

TO SEE OR NOT TO SEE?

Film Notes

By G.M.



FOUR DAUGHTERS (Warners)

The family, it has been said, is the mainstay of the nation: it also happens at the moment to be the backbone of Hollywood film production. In its return to the simpler things of life, and its efforts to keep on side with the Hays Office, the movie industry has started a "back-to-the-home" movement which is keeping the studio script-writers busy thinking up homespun themes and the studio carpenters busy building little cottages with roses round the door.

This department has no objection to the present trend. In fact, we will go further, and say that if we had to be adopted by any screen family we would not look beyond the charming Lempe ménage so attractively pictured in "Four Daughters." Not merely because of the four pretty Lempe girls (though that would be a consideration), nor because we like old man Lempe, but because we feel that life with the Lempes would be well worth living, and not far from the real thing.

"Four Daughters" is the story of a musical family in a small American town. Papa Lempe is a professor of music; his daughters have inherited his talents, and all "do something" musical, but they are no blue-stockings. They carry on a running skirmish with their father on the merits of Schubert and swing, and they all have an eye for a likely young man. Unfortunately, their eyes all turn in the one direction when the personable young composer, Felix, swings off their garden gate into their lives. Even Thea Lempe, who is about to marry for money, rather wishes she had not been so hasty; and Sister Emma, the Martha of the bunch, begins to make

unfavourable comparisons between her stolid, tongue-tied admirer, Ernest, and the dashing newcomer. But it is little Ann, youngest and brightest of the quartet, who walks off with the prize and the coveted engagement ring. Enter drama and a touch of the unusual in the person of Mickey Borden, an embittered young cynic, who claims he has never had the luck to become anything but the orchestrator of other people's music. Felix hires him to work on his new Symphony and (how did you guess?) Mickey falls hopelessly in love with Ann, who has taken him in hand for the good of his soul and tried to laugh him out of his cynicism. It requires a couple of self-sacrifice acts to bring the picture to its happy ending; but the story is by no means as melodramatic as it may sound, thanks to the capable acting, and the sensitive direction of Michael Curtiz, who never makes the mistake of tearing a passion to tatters, though he has plenty of material to tempt him.

Somebody with whom I saw the film objected that the four daughters all looked too much the same age to be really sisters. If that is so, the fault lies with a certain Dr. L. A. Mullican, who had five daughters in a row. Three of them have now grown up to become film stars under the names of Priscilla, Rosemary, and Lola Lane, and, as such, to do a sister act in "Four Daughters." The outsider is Gale Page, who competently portrays the domesticated Emma of the story. Of Dr. Mullican's closely-spaced daughters, Priscilla is easily the most notable. She is seen with Gale Page on our cover this week.

The men in their lives are Jeffrey Lynn, John Garfield, and Dick Foran. While this department is wary, on principle, of discovering new stars, we must make exceptions in the cases of Garfield and Lynn—particularly Garfield. His acting as the dour and fatalistic Mickey Borden has an electrifying quality which should put his name up in bright

lights outside the theatres, and keep it there. There is excellent work also by Claude Rains as Papa Lempe.

But it's not a matter of individual performances. The success of "Four Daughters" is a result of fine team-work by all concerned in its production. As an antidote to war-gloom this film is just the thing.

"THE SUN NEVER SETS"

By C. A. Lejeune

We often feel that the film industry takes the films too seriously and that film reviewers sometimes suffer from the same complaint. But not Caroline Lejeune, famous critic of the London "Observer." That is why we think you will enjoy the following review, which is not so much a criticism of one particular film as a criticism of a whole family of films. It is done in Miss Lejeune's delightful "question-and-answer" style.

I SEE that this film is announced as A Mighty Drama of a Mighty Empire. I take it the reference is to the British Empire? You take it correctly.

But I understand the film was made in Hollywood? Naturally, or there wouldn't be a reference to the British Empire.

And is it really a film about empire-building?

Certainly. It begins at the court of Queen Elizabeth, and brings the whole job up-to-date in two minutes dead.

But that leaves a good deal of film over, surely? It leaves precisely ninety-five minutes over.

And what are they about?

Douglas Fairbanks in shorts and a topee, Basil Rathbone in shorts and a topee, and molybdenum on the Gold Coast.

What on the Gold Coast?

Molybdenum. Element 42, a rare element for hardening steel, used in the manufacture of armaments.

You seem to know a great deal about it.

The motion picture is a great educational influence. Who owns this molybdenum? The British Empire? Certainly not. A sinister multi-millionaire named Zurov, masquerading as a scientist.

Russian, eh?

I think not. His christian name is Hugo.

And what does he do with this molybdenum?

He plans to make himself a Dictator. He has a secret broadcasting station (DNXY on short-wave) in a disused gold mine, by means of which he sinks ships, burns out planes, promotes strikes in the Far East, and incites the whole world to war against the British Empire.

But why doesn't someone stop him?

They do, eventually. The Home Office, the Foreign Office, the War Office, and the Colonial Office are all powerless, but they send out the Randolphs to investigate.

The who?

The Randolphs. Randolphs have been in the Service for three hundred years. They have a motto over their front door, "Go Forth and Return with Honour." And when the Randolph sons Go Forth the



SOMERSET MAUGHAM CHARACTER: Charles Laughton in "The Beachcomber," for release by Universal Pictures.