

SPEAKING CANDIDLY

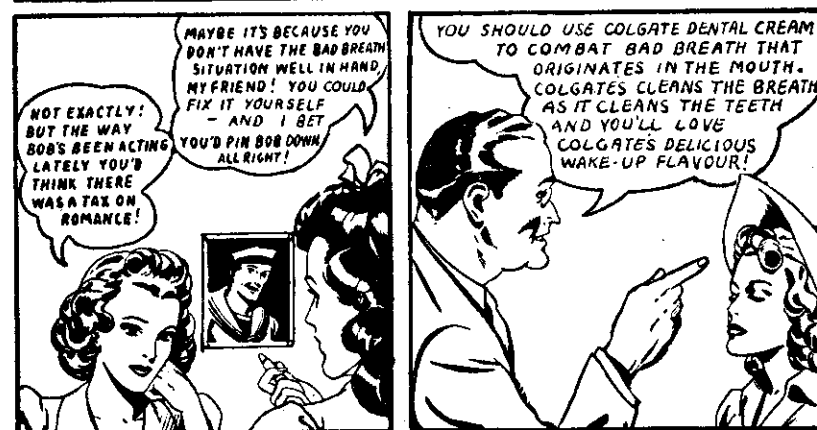
THE WICKED LADY

(Gainsborough)

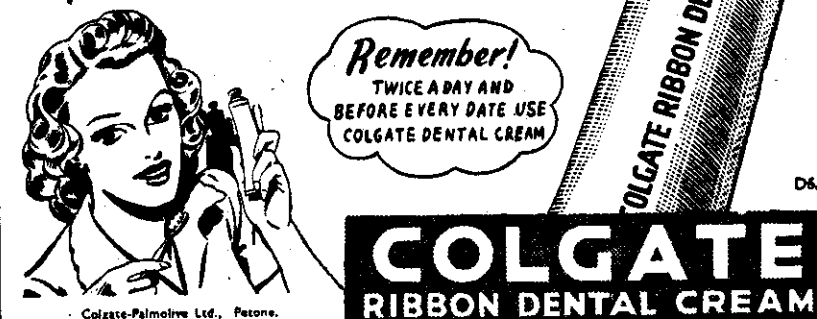
[F you were close enough, you would notice an interesting variety of expressions chasing one another, as the novelists put it, across the Little Man's face. The predominant expression, perhaps, is one of shocked disapproval, for all his puritan hackles were aroused by this salacious melodrama about a heroine who makes Scarlett O'Hara look, by contrast, like a virtuous young thing fresh from convent-school, and who even causes Amber to seem forever eclipsed in vice and promiscuity. Struggling with the disapproval, however, you would perceive a kind of grudging admiration for parts of the acting and most of the settings, and particularly for the daring of the producer in transferring some of the authentic licentiousness of the Restoration Period to the screen. And every now and then you would see a look of blank amazement—amazement at this revelation of another side to the activity of that extraordinary man, J. Arthur Rank; amazement that this sponsor of religious films and founder-patron of Children's Cinema Clubs (including those for Young New Zealanders), this pillar of Methodism whose professed intention is to raise the moral tone of British films, should apparently not have scrupled to allow a studio under his control to produce such a questionable screenplay as this.

In brief, *The Wicked Lady* is a piece to arouse mixed feelings, most of them uncomplimentary. Before I saw it I had read that the film had been banned in the U.S.A., mainly on the ground that the Restoration gowns worn by Margaret Lockwood, Patricia Roc, and others, were cut too low. I was inclined to dismiss this as an example of convenient prudishness on the part of American movie interests, enabling them to remove an unwelcome competitor from the field. But now I have seen the film I think it likely that the American censor was upset by more than "the out-works of the Lady's shape which from her fichu may escape" (as Saggiarius put it in *The New Statesman*). I have my own views on the value of screen censorship; but as long as the community accepts the need for it in principle, there are certain rules which should be observed in practice by any film-producer. There is, as I see it, no harm in allowing the characters in a Restoration story to dress in the manner of the period. Whether they can be permitted the same latitude in their speech and behaviour is, however, another matter; especially when, as would seem to be the case here, there is some doubt as to whether the unbridled talk and situations are included primarily for the sake of authenticity of atmosphere or mostly for the sake of the box-office.

(continued on next page)



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Jay Wilbur at 1ZB

[LISTENERS who have visited 1ZB's radio theatre recently have been impressed with the music of Jay Wilbur (left) and his 1ZB Orchestra. Jay Wilbur, well-known to BBC listeners, arrived in New Zealand a month or two ago, announcing his intention to settle here. Now he is busy rehearsing 22 musicians for a series of presentations shortly to be broadcast over the Commercial network. The opening broadcast will be from 1ZB at 8.15 p.m. this Sunday, November 24, under the title *Jay Wilbur and the Rustle of Strings*. The full orchestra contains 14 violins, two violas, two cellos, a string bass, a guitar,

a piano and the 1ZB novachord. The photograph below shows Jay Wilbur and members of the new orchestra at rehearsal in the radio theatre.

