

his own way with the crooked politicians and with Belle Fawcett, honey-voiced singer from New York. Stiffest obstacle in the way of Dion's soaring ambitions are the high moral principles of brother Jack (Don Ameche); and their conflict might have ended not far short of a Cain and Abel climax if Widow O'Leary's cow hadn't kicked over a lantern in the O'Leary barn.

The Big Blaze

NOBODY really knows what started the great Chicago fire of 1871, but Twentieth Century-Fox owes a debt to the Chicago newspaperman who invented the widely-accepted legend of Widow O'Leary's cow, because it ties up the human interest part of the film very neatly with the cataclysmic spectacle of the last 25 minutes.

Several hundred thousand dollars of Darryl Zanuck's money went up in smoke to produce that climax, and without inquiring into whether he mightn't have used his money better, it's certainly a fine blaze to watch. It burns out everything in the picture, including the human passions of the O'Leary's—leaving Dion a sadder but wiser young man reunited with his Belle, Jack a corpse, villainous Brian Donlevy just something that the cattle trod on, and Widow O'Leary tear-stained but undaunted among the wreck of her family.

Too Boyish

OLD Chicago was a man's city, but acting honours in the picture go to the women. Tyrone Power and Don Ameche are decidedly something more than just good-looking lads, but they're too boyish to convince me that they could dominate such a gusty, gaudy, hell-bent place as this. And the

WILCOX'S PLANS

More About Victoria And Albert

WE are to have a companion picture to "Victoria the Great." The success of "Victoria" has persuaded Herbert Wilcox to change his plans.

"Lady Hamilton," on which work was due to begin this week, is postponed till June.

In its place will be produced "Victoria and Albert," to be "in essence the private life of Queen Victoria and her Consort, beginning with the wedding, not seen in 'Victoria the Great,' and ending with the Queen on her deathbed."

The stars will be Anna Neagle and Anton Walbrook.

The Duke of Wellington will be played by Audrey Smith, who played the same part in "The House of Rothschild." And the film will be made entirely in colour.

O'Leary brothers' habit of pawing each other affectionately at nearly every meeting annoyed me immoderately. I have been informed by one film man that such behaviour is quite in order, as the Irish are a demonstrative race. It sounds to me like another libel on the Irish.

In the role of Belle, Alice Faye at last gives a hint of her latent dramatic powers, and her fascinating voice also isn't neglected. It's a pity, though she doesn't learn to keep more of a stiff lower lip when singing.

Miss Brady's Triumph

DOMINATING the whole picture, just as she dominates the O'Leary tribe, is Alice Brady as the warm-hearted, hard-working, out-spoken widow. If you have thought that all Miss Brady is good for is to play second-fiddle to Billie Burke as a specialist in flighty, modern matrons, take a look at "In Old Chicago" for a performance so rich in sentiment and sense that everybody else in the cast is acted right off the screen. And then you may understand why it is that Alice Brady's Widow O'Leary won the Academy Award for the best supporting portrayal by an actress in 1937.

It's a trifle harder for us to understand why "In Old Chicago" should have been chosen by the academy as one of the ten best pictures of last year, until we realise that the academy is an American body with, presumably, a liking for well-dramatised American history. If a British studio could produce as good a screenplay of the Great Fire of London, we'd probably think it deserved similar honours.

And at risk of going back on my early remarks about copy-cats, that's not a bad idea, is it, for a film of the Plague and Fire of London?

["In Old Chicago." 20th Century-Fox. Directed by Henry King. Starring Alice Faye, Tyrone Power, Don Ameche. Release date indefinite.]

Pioneer Spirit

AMERICAN history is painted on an even larger canvas by Director Frank Lloyd in Paramount's "Wells Fargo."

"In Old Chicago" is the story of a single city: "Wells Fargo" is just about the whole early history of American transport, interspersed with side-lights on the growth of San Francisco, the Californian gold rush, the Civil War, President Lincoln, and the notorious Lola Montez. All this is due to the long-sighted pioneering spirit of Henry Wells and William Fargo, who saw that if they could make a handsome profit by carrying oysters from New York to Boston (perhaps it wasn't Boston—I'm no good at geography) there was a fortune to be made by organising a large-scale stage coach and pony express service with the proud boast that it would go anywhere and carry anything.

And so, as the frontiers of the west pushed ever outward, the Wells-Fargo Company kept on the job, linking up the frontier towns, organising banks and post offices and even a wet-nurse service for pioneers' babies whose mothers had died. Wells and Fargo had the ideas, and the young man who carried them out was Ramsay MacKay, whom most of you will recognise as that much-improved actor, Joel McCrea.

Brief Stops

HOLLYWOOD seldom goes wrong when making these dramas of American pioneering, and "Wells Fargo" is one of the best I can remember having seen. It is, of course, almost impossible to give complete coherency to a story which covers twenty-six bustling years of a nation's history in less than two hours, and many great events have to be summarily dismissed. As the Wells-Fargo Service goes career-ing westward, one wishes that it would make longer stops in some places. I per-



Annabella with Romney Brent in a scene from "Dinner at the Ritz." The famous French star also has Paul Lukas and David Niven as leading men in this G.B.D. release, which is an Easter attraction for Wellington.