

# Mr. Donat Takes Silk

## THE WINSLOW BOY

(London Films)

**A**ZB Citizens' Forum which recently discussed the standing of the spoken word in New Zealand had little difficulty in reaching the conclusion that there was room for considerable improvement, and suggested, as a means to that end, that closer attention should be paid to the diction heard in BBC transcriptions and in the better British films.

I doubt if the undefiled English of the better British films is ever likely to be as strong an influence on the rank-and-file as the more picaresque speech-elements of the American cinema—Gresham's Law seems to apply as inflexibly to the spoken word as to currency—but for those who are interested in good speech, either from motives of self-improvement, or simply because they find pleasure in listening to it, I recommend a visit to *The Winslow Boy*.

Good speech, however, is not its only claim to attention. *The Winslow Boy* has also a good cast and a first-class theme. The cast, which contains some new faces as well as a number of old familiar ones, is headed by Robert Donat, who has been absent from films (except for a brief appearance in *Captain Boycott*) for a regrettably long time. He is, if possible, an even more polished performer than he was before, and as Sir Robert Morton, K.C., has every chance to capitalise on his fine presence, his grace of movement, and (above all) his faculty for crisp and incisive enunciation. Of equal importance to the story is the part of Arthur Winslow, played by Sir Cedric Hardwicke, a role which provides an agreeable dramatic contrast with Donat's and is, in my opinion, played with equal virtuosity. Two newcomers are Neil North, a juvenile whose portrayal of the Winslow Boy suggests a compound of his own natural talent and shrewd management by the director (Anthony Asquith), and Margaret Leighton, a pleasant young woman who, as the boy's sister, manages to combine a Pre-Raphaelite hair-do and a post-Pankhurst outlook and make the combination plausible. Besides these, there are such other experienced supporting players as Francis L. Sullivan, Marie Lohr, Basil Radford and Kathleen Harrison.

The chief attraction of the picture, however, should be the story, for *The Winslow Boy* is based on the famous Archer-Shee case which, through the part played in it by Sir Edward Carson, caused a *furor* in the years immediately before the first World War. Young Archer-Shee, a fourteen-year-old cadet of the Royal Naval College at Osborne, was expelled on suspicion of stealing a five-shilling postal-order, and without being given an opportunity to defend himself. To vindicate his son's honour, the father determined to force the Admiralty to defend its action in the Civil Courts. In this he was ultimately successful. Through the

### BAROMETER

FAIR TO FINE: "The Winslow Boy"  
FAIR: "Easter Parade."

advocacy of Carson, a Petition of Right was granted, the case heard, and the boy cleared—but at the cost of near-bankruptcy for the father.

This is the kind of story which appeals to most of us. We like to identify ourselves with the small, as opposed to the big, battalions—so long as our own non-combatant status is not infringed—and we can all cheer on the defenders of civil liberty from the comfort of a grandstand seat. Where the film failed, in my opinion, was not involving us all with the Winslows. As it is the plot turns inward on the Winslow family and concerns itself mainly with the effect on the individual members of the protracted litigation. Here the fault, of course, is not in the stars, but in Mr. Rattigan, author of the stage-play and the screen-script, who was not (I suspect) quite equal to his opportunity.

### EASTER PARADE

(M.G.M.)

[F what the doctor ordered was complete relaxation on the intellectual level, then *Easter Parade* is as good a way as could be found for carrying out the order. It brings back Fred Astaire, as sprightly as ever and apparently as deft in his timing as he was a decade ago, revives some pleasant old Irving Berlin songs, introduces some new ones, allows Judy Garland scope for a little horseplay, includes a small ration of cheesecake (Ann Miller), and thanks to the ubiquitous Miss Natalie Kalmus (how that woman does get around!) manages to wrap the lot up in dazzling technicolour. The story (*sic*) is set in the hobble-skirt period, but both the skirts and the Easter bonnets look vaguely familiar. As someone has pointed out, *The Whirligig of Time*. Brings in His Revenges.



ROBERT DONAT  
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