

(Continued from previous page)

invariably splendid when Lawson is the subject. Long after you leave the theatre you will remember glimpses of Lawson, the poaching farmhand. Lawson peeping in slyly at the window of the farm dairy, dipping his finger in a pan of cream; Lawson with the sunlight glistening on every bristle on his stubbly chin; Lawson, tankard in hand, singing impudently in the village pub; Lawson drawing good belly-laughs from a matinee audience with his salty comments on marriage—"Matrimony be a proper steam-roller for flattening the joy out of a man." And those of you who know matinee audiences will appreciate what is needed to provoke one to healthy roars of laughter. The whole show is the richest comedy imaginable.

Briefly, the story tells of the efforts of Basil Sydney (a widower gentleman-farmer with two sprightly daughters and an attractive housekeeper) to marry again. There are, in his opinion, three possible starters in the matrimonial stakes, so he puts them down in order of favouritism and lays siege to each in turn, starting with the horsey widow who owns the adjoining property, and finishing with the barmaid of the local pub, whom he describes as a rose growing on a dungheap and gets pelted with the bar-parlour bric-a-brac for his pains. Three refusals, however, don't damp his determination ("ardour" is hardly the right word), nor end the story, but it might spoil some of the fun if I went further and I should hate to mar anyone's enjoyment of this film.

I found *The Farmer's Wife* reminding me of all sorts of things. As I have mentioned, the dialogue often recalled *Cold Comfort Farm*, though there was nothing Starkadderish about Farmer Sweetlands himself. The interior and some of the portrait (close-up) photography in the early sequences took me back to *Rembrandt*, the outdoor scenes carried me even further back, to that old quasi-documentary, *The Song of the Plough*, and the delightful crowd of extras was reminiscent of *Quiet Wedding*, *The Lady Vanishes*, and *Storm in a Teacup*. And you will agree that those things of which I am reminded were all good things.

The directors responsible for this little masterpiece are Norman Lee and Leslie Arliss. I know neither of them, though the latter's name has a familiar ring about it—maybe he is related to the first Earl of Beaconsfield. At any rate, one feels he ought to have a peerage. They have been awarded for less.

## MORSE TESTS

Series No. 11.

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