

Yet only those picture-goers who prefer the old-fashioned night-shirt as much as they prefer a less sophisticated style of comedy will fail to find the opening pyjama episode of "Bluebeard" vastly stimulating. Not till much later did I notice the Lubitsch touch becoming a trifle heavy, a little too familiar.

At the outset there was the promise

lies in marriage so strongly that he hasn't been single for six months since he left college, and is already paying alimony to six wives (and has buried another) when he sets out to add Claudette Colbert to his collection. Miss Colbert herself is almost equally improbable, as the saucy, shrewd French girl who will not just be

had gone to spend his millions on the Riviera. His droll outlook on life has not altered much. And the actor himself, though looking older and more worldly (as befits a man who has experienced matrimony eight times) has very much the same whimsical sense of comedy, the same sure technique that marks him as a great artist.

### Piquant Colbert

LIKEWISE, the piquant Frenchness of Claudette Colbert has seldom been seen to better advantage. She is softly feminine when the mood demands it, provocative and tigerish at other moments.

In the supporting cast (which includes also David Niven, Warren Hymer, Herman Bing and Franklin Pangborn), Edward Everett Horton is the only one who seemed to me to be overwhelmed by the surrounding talent. He is the impecunious father of Claudette (and the recipient of the pyjama pants, in case you've been wondering).

As I hinted before, it was only toward the end that Ernst Lubitsch gave me the impression of laying on the absurdity too thickly, so that the characters became artificial and the comedy began to miss fire. Up till then, "Bluebeard's Eighth Wife" was a play of a hundred and one delights, as Gary and Claudette lashed each other with double-edged wisecracks, as they set ingenious traps for one another, and gallivanted up and down the luxurious Lubitsch corridors.

["Bluebeard's Eighth Wife." Paramount. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Starring Gary Cooper and Claudette Colbert. First release: Auckland and Wellington, June 24.]



Sheltering behind the music are Gladys Swarthout and John Boles who, with John Barrymore, are the stars of Paramount's "Romance in the Dark" (reviewed on this page).

of a farce as brilliantly amusing as "The Awful Truth." It might have kept that promise if it had not lacked the vital spark of humanity

bought, but will teach her uxorious husband a lesson, by making it a marriage in name only—till the final scene.

### Much-Married

GARY COOPER is a most improbable person in "Bluebeard's Eighth Wife"—an American Midas, who be-

No intelligent audience objects to improbability so long as it is consistent, and so long as it has even the slightest relation to real life. Let the characters carry on as crazily as they like, provided they are faithful—after their fashion—to the standards of behaviour they have adopted at the beginning. They can exaggerate the truth for all they are worth, but there must be some truth to start with.

On the other hand, once let the improbable become the impossible, and the very necessary illusion of plausibility is at once shattered. The thing thereafter is just a puppet-show which may entertain with its superficial cleverness for a time, but is soon forgotten.

### A Worldly Mr. Deeds

THIS excursion into the metaphysics of the cinema may seem unnecessary; but I have a feeling that it reaches to the very foundations of successful comedy production. It explains why such comic films as "Mr. Deeds Goes to Town," "The Awful Truth," "Stand-in," and "Theodora Goes Wild" are head and shoulders above the rest. It is the reason also why Bluebeard Cooper, although a great improvement on Gary Polo, does not live in the same street, or the same neighbourhood, with the Gary Cooper who went to town.

However, apart from the fact that you could believe in Mr. Deeds where you can't believe in the modern Bluebeard, the characters aren't altogether unlike. It is almost as if Mr. Deeds, having learned Big Business methods,

### Light Romance In The Dark

### Boles Is Better

AT last they seem to have discovered what to do with John Boles. In "Romance in the Dark," Paramount have made him play the role of a conceited singer; and since Nature appears to have done most of the work already, it wasn't particularly hard for Boles to make his performance moderately convincing. Whatever the reason, I enjoyed him better than I have for ages, although what someone has described as his "air of conscious carnality" is still a trifle overpowering in the love scenes.

Fortunately, John Boles is almost the least reason for seeing "Romance in the Dark." The real stars are Gladys Swarthout, John Barrymore, and a most amusing little foreigner named Fritz Feld.

### Gorgeous Creature

IT beats me why picturegoers don't get more excited about Miss Swarthout. She's my idea of what a cinema songbird really should be like—a gorgeous creature who's as good to look upon as she is to hear. She also knows

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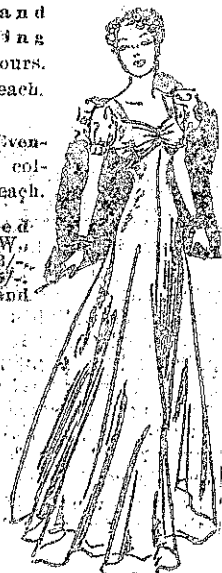
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