Courier's Current Cinema Comments

By John Springer

(Editor's Note: Listed as Class B, objectionable in part, this week by the National Legion of Decency: "I Married a Witch"; objection: "Light treatment of marriage, suggestive in dialogue and costume.")

'The Major and the Minor'—A-2

The title of the new Ginger Rogers picture is "The Major and the Minor." It's a comedy with major entertainment value and only minor points for criticism. It is also another proof that this Rogers girl, though she may not be the world's greatest actress, is a light comedienne of no mean ability.

For a long time, Ginger Rogers was just Fred Astaire's dancing partner. She got away from that when she scored a hit in "Vivacious Lady," following up with comedy triumphs in pictures like "The Bachelor Mother" and "Tom, Dick and Harry." Although she has scored also in dramatic roles in "Kitty Foyle" and "Primrose Path," it is as a comedienne that she is most welcome. She is at her best in "The Major and the Minor."

Here she plays a girl who is plenty sick of New York and wants to go back to Iowa. But she doesn't have enough money for train fare so she gets herself up in the garb of a child of twelve so that she can ride for half fare. A persistent conductor and other circumstances throw her in with a nearsighted young major who is an instructor in a military school. He looks after the little darling and the looking after includes having her spend some time at the military school. Thereupon the junior wolves proceed on the chase.

It's all quite ridiculous and inconsequential, but it's a lot of fun. Charles Brackett and Billy Wilder have written an engaging screen play and Wilder directs for the maximum laugh results. Miss Rogers isn't always the most believable little girl in the world—particularly with all of that lip make-up, but she's close enough to the real thing to make it entertaining. Ray Milland does expert acting as the major and Diana Lynn, Frankie Thomas, Raymond Roe, Billy Dawson and others make the roles of the bona-fide youngsters count.

'Eyes in the Night'—A-1

With all the best wishes in the world for a strong comeback for Ann Harding, we must regretfully report that "Eyes in the Night" isn't it. Miss Harding is still a lovely woman and, in the few occasions when she gets an opportunity indicates that she hasn't lost any of her great ability. But her role of a troubled lady in the new picture merely asks her to sit around and look distressed while Edward Arnold ferrets out the murderers. Nor is the story too believable, although it has been well handled and rates a little better than average, possessing a certain degree of novelty because of the fact that the detective, played by Arnold, is blind. Donna Read, Katharine Emery, Rosemary DeCamp, Stanley Ridges, Horace McNally and Steve Geray have lesser roles.

'Seven Sweethearts'—A-1

A pretty little trifle about tulip time in Holland, Michigan, "Seven Sweethearts" is principally notable because it gives three young people another chance to show how very nice it is to have them on the screen. The young people are Van Heflin, the fastest-rising young actor of the year, Marsha Hunt, who plays a rather silly role without overdoing it, and Kathryn Grayson, a very pretty girl with a lovely voice.

The story, a weak thing, brings New York reporter Heflin to Holland, Michigan, to cover the tulip festival. There he stays at a hotel, run by a Dutchman of the old school (S. Z. Sakall at his most delightful) assisted by his seven lovely daughters. Six, actually, because the eldest, played by Miss Hunt, toils not, neither does she dance in the festival, nor does she do anything much except make herself generally disagreeable. But the reporter falls in love with the youngest daughter, who is Miss Grayson. However Miss Hunt complicates things and it isn't until the end that seven happy couples end up married—all to the right people.

The picture—first production by Joe Pasternak, Deanna Durbin's former producer, for M-G-M—has a sort of quaint charm and the supporting cast includes such able people as Isobel Elsom, Carl Esmond, Donald Meek and Louise Beavers. But it's the starring threesome, aided by Sakall, that makes it particularly pleasant entertainment.

'Wings and the Woman'—A-2

Anna Neagle is a charming woman and a distinct actress, but "Wings and the Woman," which is the story of Amy Johnson Mollison, gives her little opportunity to show it. Amy Johnson led a dramatic and adventurous life but, somehow, as brought to the screen it doesn't make very forceful dramatic material. The reason is that her life started to become dramatic when she started to make her series of flights. And a good percentage of the picture is no more than a series of shots of Amy in the cockpit of her plane. They're nice to look at because Miss Neagle is nice to look at. But they don't make very strong drama. Her stormy life with Jim Mollison is touched briefly, although with surprising frankness, considering that Mollison is still alive. This role is well played by Robert Newton, but the director never develops more than static interest in the marriage. It's a sincere tribute to the woman, but it's only moderate movie fare.

Other Pictures

Another one of those things about the lawless town and the decent element who gets rid of the bad men is "Sin Town," B. There's nothing in it that hasn't been in all of the others. Broderick Crawford is still one of the top young character actors but he is doomed if they keep on giving him second raters like this. Constance Bennett continues to struggle valiantly in parts at which she would have turned up her nose not many years ago. Ward Bond, like Crawford, is an excellent young character actor, but he, too, deserves better roles. There's not much to say about "Secret Enemies," A-2, except that it was the other picture on the third double bill of the week. John Ridgely, who plays one of the leads, is an actor whose work bears watching.

