

SPEAKING CANDIDLY

THE YEARLING

(M-G-M)

IN this long but simple story about a small boy and his pet deer and the way the lad faces up to the first cruel responsibilities of manhood the emotional colour needed to be applied with a touch as light as a feather. Unfortunately it has too often been laid on with a trowel. So has the Gorgeous Technicolour, which continually seeks to improve on nature when depicting the backwoods country of 19th Century Florida.

Yet in spite of this defect—and particularly in spite of that infernal "heavenly choir" which spoils several fine moments by caterwauling even more inappropriately than usual—this is a film of considerable charm, and one which children should enjoy at least as much as adults. It manages substantially to overcome its handicaps because, in the first place, it is tailored from the good, home-spun material of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's novel, and even the fancy trimmings cannot hide the quality of the cloth; in the second place because the producer (Sidney Franklin) and the director (Clarence Brown), though seduced frequently by the lush allure of technicolour and a sentimental script, remained faithful in the main to the spirit of the piece; and in the third place, and most importantly, because the film has the benefit of three fine performances.

The small boy, Jody, is played by Claude Jarman with that blend of unaffected, endearing sincerity and technical skill which one frequently finds in child-stars who haven't yet had their bloom rubbed off by Hollywood. Jody's bright-eyed wonder at what he sees in the woods around his home, his friendship with the crippled lad, Foddering, his taming of the motherless fawn and his love for it, his horror, bitterness, and eventual resignation when he is forced to kill his beloved pet because it is ruining the family crops—all this is expertly and often very movingly portrayed. The lad's relationship with his father (Gregory Peck) is also developed with unusual sensitivity, and with a degree of warm understanding on Peck's part which marks him as much more than just a handsome matinee-idol. He is, perhaps, a shade too glamorous for the part, and so is Jane Wyman as the mother (who, having buried three children in infancy, is afraid to love her surviving son too much); but between the three of them these players create a sense of family life which is rather rare on the screen. Life in the backwoods provides its adventures, too—a most exciting bear-hunt, a near-fatal encounter with a snake, a feud with some neighbours. Nature also takes a hand and turns on a rainstorm which ruins the crops; but at this and other points the technicolour cameras and that infernal choir get in the way and turn *The Yearling* into a glossy but feeble imitation of parts of *The Southerner*. However, it could fairly be argued that it is largely because the director and cast do so often succeed in capturing the delicate and

elusive charm of the story that these descents into vulgarity are so painfully obvious.

NINE BACHELORS

(Pathé Cinema)

THIS French film, with subtitles in English, provides sophisticated entertainment which, though scarcely first-class, is on the whole agreeable: a farce-comedy thoroughly cynical in outlook, mildly risqué in one or two situations, but performed with a strong sense of fun. The chief recommendation, however, is that the star is Sacha Guitry and that he has surrounded himself with a very competent collection of character players. As in his more famous film *The Cheat*, Guitry essays the role of a suave and not-unlikeable rascal. Taking advantage of a Government decree against foreigners resident in France, he here sets up a Home for Aged Bachelors, fills it quickly with vagrants, and then proceeds to farm out the inmates to rich foreign women who need French husbands to evade the decree. Since there are nine such inmates and the situation in each case is basically the same, it follows that the action is repetitious; but the performances are clever and the general effect is amusing (especially, I imagine, for those who know enough French to follow the dialogue closely).

THE EGG AND I

(Universal-International)

THERE are a good many laughs in this comedy, based on a best-seller which I seem to have the distinction of not having read. It is the story of a city-bred and newly-wed couple (Claudette Colbert and Fred MacMurray), who take up poultry-farming in the American backblocks and run into plenty of pioneering hardships and comic misadventures. Again, as in the case of *The Yearling*, one feels that the butter's spread too thick: there are a number of valid comedy situations—for instance, the heroine's encounter with the stove, and the rustic dance—but almost all of them are overplayed. Even in the case of the stove, the doors pop open too often; the house which the newly-weds occupy is too incredibly senile and, for that matter, too easily rejuvenated; not quite so many leaks in the roof when it rains would have been more convincing—and just as funny.

It is perhaps a little obvious to say that this film is like the curate's egg; but it would, I think, have been better entertainment and equally as popular if it had concentrated more on chickens and their temperamental ways, and had avoided such obvious box-office bait as the Other Woman (Louise Allbritton) and her attempts to lure MacMurray away from his roost. As I say, I belong to the minority who haven't read the book; but I'm willing to bet that it doesn't hatch out any such stereotyped final situation as that of the jealous author-heroine going home to mother to brood and then returning to surprise her husband with the news that he is a father.



"I wish they made O'B Boots in our size!"

First choice of men on the land
for more than 80 years.

O'B

HEAVY DUTY WORK BOOTS



MADE BY M. O'BRIEN & CO. LTD., CHRISTCHURCH.

OB7



How pleased you feel when friends praise the way you keep your home! And it's easy to win praise for brilliant, shining grates if you use Zebo. It makes them sparkle like black diamonds! Use Zebo for surrounds and firebricks, too. You'll find Zebo much quicker and easier to use, because it's a liquid. A rub over and a quick polish—that's all!

ZEBO

LIQUID STOVE POLISH
Also ZEBRA PASTE in Tins
and ZEBRA PACKET LEAD.

No. 23



SMILE PLEASE

Teething worries are over. Mother's bought Steedman's Powders, the gentle, safe aperient. Keeps baby's bloodstream cool and habits regular.

Write now for Free Booklet 'Hints to Mothers'
— Van Staveren Bros. Ltd.
Lt. Taranaki St., Wellington.

Give STEEDMAN'S POWDERS

FOR CONSTIPATION 37