

# SPEAKING CANDIDLY

## A PLACE OF ONE'S OWN

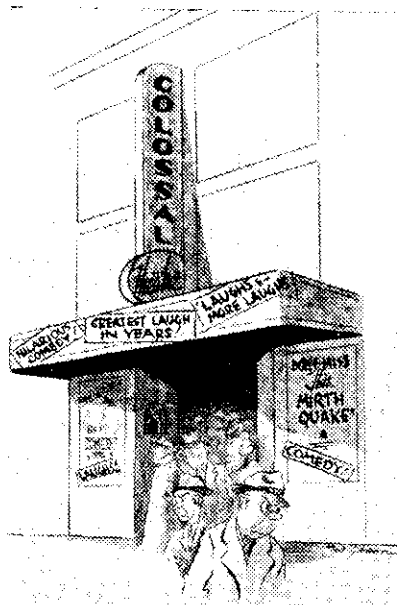
(Gainsborough)

THE more films I see, the more I think old Polonius knew what he was talking about when he said (not with reference to films, of course). "This above all, to thine own self be true. . . ." Apply this precept to almost any film you can think of, and you will find, in nearly every case, that success or failure depends above all on whether the film is true to its own nature and is not ashamed of its origins, however humble. Take this British production, *A Place of One's Own*. I don't believe in ghosts (so far as I know), but I do believe in ghost stories, provided they are not bogus; and the chief reason why this film is worth serious notice is that it believes in itself. It does not pretend to be something it is not, for example, by wrapping around itself the trappings of the murder-mystery or the psychological shocker. Instead, this shy, quiet little spook story (originally written by Sir Osbert Sitwell), comports itself throughout in the manner becoming to its kind; and it is this quality of honesty and dig-

nity even more than the good acting which inclines me to overlook any faults—such as unnecessary red herrings and a few loose ends.

*A Place of One's Own* makes no attempt to explain the ghostly happenings away in the last reel; it frankly asks you to accept them, together with the basic supposition that old buildings are impregnated with the emotions of their former occupants. And because the treatment is so sincere, the chances are that, while the film is running, if not afterward, you will do so. In this respect *A Place of One's Own* fully merits comparison with *The Uninvited*, even though it lacks the more spectacular manifestations of the supernatural as well as some of the excitement and pace of the Hollywood picture. The British ghosts are, indeed, perhaps a little too retiring; the nearest we get to a real live spook is a self-playing piano and a rushing wind. (No, I'm forgetting the old doctor who comes back in the last few minutes to exorcise the troublesome spirits; he seems real enough, but he has been dead some hours).

However, though they aren't substantial, enough queer things go on through-



young companion. The Smedhursts are played by James Mason and Barbara Mullen with warmth and humanity and a very nice sense of period (the time is 1900). After having become so used to seeing Mr. Mason leering his way sardonically through a succession of roles as wife-beater and seducer of virtuous maidens, I found it very pleasant for a change to watch him sustain—and sustain so effectively—the character of such a nice old chap as Mr. Smedhurst. As the girl who becomes "possessed" by the ghost of the former occupant, dead 40 years, Margaret Lockwood is also very satisfactory; she has the type of beauty which fits the period and a sensitive restraint which fits the role.

There is, as somebody remarks with reference to the house, "nothing in particular about the place except the atmosphere." For that matter, there is nothing in particular about the film except the atmosphere of subtle uneasiness which it creates. But in a film of this kind it is atmosphere of this kind that counts.

## PRACTICALLY YOURS

(Paramount)

THIS is billed as "Paramount's Practically Perfect Comedy," and while I think that even that is a slight overstatement, I heartily approve of the approach towards truth in advertising. But *Practically Yours* might have

out the story to create a very effective air of unease and to get properly on the nerves of Mr. and Mrs. Smedhurst, the nice elderly Yorkshire couple who have bought the house, and in particular on the nerves of Mrs. Smedhurst's charming

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