


(continued from previous page)

the director does not omit to poke good-natured fun at such peculiarities of the English way of life as broadcasting the nightingales during a blitz.

DEMI-PARADISE is another film—and I think this can be said of most really good ones—where chief credit belongs to the script-writer and the director. But the contribution of Laurence Olivier, as the Russian, is also very considerable. He sustains the character almost as well as he sustains the accent. In the long gallery of supporting players—some no more than brilliant miniatures of social types—the most outstanding is Felix Aylmer who, as the old shipping magnate, upholds the capitalists' side of the argument with genial confidence, if not with complete logic.

I would be interested to know what is the local "Party line" on *Demi-Paradise*. They will, I think, be ungrateful, humorless dogs if they do not show the appreciation with a salute of at least 40 salvoes from a minimum of 150 guns.

THE CANTERVILLE GHOST (M-G-M)

 STUDENTS of the cinema may have noticed that ghosts—genuine spooks that is, not just Laurel and Hardy in sheets, or rats in the wainscoting—have recently been fully admitted to the screen's ranks of money-making characters. *The Canterville Ghost* is the latest outcome of Hollywood's acceptance of the supernatural. From an adult point of view, this jazzed-up wartime version of the Oscar Wilde story about a timid ghost is only moderately successful. At least, that is my opinion. It is funny in spots, but only in spots, the main trouble being that the moods of the picture are hopelessly mixed. The introductory historical episode in which Sir Simon de Canterville, as punishment for turning craven in a duel, is walled up by his father in an alcove of the castle and left to perish, should have been treated as straight melodrama—to die like this is not, after all, a joking matter, though the director of the film would apparently disagree. But the reason for the hauntings having thus been established, the film, being a comedy, could legitimately have gone all out for laughs as it depicted the modern misfortunes of the weary spectre who fain would lie down but who is forbidden to stop haunting the castle until some scion of the Canterville line shall have done a brave deed and released him from his father's curse. Instead, we are invited to grieve over the poor ghost as well as to jeer at him. Indeed, it is often difficult to know by looking at him whether Charles Laughton (who acts the ghost and sometimes the goat) is trying to be funny or poignant, or whether he is merely suffering from indigestion. And in the finale the film switches sharply from slapstick to sentimentality, and even introduces the Hollywood Heavenly Choir (those boys must be earning good money these days!) to accompany the act of exorcism.

Yet although I would hesitate to recommend this film wholeheartedly to my grown-up acquaintances, I would have no hesitation in doing so to most children, with whom, indeed, it is already proving highly popular. The reasons for this

popularity, about which I can speak with some experience, are perhaps interesting. In the first place, most of the subtleties already discussed do not trouble children. In the second place, most boys and girls somehow get to hear about ghosts at a fairly early age, and in spite of assurances that there ain't no sich things they remain uneasy. Yet although this film proceeds on the assumption that ghosts really do exist, it debunks them by making the Canterville spook far more frightened of the American soldiers he is compelled to haunt than they are of him. Children in the audience are accordingly delighted to find that, instead of being scared by a ghost, they can laugh at it. And finally,

there is absolutely no "love story" in the film; next to the ghost the most important character is a six-year-old girl (Margaret O'Brien who, as usual, acts delightfully).

So, although the little man cannot now do more than sit up and look interested, he would, if the majority of the readers of this page were children, be giving *The Canterville Ghost* a stand-up clap.

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT

J. M. Thompson (Rivercargill): Theme music was from Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto in B Flat Minor. I can find no evidence to suggest that Beethoven attended an otherwise all-Russian gathering.

POST-WAR JOBS

Well paid positions after the war will be filled by TRAINED men. Will you qualify? Start an I.C.S. Specialised Course of training now so as to be ready. Over 300 home study Courses—
Accountancy Diesel Engineer
Journalism Electrical Eng.
Radio Eng. Motor Mechanic
Building Wireman's License
Plastics Anal. Chemistry
Story Writing Sign Painting
Carpentry Window Display
Draughtsman Office Training
Send NOW for the Free I.C.S. Booklet which is well worth reading. Let us know the subject or trade in which you desire to make progress. Don't delay—write TO-DAY!

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS,
Dept. L., 182 Wakefield St., Wellington.

A Prayer

"O Lord God, when Thou givest to Thy servants to endeavour any great matter, grant us also to know that it is not the beginning but the continuing of the same until it be thoroughly finished which yieldeth the true glory."

in Victory

This was the favourite prayer of a great Englishman, Sir Francis Drake. It was quoted by Field-Marshal Montgomery in a broadcast message to his troops on the Continent. For us, here at home, it carries a message, for there are many things to be done before we "thoroughly finish" this great endeavour.

The need is greater than ever

There is at present a greater call on Patriotic Funds than at any time during the war. Thousands of men in the Middle East and Italy will be waiting to come home. It will be dull, that waiting period; our men will require care and entertainment in the welfare centres and clubs provided by Patriotic Funds. There are 8,000 repatriated prisoners-of-war landing in England. These men, after grim hardship, require special care and attention. Patriotic Funds have supplied many tons of special supplies for repatriated prisoners and supplies are still going forward. Thirdly, there is still a job to be done in the Pacific. Patriotic Fund activities in the Pacific will increase, not decrease, from now on.

Now in the hour of Victory remember the need for Patriotic Funds. In thankfulness for Victory give generously.