

The Courier Covers

THE NEW MOVIES

By John Springer

(Editor's Note—Listed as Class R, Objectionable in Part, by the National Legion of Decency, this week, are: "Sullivan's Travels"; objection: light treatment of marriage, and "Bedtime Story," objection: Action of the heroine reflects acceptability of divorce.)

"One Foot in Heaven"—A-1

For many years, Protestant groups, recognizing the merits of "Boys Town" and other films that have dealt with Catholic priests, have been appealing to Hollywood to do something similar for their own ministers. "One Foot in Heaven" is Hollywood's answer — and there could scarcely have been a better one. Like Bellamy Partridge's "Country Lawyer" and Clarence Day's "Life With Father," Hartsell Spence wrote entertainingly about his own family in his best-selling non-fiction book. Warner Brothers brings it to the screen with simple dignity — but don't let that term frighten you because it's grand entertainment all the way through.

The incidents and anecdotes and memoirs that made up the book have been woven into a screen play by Casey Robinson, who preserves all of the rich human feeling of the book. Director Irving Rapper keeps the movie from becoming jerky and episodic, although the story covers a span of many years and has no real plot, in the conventional movie sense.

It is difficult to convey the charm of "One Foot in Heaven" in cold type. It is at once very funny and very tender and always completely human. It is to the screen what "Life With Father" was to the stage (the christening sequence is a close parallel with "Father's" baptism) and although it is about a minister and his family there is no mealy-mouthed moralizing. The minister and his family are presented as real people, not as types. There is a definite emphasis on the value of religion in life, but the picture doesn't get smug and sanctimonious about it.

There are any number of delightful sequences that in which the children's choir is substituted for the group of discordant oldsters, for instance, or that marvelous moment when the Methodist minister, in order to point out the evils of the movies, takes his son to a William S. Hart thriller, complete with jangling pianist; or that in which the wealthiest woman in the congregation, after a quarrel with the minister, majestically announces that she is going to join the Baptists, or that in which the minister drumming up business at the marriage license bureau, looks expectantly at some prospective customers, who turn out to be after a dog license; or that final moment in which all of the congregation are drawn to the church by the playing of the new carillon—a scene that is unbelievable in retrospect but that carries a real thrill. "One Foot in Heaven" is a collection of such sequences, beautifully played all the way through. Fredric March is true and understanding as the Rev. Spence and Martha Scott sincere and sympathetic as his wife. Here are two notable characterizations. All other players are subordinated, each to his particular sequence, but all of them, being fine actors, make the most of their moments. They include Beulah Bondi, as the rich woman who turns Baptist; Laura Hope Crews, the choir leader outraged when she is replaced by the children; Frankie Thomas, Gene Lockhart, Jerome Cowan, Moroni Olsen, Harry Davenport, Ernest Cossart, Elisa Beth Fraser and others. All of them aid in making a fine and heartwarming film.

"Ball of Fire"—A-2

Gary Cooper is playing his "John Doe-Mr. Deeds" character again this time as the learned professor who gets a few lessons in the ways of the jive-world. "Ball of Fire" is the picture—a gagged-up, hokey comedy, produced by Samuel Goldwyn and a good contrast to the current Goldwyn drama, "Little Foxes." Upon analysis, "Ball of Fire" turns out to be very thin as to story and somewhat forced as the comedy that is squeezed out of slang.

But so brightly as it acted, so speedily directed by Howard Hawks that it makes comedy with few let-downs. Cooper continues to be a surprisingly accomplished comedian and Barbara Stanwyck is excellent in her familiar role of the hard girl who softens under the influence of sweetness and light. Dana Andrews and Dan

Duryes are two young character actors who continue to show promise. Cooper's seven co-professors

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Wake Island Defender

Reno. The Most Rev. Thomas K. Gorman, Bishop of Reno, officiated at a Solemn Pontifical Requiem Mass in St. Thomas Aquinas' Cathedral for Joseph McDonald, 28, construction engineer who met gallant death in the defense of Wake Island. Mr. McDonald was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Joe McDonald, both of whom are editors of the Nevada State Journal.

WEEK OF STUDIES

Rio De Janeiro.—A week of studies in Porto Alegre brought to a close the year's activities for the Associação de Professores Católicos (League of Catholic Teachers). The theme discussed was "Contemporary Culture in the Light of St. Thomas Aquinas."

O God, come to my assistance; Lord make haste to help me Psalm 69, 1.

Woman, 102, Dies

Lodi, N. J.—Mrs. Gracie Abbate, who would have observed the 102nd anniversary of her birthday tomorrow, was buried here. Funeral services were held in St. Joseph's Church. Born in Italy, she came to this country 80 years ago. Her 102 descendants include six children, 80 grandchildren, 24 great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild.

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