

The Ways of Women

ADORABLE CREATURES

(G.C.T.)

THE belief that marriage is a happy ending is still a widely-held romantic fallacy. A blissful embrace in the last minute before the lights go up leaves most of us, I imagine, with the cosy certainty that they'll live together happily ever after. The French seem to be less starry-eyed than we are about man-woman relations, which earns them a reputation for being cynical to say the least; and perhaps they are, for it seems to me that realism with a flavour of Chekhov rather than Maupassant is nearer the heart of the matter. Life as a disillusioned Frenchman sees it is not undistorted, but all the same it can be refreshing, especially if spiced with wit, and it can help to cleanse the blood of romantic and Puritan toxins. This is a solemn reason for welcoming Christian-Jaque's new film, but then, as you may have noticed, these are solemn times; and having taken up a stance of sorts in relation to the hydra-headed monster, let me say right away that *Adorable Creatures* is hardly solemn at all but on the contrary very good entertainment.

It's a film with the same flavour as *La Ronde*—a comedy of sex which suggests that inside and outside of marriage we are much naughtier than we generally admit. Like *La Ronde* it has a compère, though only a voice—the voice of Claud Dauphin; and one of the episodes of the earlier film is recalled in a love affair between the same players—Daniel Gelin and Danielle Darrieux—in not dissimilar parts. This time M. Gelin is André Noblet, a young commercial artist whose amorous adventures are related as a sort of cynical comment on his declaration to his young bride (Antonella Lualdi) that he has never really loved anyone else. The title of the film is ironic, for this is an exposé of the ways of women—who, as every-

BAROMETER

FAIR TO FINE: "Adorable Creatures."
MAINLY FAIR: "Never Look Back."

one knows, are much easier to love than to like. One of André's women is even thoroughly unlovable—a female werewolf (Edwige Feuillère), of uncertain age, who always keeps a young man about the house. She's also a tireless do-gooder whose superficial charity finally flakes off to end the one really disturbing relationship of the film. But the quiet horror of this episode is balanced by the others. Everyone will enjoy André's loss of an expensive pick-up ("I would be your mistress if I didn't love you so much") to an ageing capitalist, vain and susceptible—as I think the film means us to understand all men are.

Between these amorous episodes André goes for comfort and a bowl of soup to the family of a struggling accountant next door, where he gets and ignores a lot of sound advice and meets the heady little teen-ager who, in a delightful scene, is finally going to snare him. The end? André thinks so, but as M. Dauphin reminds us, in case we have forgotten, it's really only the beginning. This sort of story generally makes a rather episodic film, and this one is also a bit long. It isn't as stylish as *La Ronde* (nor as artificial), not as compact, not as consistently amusing, but it is amusing, and it's well played, sophisticated and adult.

NEVER LOOK BACK

(Exclusive Films)

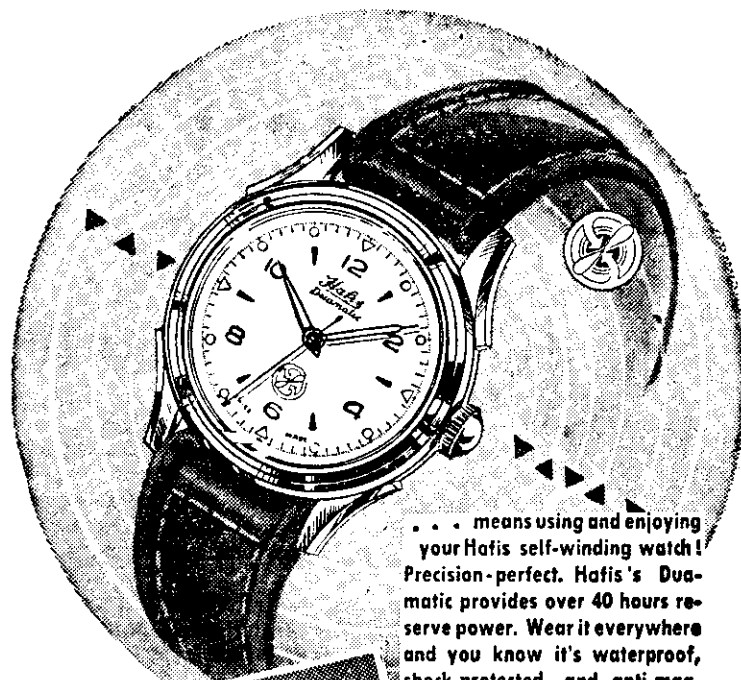
WE return safely to a familiar emotional climate in *Never Look Back*, a film about a desiccated male (Guy Middleton) and a noble female (Rosemund John). Actually there's a noble male (Hugh Sinclair) as well who makes possible a last-minute blissful embrace. Not that this film is all that bad as films go. It's undistinguished and rather improbable, but made, I think, with sincerity, by Francis Searle. Miss John is a new K.C. whose past in the form of Mr. Middleton turns up just as she is looking back. Mr. Sinclair is the other man, also a lawyer. A woman is found shot. Mr. Middleton is charged, and there's a trial. After a lifeless opening, the film managed to get me interested and I stayed so till I choked on that happy ending. The scene between the K.C. and her past incarnate at her flat is well done, parts of the trial develop the required tension, and there is quite adequate playing by Miss John and Mr. Middleton in particular. Among others in the cast are Terence Longdon, who was here with the Stratford-upon-Avon Company.



ANTONELLA LUALDI, DANIEL GELIN
After the end, the beginning

N.Z. LISTENER, NOVEMBER 19, 1954.

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