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The Films, by G.M.

SPEAKING CANDIDLY

TOGETHER AGAIN

(Columbia)

I VERY nearly missed seeing this film, imagining that the title simply indicated that Irene Dunne was again in juxtaposition with Charles Boyer, and being of the opinion that this fact, by itself, scarcely constituted sufficient reason for making another picture. Actually, if the title means anything, this is all it does mean, but I am glad I saw *Together Again*, for it is an agreeable piece of comic nonsense with some bright situations and some even brighter lines of dialogue. What is more, apart from one dull patch towards the end when the heroine is dithering between love and what she conceives to be her duty, the polish is pretty evenly spread over the whole surface.

Together Again presents Irene Dunne in rather an unusual role; she is the second wife of a statue. This dominating piece of sculpture stands in the centre of the small town of Brookhaven and is a more-than-life-size replica of that town's dead mayor, the much-revered Jonathan Crandall. His handsome widow, who has succeeded to the mayoralty, is fully occupied in sustaining this high office with dignity and efficiency, and in coping, during her off-duty moments, with a highly-strung teenage stepdaughter who suffers from "metabolic glands," and a romantically-minded father-in-law (Charles Coburn), who holds that even a mayor's widow owes it to herself to be merry sometimes. But Her Honor the Mayoress copes successfully until a bolt of lightning strikes off the statue's head and she goes up to New York to arrange with a sculptor to put it back. When the sculptor turns out to be Charles Boyer and he leads her into an adventure in Manhattan which results in the Mayoress of Brookhaven being arrested as a strip-tease artist, it begins to look as if father-in-law may have been right when he suggested that the thunderbolt was "an act of Providence to end the Crandall dynasty." This threat to Her Honor (or rather, to her sense of civic duty, since M. Boyer's intentions are reasonably matrimonial) becomes even greater when the sculptor follows her home, sets up a studio in her garage, and proceeds to remodel her life as well as the statue. And the mayoress is not the only one who starts acting, as somebody describes it, "kinda leapy"; for the teen-age stepdaughter also becomes infatuated and behaves in a manner far beyond her years, while her devoted though gangling swain, a high-school youth, does likewise. The plot becomes so entangled that, at one hectic point, the sculptor finds himself engaged to the stepdaughter, while the mayoress, though not exactly sure how she stands in relation to the amorous schoolboy, realises that the position is untenable.

"This is the most idiotic situation I have ever seen," remarks father-in-law at about this moment, a statement which may be taken as fair comment not only on this particular sequence, but on the story as a whole. However, the plot un-

ravels itself satisfactorily; and the idiocy is so cheerful, and the acting so light-heartedly competent, that I can think of many less enjoyable ways of spending an evening than seeing *Together Again*.

ON APPROVAL

(Gainsborough)

THIS is a remake of the Frederick Lonsdale comedy (with Tom Walls and Yvonne Arnaud, in 1930. Remember it?) Clive Brook produced, directed, and adapted the new version, and also takes the starring role of the 10th Duke of Bristol, being assisted by Beatrice Lillie, Googie Withers, and Roland Culver. Quite apart from the fact that I think you will enjoy the film in its own right, I suggest that you might see it for the purpose of comparing it with the American humour of *Together Again*. For *On Approval* is a comedy with style, a highly distinctive style. In actual fact, although *On Approval* is a very English picture, it probably owes a good deal to French models, being somehow suggestive of Sacha Guitry—and since it is a story of two trial-honeymoons in Edwardian days, "suggestive" is a not inappropriate adjective. However, Clive Brook has refurbished the old plot with so many new ideas, has pointed the satire so sharply, has created such a cleverly stylised period atmosphere (with Cecil Beaton doing the costumes and William Alwyn the music) that, although a few of Brook's devices are rather far-fetched, the total effect is almost as refreshing as it is funny—but refreshing in a curious, old-fashioned way. The film is often deliberately archaic, not only in content, but also in form.

The method of narration has a confiding, intimate quality, as if some clubman of another day were chewing over a piece of old scandal—and occasionally smacking his lips. Since this quality derives almost wholly from the direction, one must regard the film as a personal triumph for Clive Brook, while giving full credit to the others, especially Miss Lillie, for their contributions.

DARK WATERS

(United Artists)

IT is apparently becoming popular with film producers to drive heroines mad by subtle suggestion rather than by open violence. Having seen this done not many weeks ago to Ingrid Bergman in *Gaslight*—and done rather better, too—I was perhaps not as excited as I should have been by the fate prepared for Merle Oberon in *Dark Waters*. She, poor girl, is the sole survivor of a lifeboat voyage after her ship has been torpedoed, and enters the picture with a first-class nervous breakdown which does not, however, prevent her from describing her experience in such curiously stilted phrases as "Constantly there was the delirious nightmare of the open boat. . . ." For a rest-cure she goes to stay with an uncle and aunt she has never seen (John Qualen, Fay Bainter) on a sugar-plantation among the bayous of Louisiana, where it soon becomes apparent to the

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