

Money Isn't Everything

CHICKEN EVERY SUNDAY

(20th Century-Fox)

THE scene is Tucson, Arizona; the time, 1900 or thereabouts.

The girl, newly-married Mrs. Hefferan, waits patiently on the church steps for her bridegroom (vice-president of the bank, etc.), who has just ducked aside to borrow two dollars to pay the minister. As the bridal couple drive along to their new house amidst desert sands and giant cacti, his thoughts are not of marriage, but of a scheme to build a horse-tram service to their part of the town. But his wife has anticipated this, and there are already two boarders installed at home—just to make sure the mortgage payments don't get behind while his money is tied up in wild financial enterprises. When their first baby is about to arrive, Hefferan disposes of the tram service to build a hospital which will be "the Best in the West," and she becomes its first patient.

Time passes, and with each new business scheme another boarder comes into the house. There is the Hefferan Transport Service, the Hefferan Laundry, the Hefferan Dairy, the Hefferan General Store, the Hefferan Opera House; each of them is the best in the west, but as their creator doesn't seem to make money from them, the family lives on the profits of the boarding-house. Eventually the mortgage is paid off, and just when they seem financially secure, father, now middle-aged, takes out a new mortgage and even a loan on the furniture to invest in a worthless copper mine. With its failure he realises his life has been a failure too, until in the hour of despair his friends rally around, realising that if he has ruined himself, he has helped build a new town in doing so. (Moral: financial success isn't everything.)

Chicken Every Sunday is a pleasantly satirical period comedy, skilfully acted by Dan Dailey and Celeste Holm. Like *Life With Father* and *I Remember Mama*, it is full of whimsical family humour and amusing reminiscences of the Victorian era, but it isn't as good a picture as either of them. Although



CELESTE HOLM
"The Best in the West"

BAROMETER

FAIR: "Chicken Every Sunday."
MAINLY FAIR: "Whispering Smith."
DULL: "The Girl From Manhattan."

there are plenty of laughs, many of the jokes, coincidences, and eccentricities on which the laughter depends are a little too studied to make this more than a good average comedy. Nevertheless, a good deal of care has been lavished on it by its producer, William Perlberg, and the details of period, dress, and background have been well brought out to create what seems an authentic early-American atmosphere.

WHISPERING SMITH

(Paramount)

FANS who haven't yet seen this picture can rest assured that Alan Ladd successfully wins his spurs as a two-gun cowboy hero. The story is based on Frank Spearman's novel, and has been filmed twice before and made into a serial called *Whispering Smith Rides*. It is therefore a well-tryed one (railroad detective versus train wreckers) that is sure to please all lovers of the (fictional) Old West. Apart from Ladd's meritorious performance as a killer on the right side of the law ("I've seen him put six slugs into a guy's belly-button without even seeing him draw his guns"), the most outstanding features are the rich technicolour, the robust, manly acting of Robert Preston, and some unusually good atmosphere for such a romantic picture. There is one scene in particular, when the posse are setting off at dawn to the scene of another wreck along the line, when you can almost smell the frost in the air. The villains, Donald Crisp and Frank Faylen ("as cruel as a soft-nosed bullet"), are just sufficiently sinister and unreal for even the youngest member of the audience to know that right will triumph in the end. And what adds to the enjoyment is the complete absence of any of the sadism and violence for its own sake that have scarred so many recent films of this type.

THE GIRL FROM MANHATTAN

(United Artists)

THE happiness of half-a-dozen eccentrics in a boarding house is endangered by an unscrupulous mortgagee who wants to pull the place down and build a church there (so that he can build a hotel on the old church site after he has pulled it down too). So George Montgomery and Dorothy Lamour, both thoroughly unhappy as the helpful clergyman and his girl-friend, manage to bring the villain to justice and satisfy their love for old architecture at the same time. Although he doesn't look particularly happy either, Charles Laughton as the bishop is the only bright spot in an otherwise dull piece of work.

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