

BEDTIME STORIES

THE BED

(Terra Film-Cormoran Film-I.C.S.)

R: 16 years and over

OFFHAND, I can't remember a group of short stories that was not uneven as a film, so I didn't give up hope when the first in this Franco-Italian group was disappointing. My hope was justified, for a rather embarrassing Richard Todd as an English officer in Normandy, kept from his bed because the woman who is billeting him gives birth to a child, is succeeded by a thoroughly Gallic story about the latter day occupants of a bed that once belonged to Madame Pompadour. The third does something to maintain the tone: a respectable married man seeking divorce engages a professional co-respondent. Finally a cheerful long-distance lorry driver, used to spending his nights on the road, has an odd encounter with a rich young heiress whose home is near by.

In a familiar tradition, these stories are not nearly as naughty as they sound. The exception is the second, vintage French bedroom farce with Martine Carol, Francois Perier and Bernard Blier, played at a pace that left me a bit breathless. Directed by Jean Delannoy, it's both the naughtiest and the most stylish of the four. Style, I think, is pretty important in a film of this sort, and a little more might have improved the story about the husband and the co-respondent. It has some delightful touches—there's a boy friend on a Hudson ferry boat who keeps ringing the girl to see if she has come to any harm—the dialogue is good, and really I liked this piece very much. But I had the feeling that it might at any moment get out of hand. It didn't, but it was a near thing. The players are Vittorio de Sica (most of us know him best as a director) and Dawn Addams.

What shall I say of the last story? Well, while I could believe in it I liked it best of all. It has charm and insight into character. But you stop believing, and then with an old trick that I won't accept any more it's all explained. It's a pity, for it is good while it lasts. Francoise Arnoul is the girl and a delightful fellow named Mouloudji the boy.

We look for a high standard in films with this flavour, as we should. This one, you'll gather, is patchy. Yet if your taste runs to this sort of humour, as mine does, you may be grateful for the chance to have a glass of bubbly even three-quarters full. After all, it has been a dry summer.

THE SECRET

(Eros)

Y Cert.

THOUGH *The Secret* had me with it almost all the way, I came away disappointed. The body of a woman is found below the sea wall at Brighton. Did she fall or was she pushed? At a house near by we meet her two young children (one of them is Mandy Miller), who don't yet know she's dead, and a shifty-looking American (Sam Wana-

BAROMETER

FAIR TO FINE: "The Bed."
FAIR: "These Wilder Years."
MAINLY FAIR: "The Secret."

maker), who makes a fuss of the children but seems to know more than he should about the dead woman. The police inspector (Andre Morell) suspects him, and so do we.

Most people, I imagine, are pretty susceptible to the anguish of orphaned children, and there's plenty to be susceptible about here. A good cast plays well, that curious, lonely feeling of a seaside town comes through, there's suspense and even a chase through that familiar location, a fairground. The ending, though, is quite another matter. It shows—and a good thing, too—that circumstantial evidence isn't proof. But its new light on an old character is unconvincing, and its happy tableau doesn't have the colour of truth. It surprised me so much that I came away wondering if I had missed something somewhere. The director is C. Raker Endfield, who also wrote the script.

THESE WILDER YEARS

(M.G.M.)

A Cert.

AS advertised, *These Wilder Years* sounded pretty unlikely entertainment, but with time on my hands I went



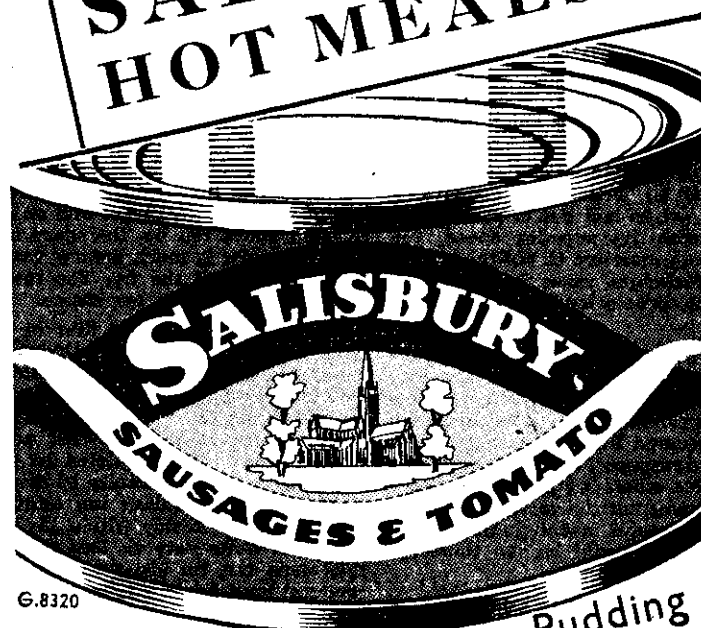
DAWN ADDAMS

Phone call from a worried boy friend

to see it and found it fresh and likeable, with its heart in the right place. As Steve Bradford, a big industrialist who has everything he has sought, James Cagney sets out to find the illegitimate son of his wilder years. In this tough-tender role Mr Cagney does a very good job, and I don't think anyone will be unmoved by his eventual meeting with his now grown-up son (Don Dubbins). Parallel with the story of Bradford's quest the film tells another, about a young girl, soon to have an illegitimate child, whom he meets at an adoption home. This part is engagingly played by Betty Lou Keim, whose name is new to me. Roy Rowland directed.

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