

It Depends on What You Mean...

DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE

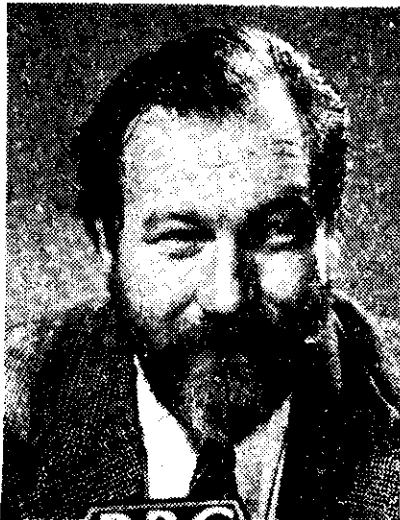
(Rank-Bettv E. Box)

RICHARD GORDON'S *Doctor in the House* is, I'm told, a very funny book. Is it because of sourness, then, or superiority that I've never split my sides over the passages that have been pointed out to me to prove it? Neither, I hope. As Dr. Joad might have said, it depends on what you mean by funny. The quite unremarkable fact is we don't all laugh ourselves silly at the same things, and my failure to do so over the film version of Mr. Gordon's book didn't astonish me even when most of those about me—and the women especially—were tickled pink. It is, I assure you, an amusing film but not one that I can rave about.

The story concerns the progress, in and out of school, of a quartet of medical students. Among them are Simon (Dirk Bogarde), a shy, earnest young man who is taken in hand by a trio of seniors led by Grimsdyke (Kenneth More). As an engaging good-timer who can't bring himself to cut off an ample allowance by graduating, Mr. More has the same sort of part he played so well in *Genevieve*. Don't let the advertisements kid you, however, that he is again partnered with Kay Kendall. She is one of several women in the film, but her appearance is as Simon's pick-up—a brief appearance, too, but effective and amusing.

Doctor in the House is very episodic, but it has plenty of pace, and since most of the episodes are not in any real sense part of a steadily developing story, it says something for a very good cast and the direction of Ralph Thomas that the film does warm up—it's much more entertaining towards the end. One of the best of the later episodes, oddly enough, is an old-as-the-hills student rag—the kidnapping of a mascot after a football match—which I found surprisingly amusing. But not all the episodes are merely funny. There's a touching quality, for instance, about Simon's first maternity case.

Much as I admired the playing of the younger fry, I must add that I liked best of all the scenes which were stolen with the greatest of ease by James Robertson Justice—every one that is, in which he appeared—as Sir Lancelot, the distinguished surgeon-instructor, gruff but



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BAROMETER

FAIR: "Doctor in the House."
MAINLY FAIR: "A Tale of Five Women."
MAINLY FAIR: "Personal Affair."

human ("... and if you have to faint, fall backwards, not across the patient.") A bit more of the quality he brings to the film and I might have found myself writing about it with less restraint.

A TALE OF FIVE WOMEN

(United Artists-Grand National)

FOR a film which includes such saleable attractions as Gina Lollobrigida and Eva Bartok, *A Tale of Five Women* has remarkably little effect on the pulse rate. Of the five women (six to be precise) who make up the world of Bonar Colleano, only Anne Vernon excites—and without benefit, to any noticeable extent, of build-up, uplift, or any of the other better-known aids to screen success. Why? I suppose one should always beware of reacting only to what Mickey Spillane (or was it Fred Astaire) called "my kind of woman," so I should say right away that personal preference isn't the explanation either. No, Miss Vernon, as she showed in *Edward and Caroline* (not, alas, released here commercially), and even in *The Love Lottery*, is just very much a real person—and here a delightful one. She's French, by the way. I hope we shall see much more of her.

