

SPEAKING CANDIDLY... REVIEWS of the NEW FILMS

Robin Hood's Very Fine Adventures

["The Adventures of Robin Hood," Warner Bros. Directed by Michael Curtiz and William Keighley. Starring Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, Basil Rathbone, Claude Rains. First release: Wellington, January 12; Auckland and Christchurch, January 13.]

AND now some of the wisecrackers are telling us that there never was such a person as Robin Hood, that he is just a fragment of folk-legend. Don't you believe it. Go along to this new Warner Bros. picture and you will meet a Robin Hood who is as real and vivid as anyone could wish. He looks and behaves a bit like Captain Blood and the young man who led the Charge of the Light Brigade; but is none the less the almost perfect personification of all one's romantic, childhood images of the Robber of Sherwood Forest, who plundered the Norman rich to give to the Anglo-Saxon poor.

SHE does not fear the FORTIES



During the Forties, Nature takes a greater toll of a woman's reserves of health. The system during these years needs to be toned up to be equal to the extra demands.

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This heroic, allegedly non-existent figure moves in an enchanted world which is as momentarily real, as richly hued in Technicolor, as the cinematic realm of Snow White and her seven dwarfs. The men behind the colour cameras for "The Adventures of Robin Hood," and the set-designers, had the souls of artists, plus technical efficiency and apparently bottomless purses.

Where Skies Are Blue

IN the Merrie England of their creation, the skies have the burnished blue appearance of Southern Italy, the greenwood is gloriously and everlastingly green, and, in the raiment of the populace, reds and blues and yellows jostle one another in spectacular and continuous profusion.

One might pause for a moment to wonder if the England of 1190 enjoyed such continuously fine weather and if the lords and ladies—and even Robin Hood's merry men—had the benefit of such expert tailoring and laundering; but that is a reflection rather than of keeping with such a picture.

The first thing to do is to accept it in the spirit in which it is offered; and then everything is for the best in this best of all adventure films—at least, that's the way I feel about it.

Fond Memories

TO be quite frank, I did not altogether expect to feel that way about it, for almost my earliest, clearest and fondest recollection of the cinema is of Douglas Fairbanks in doublet and hose leaping like a young gazelle through Sherwood Forest, swinging from battlement to battlement,

The Censors Saw It Differently!

PARAMOUNT were worried when they submitted the scenario of "Bar 20 Justice" to the Hays Office (U.S.A.). They thought objection would be taken to a scene in which the villain tries to burn the hero alive. The script came back without alteration, except one small cut.

The censors took exception to a shot showing the villain throwing the lighted match away.

The reason?

Because they were afraid it might teach children to be careless.

and shooting arrows into his foes with horrid thuds that you could sense but not hear. (You can hear them now, when Errol Flynn wields Robin Hood's longbow, and the effect is twice as thrilling.)

Flynn omits the gazelle-antics of Fairbanks, but is otherwise just as fabulously athletic, whether he be bandying quarter-staff blows with Little John, hacking his way with a broadsword out of tight corners in Nottingham Castle, or merely scaling the ivy for a midnight rendezvous with Maid Marian. He and his robber band, their allies and enemies, should do nothing to spoil any fond memories you may have of the earlier "Robin Hood."

Re-told, the story loses none of its atmosphere of sword-swishing, head-thwacking, bow-bending deeds of derring do; but instead, enhances its appeal enormously with the flamboyance of Technicolor. It is incredible, but it is magnificent.

Headlong Action

IF you have thought that the day of the "costume picture" is over and that they have lost the art of producing movies in which the emphasis is on action and spectacle, I would recommend you to see "The Adventures of Robin Hood" in order to get some idea of what this kind of film-making really means.

It means that the whole picture moves in a headlong rush of action; it means that it is utterly honest in its purpose and entirely lacking in intellectual pretence; it



IAN HUNTER

... A roast-beef monarch.

means, too, the employment (presumably without counting the cost) of two ace directors—Michael Curtiz and William Keighley—who miraculously were able to work in harmony, and an all-star cast who all seem to glory in their roles, including (in addition to Errol Flynn), Olivia de Havilland, Maid Marian, with the prettiest smile in Hollywood, and as appealing a damsel in distress as ever

for whose sake Robin Hood holds Sherwood Forest against Prince John and his henchmen, and rouses the peasantry to resistance.

