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weak flesh and irresolute spirit, between legal obligation to speak and moral obligation to keep silent, lies beneath the vivid colour and finished acting of every scene.

I do not suggest that the manner in which these conflicts are resolved will satisfy everyone. In places I found the behaviour of Michael Redgrave, as the Master Smuggler, inconsistent with the man as the early sequences of the film reveal him. His flogging of the boy who had been palpably "framed up" by the other smugglers—an episode which is the fulcrum on which the whole story turns—is psychologically unconvincing, and the final scenes left me with a vague doubt in my mind. And the narrative method, while it broke the thread of the action, provided no emotional respite. The enduring moment of the film—the point at which it opens and that to which it returns at regular intervals up to the final scene—shows the boy chained to a stake in the dungeon of the county jail under the suavely sadistic gaze of Ralph Truman, the official inquisitor. This is no moment of tranquillity in which to recall the emotion which makes up the rest of the film, and it might be argued that it overdoes the emotional catharsis.

But these are intellectual objections, and whether they are sustained or not the film still stands as a good piece of

work. As in most British pictures of a serious type, the characterisations—from the principals down to the walk-on parts—are convincing and three-dimensional. Joan Greenwood as the good girl (is that delightful accent genuinely Sussex?) and Jean Kent as the aptly-named Lucy both react well to colour photography. Felix Aylmer is a parish priest to the manner born, and Francis L. Sullivan highlights one of those convincing court-room scenes which British directors handle so well. Though the period is roughly the same as that of *The Wicked Lady*, I notice that corsets are now being worn a trifle higher. This may be attributable to the methodical eye which Mr. Rank keeps on the American market, but it might be more charitable to assume that for once *The Man Within* is more important than *The Woman Without*.

DEAR RUTH

(Paramount)

DEAR RUTH was probably much funnier as a Broadway play than as a Hollywood picture—not that any liberties have been taken in the translation which (so far as one can deduce from the settings, the dialogue, and even the conscious grouping of the players) appears to have been almost painstakingly literal. But the play scored its success in the war years and the film

comes too late to fit so neatly into the mood of the moment. Nor does the plot excel in originality. But sometimes things which are well-worn acquire a polish and the dialogue of *Dear Ruth* is smooth, well-handled, and fast (sometimes too fast for maximum enjoyment). The story, which will evoke more than vague recollections of similar themes, starts with Ruth's young sister, a sample of junior American collegiate life who would make a saint's hands itch. This brat (played to the life, one fears, by Mona Freeman) insists upon involving herself in the War Effort to the extent of donating her father's blood to the local blood-bank, sending lengthy wires at his expense to Washington demanding for all bobbysoxers the right to be drafted, and carrying on a correspondence with the Secretary of War. She also wears a French beret in protest against the State Department's attitude (circa 1943) to General de Gaulle. That, however, is not all. Her correspondence has apparently included some three-score love-letters sent to a lieutenant of the Army Air Corps on duty in Britain to keep up his morale, and signed in her sister's name. The fact that Ruth is already engaged, and on the point of being married to a pompous bank official when the airman (Bill Holden) comes bouncing in on a 48-

hour pass, sets the stage in the manner to which one has become accustomed, and from that point the show has not an unexpected moment. Even in its one or two sentimental interludes, *Dear Ruth* makes no serious demands upon the cast. Joan Caulfield, as Ruth, looks pleasant and if I did not find her as exciting as William Holden did that is perhaps because I hadn't a chance to read her sister's letters. My sympathies on the whole were with Edward Arnold, as the harassed father so humiliated at the blood-bank—"Twenty women there as well, but I was the only one put in a cot with a blanket over me."

Dear Ruth could, I suppose, be dismissed as corny, but even alien corn is tasty if served (as in the present instance) with plenty of butter, and just a dash of salt.

NATIONAL FILM UNIT

"KEEPING THE PEACE" is the provocative title of an item in National Film Unit's Weekly Review No. 329, for release on December 19. It aims at telling parents how to keep the peace in their own backyards during the present epidemic—how to amuse the children during the closed school period. "Welsh Choir" is an item from a colony of Welsh women living in New Zealand; "Fire Danger" shows the peril to life and property when careless people drop lighted matches and cigarettes, and as this is the period when bush fires are easily started, the lesson the film teaches is very timely.

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