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Film Reviews, by Jno.

Per Ardua ad Asterisks

FAMILY HONEYMOON

(Universal-International)

TO express an opinion on the subject of humour is a serious business, and to voice a preference for one kind of humour over another (usually as personal, capricious and unpredictable a business as a woman's choice in hats) is about the swiftest way I know of inviting attack from others who have prejudices of equal violence. But though conscious that I may be on the point of talking myself out of court with many people, I am at least comforted by the knowledge that there is no Committee for the Investigation of Un-British Activities to subpoena me for saying that in general I prefer the present-day American humorists to their British contemporaries. The gulf that separates *Punch* from the *New Yorker* is vaster than the Atlantic. In Benchley, Thurber, Runyon, Sullivan, Perelman, and the rest, I find a quality of sophistication and even a seasoned wisdom which is not always discernible in the work of Anthony Armstrong, A. A. Milne, P. G. Wodehouse, or—well, who are the other English humorists anyway?

But if current American humorous writing is so good, why are screen translations of it so few and far between? I can recall one admirable Runyon piece of a few years back—*A Slight Case of Murder*—and recently we had the Lindsay-Crouse version of *Life With Father*, which was at least 86-proof Clarence Day, but in general Hollywood inclines either to the Hopes, the Woolleys and the Webbs (who are witty in themselves rather than the cause of wit in others, and therefore not complete humorists), or to the simpler symbolism of the custard pie.

Or, occasionally, we get something like *Family Honeymoon*, which has little wit and less humour, but is likely to provoke enough genteel sniggering to fool some filmgoers into believing that it is comedy. Fred MacMurray plays the part of Mr. Jordan—no celestial visitant this time, but a rather down-to-earth lecturer in botany who marries the sprightly widow (Claudette Colbert) of a former faculty member. He also takes over, as a going concern, her family of two small boys and a girl, but the venture gets off to a bad start when the bride's sister breaks a leg on the day of the wedding and the newly-married couple find themselves saddled with the three children for the duration of their honeymoon. For laughs the film depends mainly on the frustration of the two adults in their attempts to consummate the marriage, as the phrase has it, on a long succession of *doubles entendres*, deriving in the main from the remarks of the innocent children, and (occasionally) on the perfectly fiendish behaviour of the young rips. In small quantities I might have found these hoary devices bearable—children do have a penchant for dropping bricks, and it's a weak stomach that can't stand an occasional innuendo—but these are not the staples of good comedy. I feel bound to repeat, however, that preferences in humour are capricious and unpredictable, and it is quite on the cards that *Family Honeymoon* will seem good

fun to some. But not, I imagine, to those who enjoyed, say, *Quiet Wedding*.

JULIA MISBEHAVES

(M.G.M.)

JULIA MISBEHAVES, which is spiritually not very far removed from the custard-pie comedy, is based on a story by Margery Sharp (who also provided the material for *Cluny Brown*). It concerns a cheery trollope (Greer Garson) who married into The County during World War I, then deserted her husband and infant daughter. To the delight of the old family retainers, she returns to attend the daughter's wedding (at the latter's invitation), persuades the dear child to elope instead with the man she loves, and goes on to win her own husband back again. There is some good fun in the film, but most of the comedy is at the expense of whatever dignity stars such as Greer Garson and Walter Pidgeon may be conceded to possess.

Six Months of Films

THE following is a list of Listener film gradings covering the period from December 17 (when the last list appeared) to June 10. Dates shown are those on which the reviews appeared.

Fine—

The Stone Flower (Moscow Film Studios), Feb. 25; *Les Enfants du Paradis* (Pathe Cinema), Mar. 4.

Fair to Fine—

Treasure of Sierra Madre (Warner Bros.), Dec. 24; *I Remember Mama* (RKO-Radio), Jan. 21; *Pitfall* (Regal Films), Feb. 4; *To the Ends of the Earth* (Columbia), Feb. 18; *Escape* (20th Century-Fox), Feb. 18; *The Paleface* (Paramount), Mar. 4; *The Search* (M.G.M.), Mar. 25; *The Red Shoes* (Rank-Archers), April 1; *No Minor Vices* (M.G.M.-Enterprise), April 22; *The Winslow Boy* (London Films), April 29; *Red River* (United Artists), May 13.

Fair—

Broken Journey (Rank), Dec. 31; *If You Knew Susie*, Jan. 14; *That Lady in Ermine* (20th Century-Fox), Jan. 28; *Rachel and the Stranger* (RKO-Radio), Feb. 25; *Cry of the City* (20th Century-Fox), Mar. 11; *The Woman in White* (Warner Bros.), Mar. 11; *I Stand Accused* (Universal-International), Mar. 18; *Larceny* (Universal-International), Mar. 18; *Key Largo* (Warner Bros.), Mar. 25; *The Velvet Touch* (RKO-Radio), April 8; *Eastern Parade* (M.G.M.), April 29; *Unfaithfully Yours* (20th Century-Fox), May 6; *The Centre* (Paul Rotha-Films of Fact), May 6; *Chicken Every Sunday* (20th Century-Fox), May 20.

Mainly Fair—

The Pirate (M.G.M.), Dec. 31; *A Date With Judy* (M.G.M.), Jan. 14; *For the Love of Mary* (Universal-International), Feb. 4; *Fame is the Spur* (Rank-Two Cities), April 1; *The Fuller Brush Man* (Columbia), April 8; *The Weaker Sex* (Rank-Two Cities), April 14; *That Wonderful Urge* (20th Century-Fox), April 22; *The Roosevelt Story* (United Artists), May 6; *Vice Versa* (Rank-United Artists), May 13; *Whispering Smith* (Paramount), May 20; *A Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (Paramount), May 27; *Eureka Stockade* (Ealing-B.E.F.), June 3; *Good Sam* (RKO-Radio), June 3.

Overcast with Bright Intervals—

I've Always Loved You (Republic), Jan. 7; *Julia Misbehaves* (M.G.M.), June 10.

Overcast—

On An Island With You (M.G.M.), Jan. 21; *A Foreign Affair* (Paramount), Jan. 28; *Tap Roots* (Universal-International), Feb. 4; *Blanche Fury* (Rank-Cineguild), Feb. 11; *Yellow Sky* (20th Century-Fox), April 14; *Apartment for Peggy* (20th Century-Fox), April 14; *On Our Merry Way* (United Artists), May 13; *Family Honeymoon* (Universal-International), June 10.

Dull—

Walls of Jericho (20th Century-Fox), Dec. 24; *The Miracle of the Bells* (RKO-Radio), Jan. 7; *Green Fingers* (Anglo-American Film Corp.), Feb. 11; *Homecoming* (M.G.M.), Feb. 25; *The Sign of the Ram* (Columbia), May 6; *The Girl from Manhattan* (United Artists), May 20; *They Passed This Way* (M.G.M.-Enterprise), May 27.

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