drew.....	Walter Kingsford
Cullen.....	DeWitt Jennings
Richard Norton.....	Charles Grapewin
Corcoran.....	Charles Richman
Kilbourne.....	Jason Robards
Skinner.....	Paul Harvey
Molleson.....	Robert McWade
Wardell.....	Edward Arnold
Harris Brownell.....	Osgood Perkins
Lincoln Lee.....	Edward Ellis
Val Orcott.....	Andy Devine
Kramer.....	Harry Woods
Mrs. Orcott.....	Irene Franklin
Nolan.....	Tommy Dugan
Mrs. Dellling.....	Clara Blandick

By ANDRE SENNWALD.

Although it is unlikely to plunge the country into the bitter fratricide that preliminary gossip had led us to expect, "The President Vanishes" is an exciting example of the topical cinema, a racy and biting melodrama which assaults the war-makers with picturesque violence. Like the anonymous novel (generally credited to Rex Stout) upon which it is based, the photoplay tells how a peace-loving President prevents his country from being stampeded into a European war. Politically orthodox, though admirably outspoken on topics which Hollywood normally leaves severely alone, it squelches a Fascist movement and savagely indicts the kindly old gentlemen whose innocent concern with munitions manufacture and foreign investments is always being misunderstood by the opponents of mass slaughter.

Since "The President Vanishes" is enthusiastically on the side of Mr. Roosevelt's administration, one cannot help suspecting that the attempt to prevent its release was not altogether prompted by a concern for the higher cinema art. The President Stanley of the photoplay, despite his efforts to fight the growing war hysteria, finds himself broken and dispirited on the eve of a special session of Congress which is to discuss the European conflict. It is a violently militant Congress and a declaration of war seems inevitable. Suddenly Washington announces that the President has disappeared. Overnight the temper of the country changes. An outraged nation, knowing that the President had opposed the war party, blames the munitions men, the Gray Shirts and his political opponents for the supposed kidnapping. In the end you discover that President Stanley has engineered his own disappearance, with the help of a loyal secret service man.

The enemies of the Republic, according to the film, are the anonymous czars who dominate the munitions and banking fields, the publisher of a large newspaper chain, the lobbyists and propagandists who inflame the legislators and the populace at the bidding of their masters and, finally, the secret Gray Shirt army. Working on the principle that slogans have helped to swell the public enthusiasm for combat, these engineers of destruction work out a new one, "Save America's Honor," which the publisher plasters over the country. Supporting General Butler's recent affirmations, the Gray Shirts, led by a fanatical neurotic named Lincoln Lee, plan to rule the country. Meanwhile they operate in the large cities, beating pacifist orators and suppressing anti-war demonstrations. The photoplay describes the frantic search for the missing President, the distrust and suspicion in Washington, the rioting and national unrest.

For this political mystery story Walter Wanger has assembled a splendid cast, which is dominated by Arthur Byron as the President, Edward Ellis as the leader of the Gray Shirts, Paul Kelly as the secret service agent, Osgood Perkins as the President's secretary and Edward Arnold as the Secretary of War who conducts the search. For the romantically inclined, there is a subdued romance in which Mr. Kelly and Peggy Conklin participate. William A. Wellman, the director, has paced the narrative briskly and he gives the film a helpful, realistic atmosphere by inserting timely news-reel scenes of street fighting. "The President Vanishes" proves to be an absorbing essay in topical melodrama and Walter Wanger deserves applause for his courage in bringing it to the screen.



Arthur Byron as the President in "The President Vanishes."