Richard is always regarded as such a thoroughly English king that, whenever he is mentioned, I can never resist the temptation to shatter a few cherished illusions by pointing out that, in sober fact, it is questionable if he lived a full year in England throughout his whole life, or even if he could speak English. But that is one of the points on which you will do well not to dwell if you want to savour this picture to the full.

To all the above stars must be added a host of small-part players who, glimpsed briefly though many of them are, represent the polished, whole-hearted capability which is typical of the production.

For merit of acting, the palm goes to Rathbone and Rains rather than to Flynn. The suave deliberation with which these two gentlemen perform is in contrast to the work of the title star, which is more notable for enthusiasm than anything else. But this is not to suggest that it is out of key with the tone of the picture.

Darina Deeds

IN fact, for an imaginary character, Robin Hood provides amazingly solid entertainment. Most of the popular episodes in the 800-year-old legend have been woven into the screen-play, including Robin's rescue of Much-the-Miller's son from a charge of poaching, his defiance of Prince John and escape from a castle bristling with Norman men-at-arms, his quarterstaff contest with Little John and enlistment of Friar Tuck, his wooing of Maid Marian, his ambush of the sheriff with King Richard's ransom money, his marvellous feats at the archery tourna-



"Suez" is 20th Century-Fox's forthcoming interpretation of the building of the Suez Canal by Ferdinand de Lesseps. Tyrone Power portrays this famous figure, with love interest from Loretta Young and Annabella.

came out of a storybook; Basil Rathbone as Robin's arch-enemy, Sir Guy of Gisbourne, superbly sinister and full of his own dignity; Claude Rains as Prince John; a crafty, sneering beast of a man; Alan Hale (a veteran of the Fairbanks film) as doughty Little John; and podgy Eugene Pallette as Friar Tuck.

"English" Richard

THERE is also Ian Hunter, making a thoroughly roast-beef monarch of Richard the Lionheart,

ment, his near-hanging, and the final duel with Sir Guy of Gisbourne which makes the spacious corridors of Nottingham Castle ring with the prolonged clash of steel.

Although all this heroic swash-buckling is in the cause of the oppressed, as a peace-lover I suppose I should deplore the film's glorification of violent deeds and the emphasis which it puts on the doctrine that might is right. As a film fan, however, I can only say that I enjoyed it all very thoroughly.

Fun And Games At "Girls' School"

["Girls' School," Columbia. Directed by John Brahm. Starring Anne Shirley, Nan Grey. Break-up date: End of January.]

FROM the feminine point of view "Girls' School" presents several interesting angles; principally it gives a fine demonstration of just how cattish young ladies can be to each other.

From the masculine point of view, which probably doesn't matter much, anyway, the picture is chiefly notable for its display of lush young womanhood.

For "Girls' School" is set, as the title might suggest, in a superior educational establishment for



NAN GREY

... Poetry on the hockey-field.

young ladies. In it literally hundreds of comely, frilly, giggling young misses spend their days imbibing synthetic charm and their nights sighing over adolescent love affairs.

Occasionally, of course, as all who know their "Young Woodley" will agree it must—it comes to more than that; and then there's the very deuce to pay.

Illicit Poetry

THAT is what starts it all in this particular girls' school. A light-headed, blonde young thing whom you'll recognise as Nan Grey, stays out all night on the hockey-field under the stars with a poetic young man who holds her hand and reads poetry to her. Yes, Nan was a literary girl.

Returning as the early morning sun is breaking through the dormitory windows, and the little birds are twittering in the trees (poetic note) she is espied by a monitor who, after deciding not to, finally tells teacher.

This monitor, a subdued, mousey lass who is Anne Shirley deglamourised for the occasion, is a scholarship girl, and is consequently snubbed by the snobs. She hates her job of monitor really, of course, and only wants to be one of the girls.

Assorted Swains

COMPLICATIONS come thick and fast. Naughty Nan is about to be expelled; her mother and father have been summoned, but her mother and father have separated, and it would be just too, too dreadful if the other girls got to know. Anne, like a brick (girls' school term), risks losing her scholarship to see that the other girls don't get to know.

There's a bunch of assorted swains in the background, the poet

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