

(Continued from previous page)

delightful, with his suave, rather agonised look and his quick, expressive movements. He plays the part of a bored Hollywood idol who, to recapture the secret of his happiness as a youngster fighting for fame, returns to the little seaside theatre where he began his career.

There he discovers a small but valiant repertory company (shades of Mr. Priestley's "Good Companions!"), waging a determined but losing fight against provincial apathy, a crooked manager, and poverty. Brook discards his identity as Famous Film Star No. 1 and enters into their lives. Inevitably, he falls in love with the impetuous young leading lady, Carol, a process watched with disfavour by Peter, the young playwright who is in love with her. Brook, driven desperate by an unhappy marriage, offers to take Carol to America with him. But later he realises that to be kind one must sometimes be cruel—it is impossible for an actor at the top of the ladder and a young girl just beginning her career to make a success of being together—so he makes a noble exit. Despite the fact that the bored, cynical mask over the aching heart is an old tear-jerker, Clive plays that scene so well that he should be rewarded by more than a few sobs. Carol goes back to Peter, whose play has now been accepted by a big

London manager, thanks to Brook's help. Anna Lee plays Carol, and David Tree plays Peter. See this one.

## THE PRIMROSE PATH (R.K.O.)

Ginger Rogers has climbed so steadily and surely up the ladder of success that few of her admirers will lose confidence in her because she has now made one slip. But she does miss the rung rather badly in "The Primrose Path." It is not altogether her own fault. Her producers should never have placed this particular rung in her ladder. It is uneven: more than that, it is slippery and grimy.

More specifically, "The Primrose Path" is a sordid tale of low life in an American coastal town, unrelieved by the humour which is usually essential in such stories to take the nasty taste out of one's mouth. The laughs are mainly sniggers, and uneasy sniggers at that. In the family round which the plot centres, Grandma (Queenie Vassar) and the mother (Marjorie Rambeau) have both deserted the primrose path of virtue with bravado and without apparent regret; and Grandma at least is chiefly concerned with leading her two grandchildren astray. To the mother's credit, she maintains her affection for her children and her gin-sodden wretch of a husband (Miles Mander). She also maintains the whole family, and though

her means of doing so hardly bear investigation, she is an angel by comparison with Grandma, who is one of the grubbiest characters the screen has ever spewed up. Ginger Rogers is the elder grand-daughter, pig-tailed, sulky-faced Ellie May, whose journey along the straight and narrow path is beset by pitfalls. That she reaches the finale with scars on her soul but none on her virtue is due to the intervention of Joel McCrea. But it is a close call.

According to what I have read, "The Primrose Path" was a good play on the American stage because it contrived to mix many grains of humour and philosophy among the dirt. Grandma was indeed a wicked old woman, but she did have her good points. In bringing the play to the screen, however, Hollywood seems to have kept only the dirt.

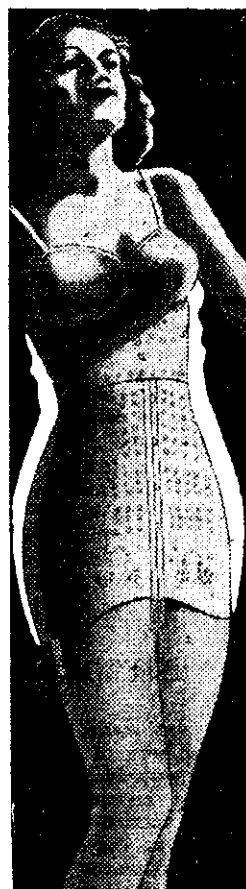
## THE MIDDLE WATCH (B.E.F.)

When Ian Hay wrote "The Middle Watch" it was acclaimed as one of the brightest comedies to have come to the

London stage. But that was some time ago, and now, in these dire days, a pleasant piece of foolery involving girls on a British battleship is likely to fail a trifle flat; and not all the good looks of Greta Gynt, who is certainly a blonde eyeful, nor the suave fooling of Jack Buchanan can save the show from landing with a dull plop on the floor of reality.

## CALL A MESSENGER (Universal)

Much nearer 42nd Street than New York's slums are the famed Dead End Kids in this unpretentious film. But though they have jettisoned some of their toughness, they contrive to make the show worth seeing. The "gang" join the Postal Union as messengers (not without the persuasion of black eyes, etc.), and end in a blaze of glory by busting up a bunch of crooks. None of the performances is outstanding, but everyone does his bit convincingly, and the whole show, which never sets out to reach great heights, comfortably arrives at lower ones.



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