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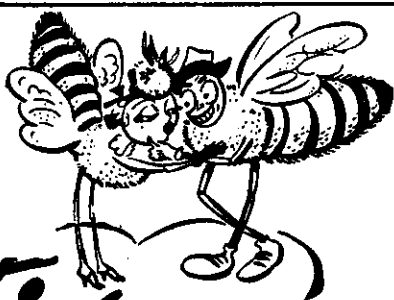
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*This Thing  
Called Love*

Film Reviews By G. M.

## SPEAKING CANDIDLY

THE PHILADELPHIA STORY

(M.G.M.)



I AM probably going to sound rather class-conscious in this review that I am going to write. If I do, it is because *The Philadelphia Story* is just about the most consciously class-conscious document that has come out of Hollywood since the movie industry first discovered that the best way to beguile the masses is to serve up polite fiction about the upper classes. If you doubt that last statement just count up how many box-office successes have been made about rich and privileged people who don't need to work for their living: and then at the head of your list of sagas of the super-taxed, as someone has called them, place *The Philadelphia Story*. For I don't think there's any question about the box-office success of this show. Specially tailored to fit the difficult contours of the Hepburn personality, the original stage play ran for a year on Broadway, and now, turned into a movie it has continued to break records and has quite removed the stigma of being "box-office poison" which was placed on Katharine Hepburn two years ago by the Independent Theatre Owners' Association of America.

Personally I am glad that Miss Hepburn is back in favour, for even in some of her dreariest pictures—and there have been several—I have admired this curious young woman with the flaring nostrils, big mouth and high cheek bones that make her look (or so I think) so much like a well-bred horse. Her dynamic energy has given life to even her dullest roles, but always she has been best when she has been able to project her own rather strident personality straight on to the screen. As Tracy Lord, the haughty daughter of an upper-crust family which can only be described as filthy rich, Miss Hepburn in *The Philadelphia Story* gives a portrayal so lifelike that one can only suspect that it is drawn from life—her own. It has, however, the saving grace



KATHARINE HEPBURN  
"A mess of a girl"

of wit and humour, and so has the whole picture, in spite of its subtle snobbishness.

Now, in branding it thus, I may perhaps seem guilty of a form of snobbishness myself, so let's see if I can sustain my charge.

In an atmosphere of unrelieved opulence, the action of the story covers two important days in the life of the lordly Miss Lord—the day before her second marriage and the day of the ceremony itself. Having divorced the well-bred but rather alcoholic C. K. Dexter Haven (Cary Grant) two years before because of intolerant contempt for his weaknesses and an over-rated sense of her own value, she is now about to try the experiment of wedlock with a man who has risen from the people (John Howard), whose parvenu qualities are underlined by the fact that he appears in spotless, creaseless riding habit, and that the best that can be said for him is that he has "very high morals and very broad shoulders." To rescue the heroine from her mésalliance, C. K. Dexter Haven, still in love with her, hatches a plot which involves introducing a reporter (James Stewart) and a photographer (Ruth Hussey) from a prying picture magazine within the exclusive portals of the Lord household in order that they may "write up" the Secrets of High Society. Anathema at first to the aristocratic Philadelphians is the thought of such low publicity, but they make the best of a situation which they cannot control; and at length even the frigid heroine (who is variously described as "a Moon Goddess," "a prude and a perennial spinster," and "a mess of a girl") begins to melt. She admits that the once-despised Haven and even the snooping reporter are both "pretty yare," whatever that may mean. Under the influence of champagne and the attractive reporter, she lets down her hair and her defences, indulges in wild midnight revels on her wedding eve, and so acquires an understanding of human frailty. Next day she "beautifully" remarries her ex-husband, while the

reporter, who had arrived chockful of proletarian prejudices against the privileged classes, sheds them all and goes away convinced that he had been grossly misinformed. Thus the joke is solely on the jilted parvenu, whose exit speech: "You and your whole rotten class! You're on the way out, the lot of you, and a good riddance," is merely the signal for refined laughter.

"For the rich and mighty, always a little patience," a maxim upon which two of the characters lay considerable stress, might very well be taken as the keynote of the picture, which works out as an artful apology for affluence, though many of those who see it may possibly think no apology is necessary. But in addition to being acutely upper-class-conscious, *The Philadelphia Story* is, I might add, extremely entertaining and very well acted. Cary Grant, more subdued than usual, has never been better, and James Stewart once again is as you desire him.

### HUDSON'S BAY

(20th Century-Fox)



TRAVELLING beyond the United States in his search for romantic historical subjects with box-office possibilities, Producer Darryl F. Zanuck of 20th Century-Fox has now arrived at the rich fur-bearing lands of Hudson's Bay. In order to win this prize for England and Mr. Zanuck, it is necessary for Paul Muni to go unshaven, wear buckskins and a fur hat, and talk with a French accent which is so realistic as to be almost unintelligible. In company with a mountainous new actor named "Gooseberry" in the story and Laird Cregar in real life, he also has to gallivant through about 8000 feet of some of the most curious history yet unearthed from the Hollywood archives, involving, among other things, two visits to the court of King Charles II. and some high-pressure salesmanship on the Merry Monarch (with Nell Gwynne hovering in the background), as a result of which Hudson's Bay is gained for the Empire and a happy ending for almost all concerned.

Muni performs this service for England, and this disservice to his reputation as a fine actor, in the role of Pierre Radisson, a Frenchman who saw the commercial possibilities of opening up Hudson's Bay and who had the good sense to realise that it could best be done by a British Trading Company. The fact that he had already been given a pretty raw deal by his fellow Frenchmen in Canada may have influenced this decision, though considerable stress is laid on Radisson as a man inspired by an altruistic vision of a land fit for modern Canadians to live in. However, equal stress is also laid on the fact that he was a merry rogue with a good head for figures, and it is this quality that endears him to Charles II. and saves him from the gallows when, in the interests of colonisation and trade, he takes the law into his own hands and shoots one of the King's favourites as an example to the Indians.

Assisting and occasionally hampering Radisson in his enterprise is "le gros Gooseberry," who acts as "stooge" to the star and steals most of the lime-light, and the noble Lord Crewe (John Sutton) who provides money and social backing for the expeditions as well as love interest for the story, through the

(Continued on next page)