

SPEAKING CANDIDLY

THE LATE GEORGE APLEY (20th Century-Fox)

SO many films (and so many novels and plays) depend for any interest they may possess upon involved plots, upon the working out of improbable and usually violent situations and the machinations of melodramatic villains, heroes, and heroines, that it is a real pleasure to come upon a quiet, gentle piece like John P. Marquand's *The Late George Apley*, which derives its appeal solely from the sedate delineation of character and the fastidious creation of an atmosphere of period and place. Indeed, it is only when the film departs from these two objectives, by becoming involved in an attempt to reach an artificial Hollywood finale, that it loses some of its savour, and thus barely misses this column's highest grading.

With an ironic sense of humour and several delicately-shaded character portrayals (especially in the supporting cast), the film deals with the private and public life, in the year 1912, of a Boston gentleman named George Apley (Ronald Colman), one of the "Brahmins" of Beacon Hill, the city's most exclusive residential district. But his public duties consist of nothing more exciting than attendance, on Monday nights, at the Boston Waifs' Society, the "family charity"; on Tuesday afternoons at the Tuesday Afternoon Club; on Tuesday nights at the Save Boston Society (to prevent the importation of "harmful literature" and the construction of electric signs near the Common); on Wednesday nights at the Wednesday Night Club; on Thursdays at the Blue Hill Bird-Watchers' Society; and, of course, at church on Sundays. The summit of George Apley's public ambition is to be elected president of the Bird Watchers' Society for having spotted a Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker in December.

His domestic existence is equally placid, lapped about by the comfort and security of inherited wealth, cushioned against the vulgar shocks of the outside world by a respect for narrow traditionalism which amounts to ancestor-worship, and by the smug belief that anything an Apley does must be right. He has been reared on Emerson, Thoreau, and Hawthorne, but is ineffably shocked to hear them described as radicals. The only ripples on the surface of the intellectual backwater in which he lives are caused by an attempt to inter an obscure relative in the family burial-plot, by his wife's hastily-suppressed wish to travel abroad, by the discovery that his son wants to marry a lower-class "foreigner" from a neighbouring town, and by the revelation that his daughter is reading Freud and is in love with a "radical" university lecturer from New York.

Troubled only momentarily by doubts about his own good judgment, George Apley deals easily enough with the obtrusive Cousin Hattie who does not know her place even in death, with the brief unrest of a wife (Edna Best) who has put up with him for many years, and with the problem of his erring son, who soon marries the girl selected for him by the family. But for the sake of a box-office ending the film makes

Apley permit his rebellious daughter to marry the man of her own choice. This final concession not only has the effect of prolonging the film unduly, but it also falsifies the characterisation and, to some extent, blunts the satiric point of the whole production.

THE humour of *The Late George Apley*, though sharp and ironic throughout (thanks mainly to excellent dialogue), is kindly enough; but it was not the author's intention, I think, that we should in any way lament the passing of George Apley and his kind. Indeed, a story like this, with its picture of rank snobbery and privilege and reactionary petty-mindedness masquerading as inherent worth, almost reconciles one to living in the atomic age. Hollywood's treatment, in these circumstances, seems a shade too nostalgic. I don't know whether it was the studio's intention to do this, but the effect of compromise in the final scenes, besides confusing the plot, is to present the character of George Apley not merely with sympathy but even with positive approval. This impression is reinforced by Ronald Colman's portrayal of the blue-blooded Bostonian! It is a skilfully urbane performance, carried through with a neat sense of the ridiculous; yet Mr. Colman is himself so dapper and debonair and he treats his subject with such whimsical affection that, although one laughs at Apley's pomposities, one comes at the finish close to admiring the man. Which, I suggest, is not quite as it should be.

THE daughter of the sedate household is played by the Irish actress, Peggy Cummins: she is probably more at home making her Hollywood debut here than in the starring role of *Forever Amber*, as originally announced, but she still doesn't seem to be in quite the right place. Most of the other supporting characters, however, are excellent, especially Edna Best as the comfortable, understanding wife, and Richard Haydn as the unctuous Horatio Willing. These people, dropping in and out of the script to utter their ironically amusing lines of dialogue, help as much as anybody to make *The Late George Apley* an enjoyable comedy of manners, well worth seeing.

SONG OF SCHEHERAZADE

(Universal)

LAST week it was the great Mr. Handel. This week it is Nicholas Andreevich Rimsky-Korsakov. Pretty soon it will be Paganini. The film industry seems determined that our knowledge of the masters shall be wide if not deep, and the effort to absorb all this musical education becomes a trifle exhausting—especially when, as happened in this case, one had seen Mr. Warwick Braithwaite conducting the National Orchestra through the *Scheherazade* Suite just the night before one came across Jean Pierre Aumont, in the role of the composer himself, trying to do the self-same thing on the screen. M. Aumont's effort, as it happens, is a poor second-best; just a portion of the Suite here, just a fragment there; which is a pity because the genuine *Scheherazade* ballet, if staged in full and in



SPRAINS

SLOAN'S gives quick relief!

Sloan's Liniment brings tingling, comforting warmth to the muscles and joints and helps ease your suffering. If you are troubled with a sprain, or suffer from rheumatism, sciatica, lumbago or strains, let Sloan's help you get quick relief.

Sold by all Chemists and Stores

SLOAN'S Family LINIMENT

Chamberlain's (N.Z.) Ltd., 49 Swanson St. Auckland. (Successors to Dr. Earl S. Sloan Ltd., London.)

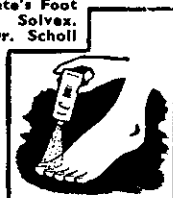
UNPLEASANT FOOT ODOUR an unhealthy condition WITH A REMEDY

Unpleasant foot odour (Bromidrosis) is a functional disease of the sweat glands due to bacterial growths. It has a remedy—Dr. Scholl's Bromidrosil Powder—a soothing powder that immediately neutralises offensive smell while it attacks the bacteria. Dusting feet, socks and shoes daily with this new powder will eventually restore the normal healthy perspiration of the feet.

Use Dr. Scholl's Bromidrosil powder, too, for treating Athlete's Foot in conjunction with Solvex. Price 3/9 at all Dr. Scholl dealers.

Dr. Scholl's
BROMIDROSIL
POWDER

Scholl Mfg. Co. Ltd., Willeston St., Wellington.



OLD SACKING

South Island Farmers . . . Wool Stores . . . Coal Merchants, etc. . . . We require your old sacking for manufacturing purposes . . . We pay freight and highest possible cash prices . . . Enquire or consign all your worn out socks, wool packs, etc. to:—

DOMINION TRADING CO. LTD.
TEXTILE - MERCHANTS
PHONE 35-054
166 MADRAS STREET - CHRISTCHURCH

SURE SPEEDY RELIEF FROM INDIGESTION

Your first trial of Hardy's will convince you of its value. Hardy's relieves painful indigestion safely and quickly, soothes the membranes of the digestive tract and restores your appetite for food. Just take Hardy's—and enjoy freedom from digestive disorders.

HARDY'S INDIGESTION REMEDY

Manufactured for R. M. Hardy & Co. Pty. Ltd., 5 Hunter Street, Sydney.

36