



ARLETTY as Garance in "Les Enfants du Paradis"

Jane hastens to join a waggon train that is carrying the illicit cargo out of town. Unfortunately, the agent who was to pose as her husband on the journey has been murdered, and just when all seems lost she makes friends with a bumbling, half-witted, peripatetic dentist from the East named Dr. Painless Peter Potter (Bob Hope), and by some skilful insinuation persuades the gun-runners that he is the person they have been warned about.

From this point on the fun really starts, for whether he is being ambushed by Indians, acting the tough guy in a frontier saloon, lying on an undertaker's slab while crooks remove the dynamite they have hidden beneath it, or being tortured at the stake, Bob Hope manages, in his role of the cowardly paleface, to raise more laughs than he has done in pictures for a long while. He is assisted most of the time by Jane Russell, who swaggers her sultry way through this burlesqued, technicoloured Western, clad successively in russet buckskin, crimson bustles, white whalebone, and then buckskin again.

Yet whatever attraction Jane Russell may offer, this is definitely Bob Hope's show, from the moment when he first appears with his cylinder of laughing gas ("that's why they call me painless") till the final fade-out in which he leans happily at the audience as he says, "Well, what did ya expect, a happy ending?" He does much in the film to consolidate his position as one of our most notable screen clowns, an artist who can, when he likes, make men like Danny Kaye and Red Skelton look in quite another street.

Although a few of the lines in *The Paleface* are lost in the laughter at something which has gone before, it doesn't matter a great deal, for the expression on Hope's face is generally enough to provoke a laugh every time it appears on the screen. And such a farcical parody of toughness as the sequence does much to counteract the passages of somewhat coarse-grained humour the film contains. Some people may find *The Paleface* rather strong meat in parts, but Bob Hope always seems to get away with whatever he is doing, and keeps the whole thing going by the boisterousness with which he throws himself into his part.

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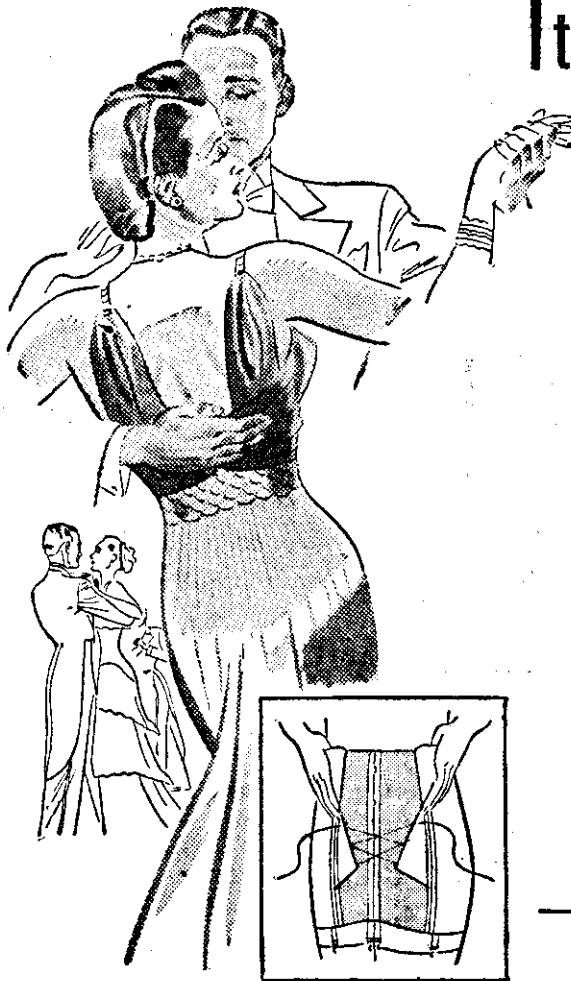
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