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Film Reviews, by Jno.

HIELAN' LARRY

THE SWORDSMAN

(Columbia)

I STRONGLY suspect that if there were any genuine Highlanders among those members of the Wellington Caledonian Society's Pipe Band who blew their way lustily into the theatre on the opening night of *The Swordsman* they must have emerged with their faces a good deal redder than their kilts. Indeed, even if they were only Lowlanders (who are not much better than half-Sassenach anyway) it must have dawned on them quickly enough that this latest Hollywood extravaganza was scarcely suited to the solemn accompaniment of pipes and drums—and outriding traffic cops.

But don't imagine that it isn't good fun. The simple will enjoy it as much as any other horse opera, the more intelligent will shout with laughter, the only filmgoers who are not likely to be entertained are those who suspect that there is something wrong somewhere but are not quite sure what it is. And if *The Swordsman* doesn't raise gales of raucous merriment in Otago and Southland I'll accept Sydney Smith's opinion that it takes a surgical operation to get a joke into the head of a Scotsman.

As anyone who has read thus far will have guessed, *The Swordsman* is all about Scotland—to be precise, it is a Technicolour Adventure Romance of the Scottish Highlands in the 17th Century. And if at this point anyone were to put to me the time-honoured question, Stands Scotland where it did? I would be constrained to reply, Not by a thousand miles of latitude. Never, I swear, have the Highlands seen such skies, such sunshine, such verdant pastures, such feasting. Never have they seen such horses—or such men. Never have they seen such rootin' tootin' clans as the feuding Glowans and MacArdens. To be quite honest, I haven't seen anything quite like them myself since the Gonsalez Opera Company staged *Lucia di Lammermoor* at Dunedin 20 years ago, with the assistance of flesh-coloured tights and magenta kilts.

But let me tell you how the Trouble began—and by trouble I don't mean the clan-feud. If old MacIan MacArden of MacArden hadn't foolishly sent his son Alexander (Larry Parks) down to Oxford, the Glowans and MacArdens might have been contentedly cutting one another's throats to this day. But what with being 10 long years away from the front line, young MacArden when the picture opens is in the pitiful situation of being unable to recognise a Glowan when he sees one—and he has (as it transpires) absorbed a lot of queer college notions forby.

As one might suspect, the Glowan who fools him on the Highland-bound stagecoach is none other than the beautiful young Lady Barbara, who (by the cut of her jib) seems to have been attending finishing school in Paris. Of course, young Alex falls for her, and she for him, and when the coach reaches the Wee Kirk o' the Heather (all change for MacArden Moor and Castle Dungarry) she introduces herself and the cousin who is there to meet her—a

BAROMETER

FAIR: "The Swordsman."

MAINLY FAIR: "The Mating of Millie."

proper bad hat, Captain Robert Glowan. Wee MacArden does some quick thinking and introduces himself as Mr. Fraser, which wouldn't fool you or me for a moment, but which seems to satisfy the Glowans, who are not noticeably quick on the uptake. Anyway, they part amicably on the understanding that Mr. Fraser will attend the May Day celebrations at Dungarry Castle the next day.

And what a day it is! Summer must have occurred on May 1 that year, and the lawn at Castle Dungarry is a blaze of colour. There sits old Lord Glowan and his five sons, and on every hand stand strapping clansmen wearing athletic-looking tartan tights. I was rather at a loss to understand the absence of kilts until the posses started riding, then it dawned on me that a platoon of highlanders riding side-saddle would look a bit daft.

Young Mr. Fraser, who arrives suitably incognito in tights of Mosgiel hunting pink, wins the sgian dubh for javelin-throwing, but he has barely received it from Lady Barbara when his faithful henchman is recognised for a MacArden. That sends the balloon up properly. In a twinkling the MacArdens are riding hard for home with the Glowans hot on their heels. One Glowan gets killed, and the same night Alex is captured while trying to keep tryst with Barbara. Old MacIan thereupon captures one of the glowering Glowans and arranges an exchange of prisoners, but in the process of exchanging them somebody insults somebody else. Nothing but a full-scale clan battle on MacArden Moor will apparently wipe out the insult and this is duly arranged. And now wee MacArden shows himself in his true colours. Duelling is all very well so long as it is unilateral, but had he not pledged himself in the Oxford Union not under any circumstances to fight for Clan and Country? Secretly he returns the cattl: the MacArdens have stolen from the Glowans and offers Lord G. the hand of fellowship. And the Glowan accepts! Red Robert tries another dirty trick, but in the end love conquers all. The rival clansmen swallow the hatchet. Alex and Barbara leave the Wee Kirk o' the Heather to the strains of a bagpipe voluntary, and the only thing missing is an offstage rendition of *Old Lang Syne* by the Andrews Sisters. From such scenes as these old Scotia's grandeur springs.

THE MATING OF MILLIE

(Columbia)

AS a prim little business girl who desperately wants to adopt a small orphan boy, but must first find a husband for herself, Evelyn Keyes made *The Mating of Millie* a good deal more amusing than I imagined it would be. She is neat but not gaudy, she apparently can be funny without grimaces or contortions and I felt she deserved a better-written story—and a better leading man than Glenn Ford.

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