

TOM BROWN'S SCHOOL DAYS

(R.K.O.)



[T] would be a pity if anyone is deterred from seeing "Tom Brown's School Days" because he saw and liked "Good-bye Mr. Chips," and thought this was just another schoolboy picture that couldn't come up to it. "Tom Brown's School Days" is a different proposition—not because it is an old-time classic of the coaching days, but because it is primarily a bright boisterous schoolboy revel, and only secondarily a study of a great English headmaster. It must be more than 20 years since I read "Tom Brown's School Days," but the story is so vividly a part of my childhood memories that I can recall many episodes to this day. The film has recaptured the spirit of the book. It may have been altered a little to give a sharper outline of Dr. Arnold of Rugby—I don't know—but the only things I missed of Tom Brown's adventures were the paper chase and what I remember as an ultra-sentimental episode of Tom in hospital.

All the rest are there—Flashman the bully, Brooks the "Head of House" whom Tom hero-worshipped, the roasting and the blanket tossing, the fagging and the sending to "Coventry," the "murphies" at the school tuck shop, Harry East his great friend and conspirator, the uproarious sing-song in "Big School" which followed the great Rugger match won by "School House," and so on, and so on. Schooldays were certainly full, happy and exciting for Tom Brown, and this film crams them all in.

Parts struck me as odd; for example the exaggerated schoolboy code of honour enforced with the utmost rigidity. Common sense would surely suggest that bullies like Flashman be reported to the school authorities. But those episodes were in the book, and I for one would not have had them removed. "Tom Brown's School Days" has been read by generations of boys of British stock, and is a part of British education.

The second merit of the film is that it shows just what the great Dr. Arnold did for Rugby and through his example at that school, for the whole public school system of England. His aim was for "decent courageous gentlemen," and he had to fight ignorance and prejudice pretty hard to get his ideas accepted. Sir Cedric Hardwicke plays the part of the headmaster of a great English school as such a man would be, dignified, without eccentric mannerisms, and never merely sentimental; hard and ruthless on occasions, but, above all, capable and dignified. One came away from the theatre with respect for what Arnold of Rugby must have been.

SPEAKING CANDIDLY

Freddie Bartholomew was, of course, a fairly obvious choice for the name part. The boy who did Harry East was good, and so were all the small parts. The fat coachman who drove Tom Brown up to Rugby, with his high four-horse coach, might almost have been filmed at the time.

CONVOY

(A.T.P.)



[I] HAVE an idea that "Convoy" would have been a greater success if it had been wholly documentary or alternatively had concentrated on the story. As it is, it is a little indistinct, and the result is that when you are most gripped

A more particular complaint attaches to the credibility of certain aspects of the story. A not-the-most-modern 'plane from a British light cruiser, for instance, gives a thorough fright to the pocket battleship Deutschland by diving down within a few feet of her decks and spraying her bridge with machine-gun fire. From the little I know of such matters, I gather it is a safe bet that the Deutschland's anti-aircraft fire would not have permitted such audacity. And again, one of His Majesty's light cruisers is represented as battering the Deutschland unmercifully and putting her to flight unaided. I have the impression that it is considered rash in the extreme



TYLETTE, TYLO AND MYTYL, the three people who search for happiness in the screen version of Maeterlinck's "The Blue Bird." They are Eddie Collins, Gale Sondergaard and Shirley Temple

by the really excellent shots of the Navy on convoy, you are suddenly dragged back to the sad affair of John Clements, who once ran away with Clive Brook's wife, and now, by a Queer Coincidence, is posted to Mr. (Flotilla Captain) Brook's light cruiser. And just when you are waiting for the girl to turn up (as she is bound to), back we go on convoy duty.

for lone light cruisers to engage pocket battleships.

Still, there was no saying what a light cruiser would do after the Battle of the River Plate.

I hope I do not sound too captious, or maybe such details don't matter very much after all. It may be the result of playing too much Naval Battle Tactics, my favourite game these days. It is played with a large map, and models of warships; one side is six Italian battleships, and the other is a British cruiser. You toss up, and the winner has first throw of the dice, which means that...

However, let us return to our Convoy, which is nearly in port.

As I have indicated, there is a certain to-do between John Clements and Clive Brook, and the whole circumstances of the affair suggest that the Admiralty should examine the private lives of young officers before posting them on active service. It stands to reason efficiency must suffer when a young lieutenant has to sit at the same table as the man whose wife he has lately stolen.

In this case it ends up happily. The runaway wife, who had also run away

from the lieutenant, sets everything right, and Lieutenant Clements shows that he is True Blue by flooding the magazine in the nick of time.

"Convoy" is exciting stuff, and I am particularly glad to see Clive Brook getting such a good part. There is a small but delightfully drawn sketch by Hay Petrie, as the minesweeper captain who is more interested in fishing.

"Convoy" is at its best, though, when the cameraman is given a free hand with the sea, the clouds, and the Royal Navy.

THE BLUE BIRD

(Twentieth Century-Fox)



[W]ITH shame I must confess that I have never read Maeterlinck's "The Blue Bird," and so I am not a fit person to pass judgment on the authenticity of Twentieth Century-Fox's technicolour film.

I shall assume that there are a number of people as lamentably ignorant as myself, and explain that "The Blue Bird" is the story of a little girl who isn't as happy and contented with her small-girl life as she should be. To her, one night, comes an elderly fairy who orders her and her small brother out into the world to find the blue bird of happiness. With another ethereal creature, Light, to help her, she visits the Past, the Future, and the fantastic mansion of Mr. and Mrs. Luxury. Nowhere does she find the blue bird, but waking the next morning from her dream wanderings, she sees that a common, bedraggled forest bird she had caught in a trap the day before has turned blue, and so she is taught the lesson that true happiness lies in your own heart and in the things around you.

From the box office point of view I suppose the important thing about "The Blue Bird" is that the part of Mytyl is played by Shirley Temple. There can be no doubt that little Miss Temple is growing up, and maybe her performance smacks a little of her long years of experience on the screen, but personally I could find little to find fault with.

The strongest characters are Tylo, the dog who changes in the wink of an eye into a doggy looking man, and Tyllette, the cat who similarly changes into an exceedingly feline woman. To Gale Sondergaard as Tyllette and Eddie Collins as Tylo, high marks.

"The Blue Bird" is pure fantasy, and it is treated simply, as fantasies should be. It may have been the lingering emotions of Christmas, but I enjoyed it.

"GRETA GARBAGE"

The grand spirit of British women! Nora Blaney, popular theatrical star, has given up the stage "for the duration" to play her part toward winning the war. Her job is to be a voluntary refuse collector and dustbin driver in Yorkshire. Someone has to do the work, and Nora thinks she can make a pretty good job of it. Her professional name now is "Greta Garbage!"



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