

good-bye to Kit in a bomber and self-consciously fingering a wedding-ring—just so we won't overlook it.

IT would not be fair to this masterpiece of sentimental flappedoodle if I omitted to mention that it contains a good deal of really worthwhile incidental material, and some acting of a high standard: the scene, for instance, in the bus at the beginning where Lissa tells her concert manager about her death sentence—there's a neat use here of irrelevant details to heighten a tragic moment; the scene underground when the trapped miners wait for the explosion that will either save or engulf them; the magnificent Cornish scenery (much of the story takes place out of doors); the admirable performance of Tom Walls as an elderly North Country mining-engineer; the brief but delightful study of a waiter by Reginald Purdell; and even the famous Cornish Rhapsody itself (composed for the film by the late Hubert Bath). This Cornish Rhapsody isn't great music, and it often seems curiously reminiscent of the Warsaw Concerto, but at least it is better "original" music than we usually hear from the screen. It is played with spirit by the London Symphony Orchestra and Harriet Cohen (as soloist), with Margaret Lockwood putting up a remarkably effective pretence of playing it herself.

As I splashed my way out through the tears in the aisle, I could not help reflecting with some bitterness on the way in which all this undoubted talent, and integrity itself, have been sacrificed to "the commercial advantages of providing a nice cry."

OUR VINES HAVE TENDER GRAPES

(M-G-M)



I OVERHEARD somebody call this "Our Voines Have Tender Gripes." Well, I don't know about that, but any gripes I have about this film are certainly tender ones. In this case the substance of the picture is excellent and it is only some of the incidentals that are at fault (unlike *Love Story*, where the reverse applies). This film confirms me in the theory that the average American child player is streets ahead of the average from any other country: or, since I don't know much about those from China, Chile, and the Caucasus, I'd better restrict the comparison to America and Great Britain. I can't say what the reason is, except perhaps that the Americans are naturally less inhibited and more sentimental; or perhaps they have a better understanding of children and the secret world they live in, and so are occasionally able to give us glimpses of it. Anyway, there it is.

I'll dispose of the annoying details first: for example, the unnecessary and badly-handled "love interest" between an unprepossessing young "editor" and a country school-mistress who wears high-heeled shoes and looks all the time as if she were on the verge of leaving for a cocktail party; the rather uneven and uneasy performance of Agnes Moorhead as the mother; the failure to make more of the by-plot involving the girl who is "not quite right in her mind" (this could, I am sure, have been interesting); the inclusion of other and duller incidents,

with the result that the film is over-long; and the excessive sentimentalism of certain situations (though on the whole I'm inclined to think that this, like *The Human Comedy* and *Our Town*, is a fundamentally true picture of American life).

Having said this, I feel free to praise with only slight reservations the performance of Edward G. Robinson in the unusual (for him) role of a Norwegian farmer in a district of Wisconsin, and without any reservations at all the acting of Margaret O'Brien as his little daughter, and of Jackie ("Butch") Jenkins as her small cousin. Having rhapsodised over Margaret O'Brien before—in *Lost Angel*, for example—I would be guilty of understatement now if I said anything less than that she seems to me easily the best actress of any age on the screen to-day: the most natural, the least self-conscious, the most radiant. How they make her do it I don't know: how she can be made to assume that look of rapt intensity or of bubbling vitality to suit the camera is a secret known only to her director (I am sure it is not known to the little star herself: her performance is altogether too spontaneous to be a conscious work of art). Granted that neither she nor Jackie Jenkins gives us a study of childhood in all its moods. The little girl would have been much more like some little girls we know if we had seen her occasionally in a real tantrum; if she had got under our skin and on our nerves now and again instead of continually melting our heart. And though everybody knows how devastating the logic of childhood can be, Jackie Jenkins would have been a more complete little boy if just once or twice he had said something that didn't sound so much like an unconscious wisecrack. All the same, even in a long film like this there has to be some selection, and M-G-M may perhaps be excused for omitting what might have been purely irrelevant or merely pedestrian.

There is no point in describing this film in detail. No one could capture in words the magic and the radiance of some of its scenes. I can only recommend it heartily to anybody who knows children and loves them, while suggesting to others less fortunate that they had perhaps better stay away.

But if you are going to see *Our Vines Have Tender Grapes* don't leave it too long, for I am not hopeful that it will set records for extended seasons. In fact, as I came out of this film, I could not help reflecting with some bitterness on the conditioning of audiences which makes them prefer the elaborate artificiality of a *Love Story* to the simplicity and basic genuineness of a film like *Our Vines Have Tender Grapes*.

NATIONAL FILM UNIT

THE New Zealand J Force in Japan, photographed by a National Film Unit cameraman, is featured in the Weekly Review released throughout the Dominion on April 19. It shows our troops at Kyoto and Kure, where they inspect some of the new type submarines which were not put into operation because of the end of the war. Another interesting item is Lord Louis Mountbatten and Lady Mountbatten in the South Island. News Clips include the Endurance Swim at Gisborne, and How the Kiwis Beat France.

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EYES RIGHT?

Three out of every hundred primary school-children in New Zealand have defective vision—most of it undetected until the School Medical Service finds the weakness and warns parents.

Parents themselves should be on the lookout for symptoms of defective vision:

Headaches, blurred vision, burning sensation in the eyes—these are positive warnings that all is not well with the eyesight.

Watery eyes, swollen lids, inflammation of the eyelids, styes which do not heal—these are cause for suspicion.

Other signs indicative of eye defects are the way a child reads. The book may be held close to the eyes; the reader may blink or screw his eyes up. When looking into distance there may be a tenseness, or contortion of the face.

When any of these occur, have the child's vision tested without delay.

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SERIOUS TROUBLE LATER**

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FOR A HEALTHIER NATION

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