

SPEAKING CANDIDLY... REVIEWS of the NEW FILMS

Little Films Are Sometimes Best

["Hollywood Stadium Mystery." Republic-BEF. Directed by David Howard. With Neil Hamilton, Evelyn Venable. Release date indefinite.]

THE past few weeks have seen the arrival of an unusually large number of minor movies, destined almost certainly for positions on double-feature programmes. A regular swarm of B's, in fact.

However, it doesn't mean that a film's no good, just because it doesn't show by itself at the largest theatre in town. In fact, so many of these little features are so competent and unobtrusively successful, and so many of the A-grade pictures are such pretentious failures, that at the moment one might say that some of the best things in life are B.

Keeps You Awake

FOR instance, there's that Republic film, "Hollywood Stadium Mystery." It's not the kind of show you'd go far out of your way to see, and yet I doubt if anybody, coming across it on the first half of a double-feature programme, would feel like going to sleep while waiting for the interval.

Enough happens in the first few minutes of this well-constructed little "whodunit" to keep one wide awake, and even if the action does fade off a bit toward the end, it never becomes stodgy.

Rival Sleuths

A PRIZE-FIGHTER is ingeniously murdered while in the ring in the crowded Hollywood Stadium. One of those clever girl amateur detectives (no, not a girl reporter, but a writer of crime plays, which is the next best thing) has theories which conflict with those of the District Attorney, and they both put them to the test while all the likely criminals wait in the guarded stadium.

The solving of the problem practically takes the form of eliminating the suspects one by one. While this is going on the rival sleuths are bickering humorously together; but the wedding bells are ready to ring out in the final scene.

Sufficient unto the story is the acting thereof, Evelyn Venable and Neil Hamilton being the pair who bandy wisecracks and clues.



More trouble on the Frontier—but still Cary Grant, Robert Coote and Victor McLaglen find some reason to drink a toast in this scene from RKO's "Gunga Din," drama of the British Army in India.

Murder With The Aid Of Algebra

["Gambling Ship." Universal. Directed by Aubrey Scotto. With Helen Mack, Robert Wilcox, Irving Pichel. Release date indefinite.]

THERE are few things I like better than a really odious villain. That is why I have a soft spot for Irving Pichel. I remember with pleasure a film (but not its name) in which he always eased his soul, before and after murder, by playing Bach preludes on the organ; and in Universal's "Gambling Ship" he takes much the same sort of fantastically fascinating character, being a gang-



ROBERT WILCOX
...The unknown quantity.

leader named "Professor," who bumps off his victims with the aid of algebra.

Crooked gambling is the Professor's pet racket, and he's understandably annoyed when somebody opens up an opposition floating casino where the clientele can get a fair run for its money. This opponent, believe it or not, is such an idealist that he supports an orphanage with the profits from the casino; and when he is eliminated by one of the Professor's bombs, his daughter (Helen Mack) keeps the gambling ship afloat and carries on the good work of taking from the rich to give to the poor little orphans.

Enter Mr. X

SO the Professor sits down and works it all out by algebra, introducing an unknown quantity in-

to the equation in the form of a personable young rascal who goes to work aboard the heroine's philanthropic gambling-ship, and makes what is professionally known as "a play" for her.

But—don't tell me you guessed?—this bright lad (Robert Wilcox) is really a G-man in disguise, which means that the Professor's equation doesn't work out quite the way he had planned.

Orphans' Outing

SUSPENSE is introduced into the final scenes by the familiar device of a time bomb, planted to explode just when all the dear little orphans are having an outing aboard the gambling ship. If you think this was hardly a suitable place to hold a children's outing, let me assure you that the roulette tables were all covered up and there wasn't a poker chip in sight.

Lighter Side Of Army Life

["23½ Hours' Leave." Action Pictures. Directed by John G. Blystone. With James Ellison, Terry Walker. First release, Wellington, February 24.]

GAMBLING again forms the theme of "23½ Hours' Leave," but this time it takes place in the army and is therefore quite innocent and frightfully jolly and free from vice.

The film seeks to show the lighter side of camp life. The period is 1917, the setting America, and the hero a cocksure young sergeant who is an inveterate—and diabolically lucky—gambler. A bet he makes that he will have breakfast with the general of the regiment provides the main situation of the picture. More than that, it provides practically the whole story—what there is of it. The rest of the footage is eked out with a vast amount of hearty, head-punching, tomato-throwing horseplay by the troops, who also sing barrack-room ballads of a kind that Kipling never wrote. The names of these ditties are "Goodnight, My Lucky Day," "Now You're Talking my Language," "We Happen to be in the Army" and "It Must be Love." The last one is good.

