

FILM REVIEWS

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material in the subject to keep the picture going for half the time it actually runs. There is only one basic situation—having babies—and the clinical experiences of the Lemp sisters comprise almost the whole of a long and dull film. All the time-honoured variations on the theme of motherhood are put to work: one sister wants a baby but finds she can never have one; the village gossip makes a mistake and spreads the wrong rumour; another sister adopts a child only to find herself very soon with twins of her own; and a third sister (whose husband committed suicide in "Four Daughters") complicates matters by going neurotic when she learns that she is to have a posthumous baby.

All this maternity in one picture is bad enough; but I cannot remember having seen a production in which the mood was more hopelessly mixed. One minute it is utter burlesque and the next it is trying to be starkly tragic and almost supernatural in order to put over the theme of Priscilla Lane's neurosis and cure.

Claude Rains and May Robson are in the cast again; but John Garfield, who made such an impression as Priscilla's embittered, suiciding husband in "Four Daughters," appears now only in the spirit in order to haunt his wife. By his absence he makes plain what an enormous debt the success of the early picture owed to him.

We now view with some apprehension the prospect of another sequel entitled "Four Mothers," followed in due course, no doubt, by "Four Grandmothers," "Four Great-grandfathers," and "Forty-four Great-grandchildren."

THE MAN FROM DAKOTA

(M.-G.-M.)

As somebody else has probably said already, Hollywood is looking very down in the South these days, thanks mainly to the influence of "Gone With the Wind" (by the way, when is that film coming here?). The Hollywood atmosphere for more than a year past has been thick with old Southern colonels, mint juleps, darkies, crinolines, and civil strife. The latest outbreak of North-and-South disease occurs in "The Man from Dakota," which gives Wallace Beery his favourite opportunity to act the hard-boiled egg with a soft centre. He is a Northern sergeant who escapes from a Confederate prison camp in company with Lieutenant John Howard and picks up Delores del Rio on the way. Sergeant Beery, as usual, cultivates the impression that he is interested solely in what happens to Sergeant Beery, but we all know that, beneath that tattered blue uniform, there beats the usual Beery heart of gold; and sure enough the film does not close without an act of redeeming heroism in which the gallant Sergeant risks his hide to save the lovers and the Southern Army.

However, this old formula is embellished with so many reckless improba-

bilities and with so much wild adventure, and Beery himself is so wholeheartedly tough, that the show can be confidently recommended to those picture-goers who are prepared to take their hard-boiled egg with a large pinch of salt.

TURNABOUT

(Hal Roach-United Artists)

For those who remember "Topper," and Roland Young's hilarious acting of the Thorne Smith comedy piece, "Turn-

about" will be a disappointment. For those who don't, it will be what the advertising puffs call "novel entertainment."

Carole Landis is the wife who becomes her husband, and John Hubbard the husband who becomes his wife. The laughs that follow are laughs at the situation. The direction strains at the jokes, and the cast strains at a task that has been beyond it. "Topper" fans will have pangs of regret that such a chance to revive their humour has been missed. The rest will probably

guess that something better might have happened but didn't; although what has happened isn't bad.

THE CROOKED ROAD

(Republic)

Strong-jawed, steely-eyed Edmund Lowe plays the familiar part of a man innocently convicted of various crimes, who escapes and wreaks vengeance years later. Irene Harvey is the girl who thinks he's wonderful; Henry Wilcoxon the lawyer who catches Mr. Lowe out and then saves him from the chair.

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