

invited to follow his master in an address over the air to the electors—and does so with a fighting speech that increases the indignation of everybody but the P.M. himself, who is chiefly worried by the thought that he may now have to tie his own ties.

Romantic Conflict

IF the whole film could have been handled in the style of that early scene, it might have been first-class farcical fare for sophisticated palates—though a Prime Minister who could treat his worst political enemy so benignly would still have been hard to swallow. Statesmen of the type depicted by Henry Stephenson are not of this world.

Occasionally thereafter you get a flavour of what the authors of this Hungarian play must originally have intended; but for the most part it is lost when the emphasis is placed on the theme of romantic conflict between the Baroness and the Butler.

From being the butler's iciest opponent, the Baroness gradually warms toward him and finally melts into his arms—only to be caught by her husband (Joseph Schildkraut), who tries to make political capital from the indiscretion.

Instead of being treated lightly, this conventional situation is conventionally handled as semi-serious emotional drama, leading to an absurdly far-fetched climax when the Baroness stands up in the gallery of Parliament and makes an impassioned speech disclosing the whole dirty plot to make her butler-lover resign.

In such a context, a climax like that could only avoid striking a false note if it were treated purely as a joke. It isn't—but it's still a joke.

... And The Cast

POWELL'S butler is a charming but un-life-like hero—as efficient as a Hungarian Jeeves, as suave as only Powell can be when he is playing butler parts. Perhaps it is because the role is so typical of him that he gave me the impression of being mechanically competent—but hardly more.

Annabella's first American picture leaves her practically where she was before—she has certainly not improved on "Wings of the Morning."

Nor has Hollywood done anything to solve the problem of her French accent. If anything, she is more incoherent than ever.

Yet Annabella is a gorgeous creature, with her Gallic vivacity, her feline quickness of movement, the clear-cut lines of her countenance. There is something tremendously vital about Annabella, which even the artificiality of her present role cannot hide. If only it were not such a strain to follow her dialogue. . . .

All Very Nebulous

SCHILDKRAUT is never given much chance to make anything definite of his role as the Baron. Better served are Helen Westley and Nigel Bruce. Indeed, I thought that Bruce, with the smallest part, practically made it the best.

I am afraid this review is somewhat tepid. But so, I thought, was the picture. Apart from Annabella, I found little in it to arouse extremes of either enthusiasm or dislike, or make it anything more than mildly entertaining.

People Who Are Crazy But Human

["Romance For Three." M-G-M. Directed by Edward Buzzell. With Frank Morgan, Robert Young, Mary Astor, Florence Rice. Just released.]



A GOOD BET.

HERE'S another of those exceptionally competent second-line comedies which Metro have been turning out in fair quantity lately. Remember "Married Before Breakfast" and "Beg, Borrow or Steal?" This is better than either. In fact, it's so good it moves up easily into the front line of entertainment. What a clean-up it would be at the box-office if it had one or two really big stars—but it wouldn't be a better picture.

Come to think of it, Metro—although as much infected by the current epidemic of craziness as any studio—doesn't seem to have made so many flops. "Double Wedding" is the only one I can think of at the moment, though, with a little concentration, one could probably add to the number.

Romance In The Snow

THE main reason for the success of "Romance for Three" is that, while the characters behave in quite as eccentric a fashion as those in, say, "Bluebeard's Eighth Wife," they remain pleasantly human throughout. Thanks to expert direction and acting, it's a happy rather than happy-go-lucky affair, this delicious little fantasy about a poor slogan contest winner who swaps places with a millionaire at a Swiss winter resort and lives in the lap of luxury and feeds on caviare, while the rich man lives in the attic and feeds on boiled beef and carrots.

Both thoroughly enjoy the change, both have incredible but hilarious adventures—the poor boy falls in love with the rich man's daughter; the rich man tastes the joy of intrigue with a lovely adventuress who has penetrated his disguise and vamps him with gusto. And there is another very amusing complication in the person of Edna May Oliver, as the millionaire's housekeeper, whose devotion to duty drags her to the alpine hotel, and, even on to a ski-run, to save her master from the vamp.

In the end, rewards and punishments are handed out in proper story-book style. The hotel manager and the porter, who have tried to make the rich man's life a misery while they thought he was poor, are demoted, while the overworked scullery hand, who has been kind to him, is raised to manager-ship. The poor hero marries the rich man's daughter; the vamp is put in her place; and so on.

All Artists

WHAT a cast of first-rate artists there is in "Romance for Three"—Frank Morgan, Robert Young, Edna May Oliver, Florence Rice, Reginald Owen, Herman Bing, Henry Hull, Sig Rumann! They're all so good, so

thoroughly in tune with the irresponsible gaiety of the picture, that distinctions are rather invidious.

Yet Morgan stands out, as he always does, with a mixture of eccentric comedy and human philosophy that makes the millionaire a very lovable, if unlikely, person. One of the other characters puts him in a nutshell when he says: "I'm glad you're a rich man, because as a poor man you could not make a living."

Herman Bing, the screen's champion roller of "r's," supplies the best line of dialogue, when, as the pompous porter, he is ordered by the manager to secure three Siamese kittens immediately. Even a cat, he protests, is allowed 60 days to get kittens!

The Interest Hangs On A Hair

["Mademoiselle Docteur." Max Schach-Trafalgar Films. Directed by Edmond Greville. With Dita Parlo, Erich von Stroheim, John Loder. Just released.]



ALSO RAN

THE only thing that really impressed me in "Mademoiselle Docteur" was Dita Parlo's hair. It was twisted and twirled into fantastic shapes, so that at one minute it resembled one of those homely cottage loaves, while at the next it was as sinisterly serpentine as the locks of the Gorgon Medusa. It stood on end, it hung in a fringe, it meandered over the face beneath it as aimlessly as the plot of this spy melodrama meandered through 7500 feet of film.

Perhaps I am a lost soul. Perhaps I have basked so long in the reflected beauty of conventional Hollywood heroines that I was unable to become excited by the Germanic archness of Dita Parlo, in the same way as the ponderous Continental technique of this picture made me long for the sickness of American direction.

More Than Somewhat

IHAVE a feeling, though, that if Dita

Parlo had been a better and more versatile dramatic actress, and if the story had had more vitality and a greater sense of direction, the curious coiffures and the Continental technique wouldn't have mattered. All those close-ups of the star striving to look determined or self-sacrificing or kittenish might really have meant something; and her quaint hair fashions might have been accepted as true to period and part of the disguise which the most daring secret agent in the German service would naturally be called upon to assume. As it was, Miss Parlo struck me as being rather more unconvincing than somewhat.

John Loder is quite likeably true-blue British as the officer who has to fall in love with the beautiful enemy agent in order that this spy film may be like all the other spy films ever made. But so far as acting goes it's Erich von Stroheim who gets my money