

*Robin Hood and Maid Marion—
Errol Flynn and Olivia de Havilland as the stars of Warner's big technicolour film, "The Adventures of Robin Hood."*



until at last he leaves home to attend medical school. He will win fame and fortune so that his mother will no longer have to suffer poverty.

But in seeking to achieve that ambition he almost breaks his mother's heart when, with the thoughtless cruelty of youth, he drains her of her few treasured possessions so that he may continue his education and keep up appearances.

He is going to the wars. He must have a surgeon's uniform. Couldn't his mother sell that old ornament which she got as a wedding present? It was no use to her, but it would fetch a few pounds. . . And while the mother snaps another precious link with her past, and goes hungry and cold, the son spends the few pounds on a pair of doeskin gloves. After all, every officer is wearing them!

I'm afraid I have made that son sound like a skunk; but actually his behaviour is made to seem so natural that it is hard to condemn it. For all his base ingratitude, it is easy to like this young man who means so well, but is so humanly fallible.

Gems Of Acting

THERE is, however, outright, unshadowed nobility in the character of the mother (Beulah Bondi), who is prepared to sacrifice everything for her family, and who bears malice toward none. Such virtue as this could easily have been made the excuse for artificial sentiment and maudlin moralising. It never is. Beulah Bondi as the mother is as lifelike a figure as the father, the son, or the drunken doctor who is held up to scorn by the pious villagers, but actually is the best man among them.

This character of the doctor is just another example of the film's perfection. Charles Coburn plays him; but

I am not prepared to say that Coburn acts better than Walter Huston as the father, or Guy Kibbee as the niggardly storekeeper, or even better than the unknown actor who appears for a few brief seconds here and there as the oldest inhabitant. Each performance is a clear-cut gem in a setting of drowsy, rural beauty that is so real you can almost feel the warmth of the sunshine that glints on the river.

The Boy Stands Out

I AM, however, prepared to make special reference to Gene Reynolds, who plays the part of the son as a young boy. I can remember nothing so sensitive, so moving as this performance. With so many brilliant children coming to the forefront these days the Academy should give a special juvenile Award. If they did, Gene Reynolds would be the first to win it.

There is only one sequence in "Of Human Hearts" which, at the time, gave me the impression of being rather far-fetched. That was the meeting between President Lincoln and the young soldier, whom the great man reprimands for not having written to his mother for two years. I have since learned, however, that this Lincoln episode is widely accepted as being authentic. Even if it isn't, John Carradine's portrayal of Lincoln more than excuses it.

It Gets A Shirt!

I MAKE no apologies for having been rather carried away by my enthusiasm for "Of Human Hearts," nor for giving it the "Record's" highest grading, though I must confess to having been somewhat dubious on the last point. In some ways, perhaps, a "Dark Horse" grading might have been

better, because with its lack of star value, and its lack of sensationalism or sophistication, "Of Human Hearts" may quite possibly not make the hearts of theatre managers beat with joy at the sound of shillings tinkling into the cash-desk.

And yet, to dismiss "Of Human Hearts" merely as a dark horse would hardly be fair to a film which shows such outstanding merit on every side. No, it gets a "shirt."

See it, every mother's son—and daughter—of you!

Doesn't Make The Most Of Itself

[*"The Baroness and the Butler,"* 20th Century-Fox. Directed by Walter Lang, starring William Powell, Annabella. First release: Christchurch, July 15.]



SHOWS FAIR FORM.

AS a variation on the old theme of the servant in love with his mistress, 20th Century-Fox's "The Baroness and the Butler" offered an idea capable of being exploited almost to the limit of comic entertainment. For most of the time, however, that idea remains just a forlorn ghost wandering about the screen seeking release and finding none.

Here you have a butler reared in the tradition of loyal service to the Prime Minister of Hungary, who takes up politics and throws his master's party out of power—and then jeopardises everything by falling in love most indiscreetly with the master's daughter, the Baroness.

That theme could have been developed as pure romantic melodrama, in which case it would probably have been little different from a dozen other pictures with the same basic plot. Or it could have been treated as sheer comedy—in which case it would have stood a good chance, with such players as Annabella and William Powell to help it, of becoming one of the most diverting films of the year.

But "The Baroness and the Butler" tries to run with the hares of satirical farce and hunt with the hounds of romantic melodrama. As a result, if you will excuse the mixed metaphor, the show falls between two stools.

Best At Beginning

"THE Baroness and the Butler" scores most of its points early, when it is chiefly concerned with being a social and political comedy with a dash of satire. The butler's personal devotion to the Prime Minister and his family is established in several quite clever, if rather slow-moving sequences; and then comes the revelation that he has been elected as a delegate of the Social Progressive Party, in opposition to the P.M.

The picture reaches its peak in that scene where the butler-politician, bringing drinks out on to the castle terrace for the indignant nobility, is