Army Girl

THE actor who goes round betting the shirt off everybody's back is Jimmy Ellison, best known as Hopalong Cassidy's original protege. He is more at home on the prairie than in the army.

Since there is a general in the story, there must also be a general's daughter. Her contribution to the simple scheme of things is to run a free taxi-service for the troops and fall in love with the hero; which only goes to show that generals' daughters in America are more democratic than elsewhere. The name of the girl, if you're interested, is Terry Walker.

How To Be Happy When Married !

["Vacation from Love." M-G-M. Directed by George Fitzmaurice. With Dennis O'Keefe, Florence Rice, Reginald Owen. First release: Wellington, April 14.]

MARRIED life, according to the movies, is seldom normal. In M-G-M's "Vacation From Love" it is just plain crazy. But one would, I suppose, hardly expect sanity from a saxophone player who breaks up a society wedding



STARS OF "KENTUCKY"—Loretta Young, Richard Greene (seen in "Four Men and a Prayer") and Walter Brennan, who head the cast of 20th Century-Fox's melodrama, in colour, of the race-track, "Way Down South."

and coolly walks off with the bride just because he liked the look of her photograph in his morning paper; or from a girl who let herself be carried away like that. These young people, you see, have a Scheme of Things. They believe that the way to be happy is to do just what you want to do just when you want to do it. And always, above all things, have fun. Be mad, be merry, have fun, fun, FUN!

To which the cynic in us replies, rot, rot, ROT!

However, if you are prepared to poke the tongue firmly in the cheek, and look with a tolerant eye upon the madcap moods of Dennis O'Keefe and Florence Rice, you may find "Vacation from Love" moderately amusing. It has to be conceded that all the cast work strenuously to make it so; which is possibly the reason why some of their efforts seem a trifle laboured.

After The Wedding

IT'S not until after the hero has snatched his bride from the altar, and her irate father (Reginald Owen) has practically blown up and burst, and then subsided, that the young couple discover that a certain amount of money is necessary to maintain a steady pressure of fun. After the billing and cooing, come the bills.

So the husband goes to work for his father-in-law and becomes so interested in his job that business interferes with pleasure. All work and not much play makes Dennis a dull boy. Whereupon the wife feels herself neglected and dashes off to Paris to get a divorce. The husband follows later, and by that time he's ready for more fun and the film is ready to end. Which it does, without a divorce.

Vivien Leigh As "Scarlett O'Hara"

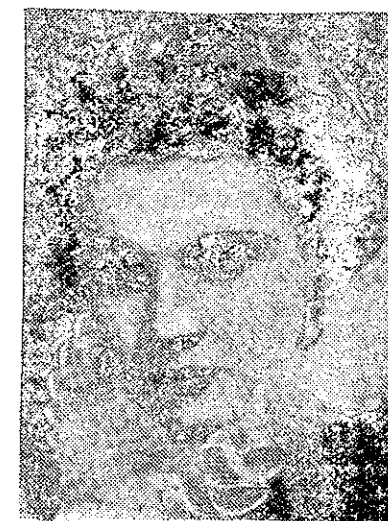
AUTHOR APPROVES CHOICE

DEFINITE choice of Vivien Leigh for the role of Scarlett O'Hara in the "Record" a week or so back, and ends the longest and costliest star-search in Hollywood history. Already the picture has cost thousands of dollars before a single scene has gone before the cameras.

Margaret Mitchell, author of "Gone With the Wind," has approved David O. Selznick's choice of English actress Vivien Leigh. "I'm so glad it's all settled," said Miss Mitchell. "Miss Leigh looks as if she has spirit and intelligence, and she's French and Irish, like Scarlett was."

Miss Leigh herself is still a trifle bewildered by the honour thrust upon her. She was in America on holiday when George Cukor, who will direct the picture, saw her in a screen test—and the two-year search was ended.

Producer Selznick says he has kept to his original purpose "to



VIVIEN LEIGH
As seen in "Fire Over England."

cast a girl who was not identified in the minds of the public with other roles, and who was a physical counterpart of the original Scarlett, as described in "Gone With the Wind."

Vivien Leigh is five feet three, weighs 103lb., has green eyes, brown hair with a touch of red, and a pointed chin.

As an actress she should easily be able to make the grade. Although she has played nothing previously like the role of Scarlett, her experience in each of her previous British films should contribute something to the composite characterisation—the aristocratic dignity of "Fire Over England," the "gamin" touch of "St. Martin's Lane," the provocative philandering of "A Yank at Oxford," and the spirit and assurance of "Storm in a Teacup" and "Dark Journey."

Opposite her will appear Clark Gable as Rhett Butler; Leslie Howard as Ashley Wilkes; and Olivia de Havilland as Melanie.