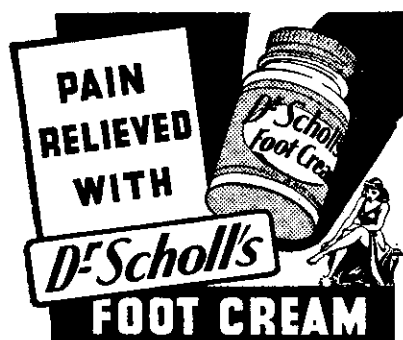


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Film Reviews by G.M.

ERRORS AND OMISSIONS EXCEPTED

HOW GREEN WAS MY VALLEY

(20th Century Fox)

 IF I might have wished anything further of *How Green Was My Valley* it would have been that there was more of it—even if necessary that it was as long as *Gone With the Wind*. I should have liked to see on the screen what happened to the Valley after Gwilym Morgan's death in the mine, when the black slag crept ever further down the hillside to engulf the houses, and black depression settled more and more on the hearts and in the pockets of the people. I should also have liked to see the development of the strange, not-purely-platonic relationship between Huw and Bronwen; the tragic episode involving Marged (was that her name; you can't get a copy of the book in town now for love or money?); the chapter about how Huw and his young sweetheart heard the first nightingale on the mountain; and—though this may be unreasonable—that grim incident of the lynching.

This slightly regretful note about the omissions in the film means, of course, that I am a great admirer of Richard Llewellyn's novel, and what I have to say in this review should be read in the light of that fact. If you were as much impressed by the book as I was, you will probably be impressed by the film in about the same proportion; if you didn't think much of the book, you will hardly think much more of the film. Indeed, the film seems to me almost to proceed on the assumption that you already know the story. In telescoping some of the situations and some of the character-development, the director appears to me rather to have taken it for granted that his audience will have the knowledge to fill in the gaps. And if this review seems rather sketchy, if I don't attempt to discuss every aspect of



DONALD CRISP as the father of the Morgans in "*How Green Was My Valley*," the role for which he won the Academy award last year for the best work by a supporting actor. The director, John Ford, also won an award: the film itself was adjudged "the year's best"

the picture, it is largely because I am proceeding on much the same assumption—surely a legitimate one in the case of such a widely-read novel.


WELL then, there are some situations omitted entirely (mostly, you will note, the starkly tragic ones), some slightly changed in emphasis, and others telescoped; and actually I don't see how some of this could have been avoided in a story where the leading character is a small boy (brilliantly played by Roddy McDowell), who can't on the screen grow up beyond the age of about 13. But allowing for this physical limitation, *How Green Was My Valley* (sorry, *How Green Was My Valley*), is as notable and faithful a copy of a popular work of fiction as was *Gone With the Wind*. Indeed, it is perhaps even more notable, for, within a much smaller compass, the copy is faithful not only in the letter but in the very spirit of the original. I am not going to say that this is John Ford's finest effort (personally, I would award that distinction to his *Grapes of Wrath*), but it may well be his most popular, and he has undoubtedly shown a remarkable discernment of what was in the author's mind. He has told the story in the author's own words and almost in his own idiom; he has been markedly successful in several places in introducing the documentary technique of silent action with off-screen narration; he has built in a corner of Hollywood what, to non-Welsh audiences anyway, looks like a slice of Wales; he has, for the most part, chosen the right players for the right roles; he has made triumphant use of Welsh singing to strengthen the emotional background; he has introduced a lyrical quality into much of his camerawork; and above all,

he and his cast have, with some exceptions, brought to life the characters of the book, with all the intimacies of their family life and relationship. For once, anyway, I agree with a film publicity slogan: "Great families make great pictures." So do great directors.

WITH all this it may seem petty to add that *How Green Was My Valley* has its faults. But since somebody is sure to pick on those faults and over-emphasise them, it is perhaps as well to admit frankly that some incidents and some characters are falsely sentimental; that a good many of the "Welsh" accents probably owe as much to Dublin, London, or Los Angeles as to the Rhondda Valley; that the hair-do of Angharad Morgan (Maureen O'Hara), was probably never seen in the land of Richard Llewellyn's fathers at the time of his story; that the Morgans on the screen live more sparsely than the Morgans on the printed page; and so on and so on.

Yet none of this kind of criticism really detracts from the essential restraint and integrity—or from the entertainment of John Ford's picture. You might indeed say that, just as Sullivan's *Travels* last week was an answer to one side of my recent plea for better pictures, so this is an answer from another angle. And if there were many films like it I might have to agree. Yet it is afraid I am that there is waiting a long time we will be for another *How Green Was My Valley*.

DESIGN FOR SCANDAL (M.G.M.)

 ANYBODY but an American would, one feels, have hesitated to make *Design for Scandal*, for there are laws in most other countries, aren't there, against saying or doing anything likely to bring the Courts into contempt and Justice into disrepute? But in America it seems that the laws must be different, as well as the Law itself. For this picture records a conspiracy by a loud-mouthed capitalist (Edward Arnold) and his agent (Walter Pidgeon) to ruin the reputation of a woman judge of the U.S. Supreme Court (Rosalind Russell) in order that she shall be removed from the bench and the Capitalist won't have to pay such heavy alimony. To carry out this major crime, Mr. Pidgeon commits such lesser ones as misrepresentation (pretending to be an artist), bribery, and unlawful use of premises, not to mention such social offences as tampering with her Honor's affections, falsehood, gate-crashing, and boorish behaviour generally. For all this he deserves at least a long stretch at hard labour. But while the Capitalist does suffer to the extent of having to continue his heavy alimony payments, the other—who thought of the scheme besides carrying it out—gets off scot-free and with a blessing from the bench. Reason: he was in love with Her Honor the Judge from the moment he saw her. Amor vincit justitiam!

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT

W. G. FOSTER (Wellington): The first release of Walt Disney's *Fantasia* is expected in September, probably in Wellington.



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