

A SCRAP OF PAPER

THE MILLION POUND NOTE
(Rank)

A ROYAL Command screening might be a happy omen for the box office, but it's no guarantee of a satisfying night at the cinema, and when I queued up for *The Million Pound Note* (the film which had its world première before the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh at Auckland) I had no illusions about the sort of thing I might have to sit through—in spite of its resounding names, from Mark Twain (author of the original story) to Gregory Peck (the star).

The story is simple and slight enough. A young, down-and-out American in London (Mr. Peck) is lent a million pound note by two eccentric brothers (Ronald Squire and Wilfred Hyde-White), on the understanding that he returns it intact after a month. I've always been a little embarrassed by Mr. Peck's self-conscious masculinity of voice and bearing, and I was not reassured by his entrance in this film. So if I remark that presently I almost forgot it was Mr. Peck and settled down to enjoy the show, it will, I hope, say much for everyone else concerned—and perhaps something for Mr. Peck himself.

The first part of *The Million Pound Note* is undoubtedly the best. The opening, with the brothers waiting outside the Bank of England vault for the note, is very good, and once Mr. Peck's usual uncomfortable first sequence is past, there is a quite delightful series of scenes in which he startles a café proprietor, himself, a tailor or two and a hotelkeeper, with his scrap of paper. His pursuit of the note when it is carried away by a gust of wind has something of the quality of ballet about it. This could be said also of the processional of servants (to the music of "Yankee Doodle") with everything that money (or credit) can command, and of the sequence when a chambermaid steals the note and hides it under a carpet, thereby causing much alarm and despondency on the Stock Exchange and almost bringing about the young man's ruin.

BAROMETER

FAIR TO FINE: "The Million Pound Note."
FAIR: "Peter Pan."

This is all very enjoyable, and not less so because it's more than slightly satirical. It's surprising how the attitude of the Embassy changes when it is discovered that Mr. Peck is not an American genuinely in need of money, but one with plenty of it, if temporarily embarrassed by a shortage of small change. Unfortunately, the film drags a bit when it gets into Society, and the Stock Exchange, and I found the romantic lead, Jane Griffiths, no better than many another.

But on the whole this is an entertaining and very amusing film, in which almost all the players—from A. E. Matthews to Joyce Grenfell—pull their weight more than adequately. Ronald Neame directed.

PETER PAN

(Walt Disney-R.K.O. Radio)

ALICE (I thought) was almost-the-end-of-Disney-for-me, but when Peter made his startling and quite wonderful appearance, in silhouette on the roof-tree, in this latest piece, I swallowed quickly and began a hasty reconsideration. This mightn't be Disney-at-his best but it was quite definitely Disney-not-as-bad-as-he-can-be. Captain Hook was the poorest conception here—a waxed-moustached, sleek-haired, Continental sort of villain, not a bit like the old cut-throat I'd always imagined. Peter, too, in close-up, was a bit disappointing—a slightly more fiendish-looking little boy than I'd expected; and the crocodile—well, he might have been less of a joke. Still, for most people Disney's *Peter Pan* will, I think, be good enough and, even if they know the Barrie story well, close enough to the original to be enjoyed.

The Royal Visit to Fiji and Tonga

(Rank-National Film Unit)

THE New Zealand National Film Unit has captured in colour for the Rank Organisation a most agreeable 20 minutes or so of the Queen in the Islands. It's more memorable than the black and white we have already seen, even though some of the shots are so misty that one begins to wonder why they were retained.

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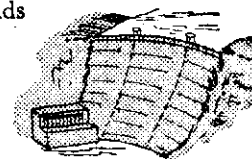
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