Gilbert and Sullivan Operas

As enthusiastic a cult as there is among theater lovers is that of the Gilbert and Sullivan devotees. They—and their name is legion—and many others, who have never been properly introduced to the great masters of musical comedy, will have their chance at the Auditorium this week end, when the Boston Comic Opera Company presents a repertory of five Gilbert and Sullivan operas. Tonight is "The Pirates of Penzance"; tomorrow evening a double bill, consisting of "Trial by Jury" and "Pinafore". Saturday matinee, "The Mikado" and Saturday evening, "Iolanthe."

(John Springer reminisces about one of the best pictures of the year, "The Male Animal," which starred Henry Fonda and Olivia deHavilland, on Your Movie Memory, WSAY, Monday morning at 10.)

Priest Designs Picture Prayer

This unique "picture-within-a-picture" was conceived for service men's mothers, wives and sweethearts by the Rev. Benedict Mahan, M.S.SS.T., once a commercial artist, now a Missionary Servant of the Most Holy Trinity at the National Shrine of St. Joseph, Stirling, N. J., where thousands of soldiers' and sailors' names are recorded on first national Honor Roll. Stores throughout the nation will soon display these colorful framed pictures with opening in easel-back for inserting photo of your own soldier, shielding Old Glory under the protecting arm of Our Lady of Victory.

New Missal Sent Service Chaplains

NEW YORK.—Distribution of a Military Missal, Missale Castrense, to all Catholic chaplains in the armed services, including civilian auxiliary chaplains, is announced by the Chaplains' Aid Association in its publication, Bulletin. Kits prepared for newly-enlisting chaplains will have this Missal as standard equipment.

"The popular War Missal, published under the direction of the Rt. Rev. Msgr. John J. Burke, C.S.P., during the last war, was made inoperative by a change in the indult granted to chaplains in the present war, so a new Missal had to be prepared," the Bulletin asserts. "The present indult gives chaplains a right to substitute for the Mass of the day one of the following Masses, according to the character of the day: 1. On Sundays and major feasts, the Mass of Trinity Sunday; 2. Throughout Easter Week, the Mass of Easter Sunday; 3. On all other days, one of the following three Masses: (a) the Votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin; (b) the Votive Mass in Time of War; and (c) the Mass of the Dead. Five Votive Masses of the Blessed Virgin are provided in the Missal; they are to be used according to the season of the year."

Movie Guide

NEW FILMS REVIEWED

Navy Comes Through, A-1
Seven Days' Leave, A-1
Texas to Bataan, A-1
Black Swan, A-2
Criminal Investigator, A-2
Isle of Missing Men, A-2
Police Bullets, A-2
That Other Woman, A-2
Undying Monster, A-2
I Married a Witch, B

AT THE THEATRES

PALACE
Now, Voyager, A-2
Henry Aldrich, Editor, A-1

LOEW'S ROCHESTER
You Were Never Lovelier (Not classified)
Spirit of Stanford, A-1

CENTURY
Gentleman Jim, A-1
That Other Woman, A-2

TEMPLE
Secrets of a Co-ed, A-2

REGENT
Major and the Minor, A-2
Scattergood Survives a Murder, A-1

LITTLE
Louisa (Not classified)

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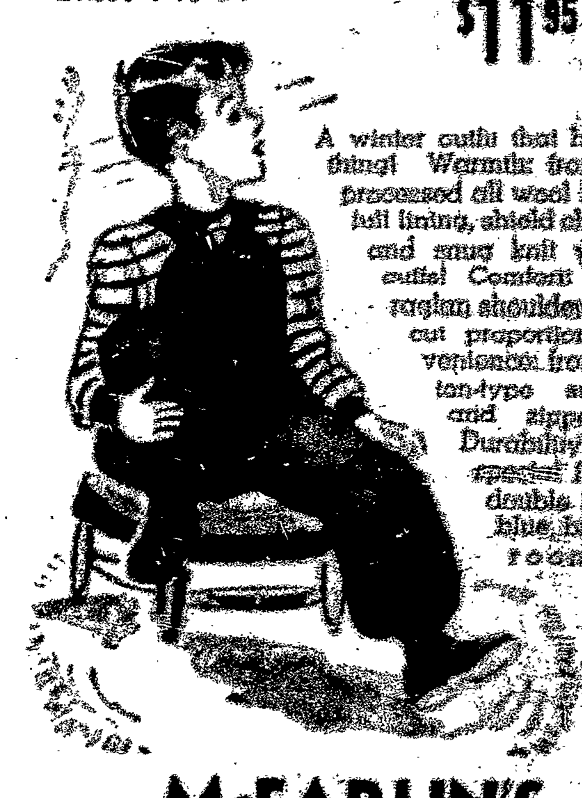

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