

he has reluctantly returned to London to be knighted; the first evening home, his valet (Eric Blore) dies suddenly of pneumonia; the doctor who has been called in assumes that it is the great painter who has died; and the painter, loathing prominence and seeking only peace and quiet, allows the mistake to go unchallenged, and assumes the identity of the valet. When the enormity of the hoax dawns on him, it is too late; nobody will believe him; and the valet goes to a tomb among the nation's great in the Abbey, while the painter goes off to a villa in Putney, on the arm of a widow (Gracie Fields), who is looking for a husband. But, as the poet has said, "Oh what a tangled web we weave, when first we practise to deceive"; and that is only the start of a comedy of errors in which echoes from the valet's and the painter's pasts are constantly rising to trouble the tranquility of the Putney present.

Monty Woolley still has the Beard and some of the acrimony of his previous roles, but manages to let you forget that he was once Sheridan Whiteside, and enlists all the necessary sympathy for the character he is playing. Some people may regret that Gracie Fields does not sing in the film, but she doesn't need to: her warmly human portrayal of the widow demonstrates that her personality is by no means dependent on her voice.

THE IMPOSTOR

(Universal)

HOW long does one go on making allowances for the foreign artist who finds himself in the clutches of the Hollywood system? When does one cease blaming the system for the inadequacies of his films and start blaming the man himself? These are questions which might be debated at great length; indeed, they almost involve the theological doctrine of Free Will. I raise them now because the Hollywood productions of the *ci-devant* great French director, Julien Duvivier, have been growing progressively phonier, and his latest is the phoniest of the lot. It begins to look as if Duvivier was never really keen on resisting Hollywood, was always a collaborationist at heart.

The Impostor is melodramatic mush, but it opens promisingly enough, with Jean Gabin, as a French criminal convicted of murder, escaping from almost under the knife of the guillotine during the blitz of 1940. With a stolen uniform and papers he reaches North Africa. But not content with having saved his hero's head, M. Duvivier must then proceed to save his soul by subjecting him to the influence of La Patrie, the trust and comradeship of honest men, and practically every other known device of conversion (including a heavenly choir at the tensest moments).

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