Mr. Colleano is a member of the Army of Occupation in Germany who loses his memory in a fall, on a night out. "I gotta find myself," he says, and with the help of Barbara Kelly, the photograph of a child (his?), the backing of a popular New York magazine, and five banknotes—from Rome, Vienna, Berlin, Paris and London—each bearing a woman's signature, he sets out to discover where the five women fitted into his life. As an unwilling Party member in Vienna, Miss Bartok tugs at the heart strings a bit, but no harder really than the war ruins in the background. Still, this is nowhere a heavy-weight piece, and by the time it gets to Paris and London it has become quite cheerful.

PERSONAL AFFAIR

(Rank-Two Cities)

ESLEY STORM'S play *The Day's Mischief* impressed me with its dramatic possibilities when I read about it a year or two ago, for even if some of the detail of the story is improbable, the ingredients are interesting—an infatuated schoolgirl, an indiscreet master and a possessive wife. No one means to do harm, but after a meeting with the master late at night the girl disappears and tongues begin to wag. Unfortunately, the possibilities are by no means fully realised in *Personal Affair*, the film of the play, which Anthony Pelissier has directed.

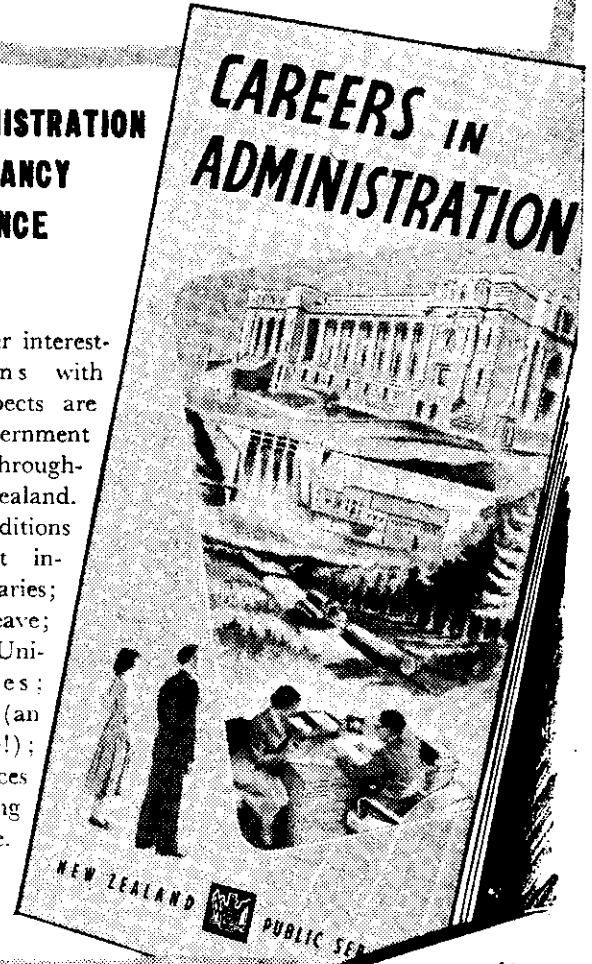
The early scenes, well done and not stage-bound, successfully establish the situation, but the long middle section of the film when the girl is being sought, murder suspected and the master in disgrace, doesn't develop anything like the suspense it should. The only shots that really got me were two or three showing dragging operations in the canal. As the master who should at this stage be just about off his head with anxiety, Leo Genn is incredibly unimaginative, and apparently incapable of displaying strong emotion for more than about 10 consecutive seconds. The other big defect of the production is a too frequent and obtrusive staginess. On the credit side Glynis Johns brings a touching bewilderment and wistfulness to the part of the girl, and some of the smaller parts also, such as the girl's queer aunt (Pamela Brown), are well played.

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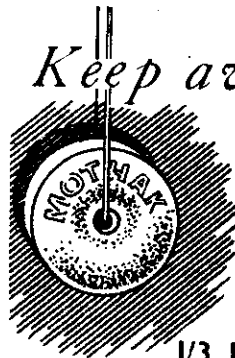
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