


SPEAKING CANDIDLY

THE DEVIL AND MISS JONES


(RKO-Radio)

 COUNTLESS times the movies have essayed the fairy-tale theme of the ruthless rich man whose granite heart is softened by the combined influences of love and suffering shared with his less fortunate fellows. Seldom has it been done with more quiet success than in *The Devil and Miss Jones*. The "devil" is John P. Merrick (Charles Coburn), an elderly millionaire with a weak stomach, no wife, and enough influence to have kept his picture out of the press for 20 years. Judge then of his annoyance when he learns from his morning paper that he has been hanged in effigy by the rebellious employees of one of the huge department stores which he owns. To hunt down and suppress the working-class agitators who are thus challenging the sacred rights of private property, the old boy elects to work incognito in the shoe department of the store. Here he soon encounters the angel who brings about his conversion—Miss Jones of Children's Shoes (Jean Arthur), a forthright, kind-hearted working-girl. Thanks to her he learns many things that are as good for his soul as for his stomach; that his employees have a real grievance, that the managers he has set in authority over them are petty tyrants, that the terror of the poor is lack of security in old age, that tuna-fish popovers are good to eat, and that it is possible to have more fun on three feet of sand on Coney Island than in a millionaire's mansion. He also falls in love with another employee and finally, having incited the staff to go on strike against himself, he smooths out labour troubles and romantic complications with the touch of a fairy godfather.

All this, of course, is too good to be true, but the film is more serious; in some of its philosophy than some at any rate of the audience around me appeared to appreciate. However, it never becomes the least ponderous. Its sustained level of humour is due as much to the expert guidance of Director Sam Wood as to the acting. Miss Arthur fully maintains her reputation as an actress of depth and intelligence, but this time she yields first place on the honours list to the veteran Coburn.

THE LADY FROM CHEYENNE

(Universal)

 AS a mild and gently satirical fantasia on what is a somewhat hackneyed theme, *The Lady from Cheyenne* may not break box-office records, but it will certainly do no harm to the reputations of those concerned in its production. It's a tale of the Mid-West in the 'sixties—or what the Mid-West might have been—starting off with a well-rigged land auction and ending happily for everyone except the badmen who rigged the auction and tried to do the same with the civic life which mush-



LORETTA YOUNG


"... Opposition takes on a definitely feminist line"

roomed from the land. Public Enemy No. 1, is of course, Edward Arnold, as the ornamentally and amply waist-coated proprietor of the local saloon (there must be a saloon sinister somewhere in that fellow's escutcheon), and the major landholder in the new town. Opposition to his rustic totalitarianism is at first headed by Frank Craven, as the local newspaper editor, a sort of homespun Doremus Jessup, who demonstrates just what a free press can do, when it is free and when it chooses to do it. But when Loretta Young, as the village schoolmistress, discovers that she is on the verge of being cheated of her school-house land to make a water monopoly, opposition to Mr. Arnold takes on a definitely feminist line.

As a kind of prairie Pankhurst, she carries the fight to the State legislature and, by playing Democrats off against Republicans, wangles a women's suffrage bill on to the Statute Book. Armed with this, she returns home, and Mr. Arnold and his bad lads are appropriately dealt with by a women's jury. The story is (if feminists don't mind my saying so), slight and improbable. But in that respect it suits the spirit of the picture, which is rather impish, and if *The Lady From Cheyenne* doesn't quite raise gales of laughter, it does provide a good hour and a-half of quiet amusement. Arnold, Loretta Young and Craven are good—so is Jessie Ralph, who has not always pleased me—but Robert Preston is not quite at ease. As Arnold's lieutenant and Miss Young's young man, he has a foot in either camp, and perhaps he can be forgiven if he feels uncomfortable and shifts from one foot to the other occasionally. Taken for all in all, it's good family entertainment, and I would recommend it to feminists with a sense of humour (if there are any).

ONE NIGHT IN LISBON

(Paramount)

 SERIOUS anti-Nazi films like *Pastor Hall*, *Escape* and *The Mortal Storm* having failed to do as well as was hoped at the box-office, it is reported that Hollywood is diverting its propaganda-urge into more frivolous channels. One can only hope that this report is not true or, if it is, that *One Night in Lisbon* is not typical of what we may now expect. This picture is not so much anti-Nazi as pro-Anglo-American collaboration, but from the viewpoint of either country is not likely to strengthen the bonds of friendship. Proceeding on the thesis that "into the life of every English girl a little American should fall," it puts forward as hero Fred MacMurray, an aviator who flies bombers to England and who suffers from an over-developed mating instinct. Though no opportunity is given this young man to demonstrate his ability as a flyer, his other quality is evident from the moment he set eyes on Madeleine Carroll in an empty shelter during a London air-raid. Thereafter we are treated to the rather unedifying spectacle of Mr. MacMurray boldly advancing and Miss Carroll coyly retreating. With a manner which suggests the calm assumption that every girl he casts eyes on will find him irresistible, our American hero makes duck calls at his protesting victim, invades her bedroom, insults her escort (an English naval commander who is so stuffy that the insults are admittedly

not undeserved). Between times he hobnobs with the West End elite in an atmosphere of rich food, champagne, tiaras, butlers, and Mayfair night-clubs which is rather at variance with the air-raids going on outside. After this reassuring evidence of a new social order in England, the film drags in a spy plot by the scruff of the neck, and the action thereupon moves to Portugal, where the hero and victim (no longer protesting) are deposited at a hotel for their Night in Lisbon. Unfortunately, the hero's divorced wife, the high-minded naval commander, several sinister Nazis, and a disguised Earl all join the party and temporarily frustrate their plans.

One Night in Lisbon has its moments of brightness and occasionally of genuine fun, but for the most part it is bogged down by silly story, laboured wisecracks, uninspired direction, and self-conscious propaganda. And while I believe that risqué situations have a legitimate place in adult entertainment, I did find something in this film that was rather blatant and offensive. (Won't Mr. L. D. Austin be pleased with me!) Miss Carroll's portrayal of virginal timidity melting into submission is not unengaging, but of Mr. MacMurray's acting I find it difficult to write with critical calm—he is noisome as well as noisy. For the sake of the Anglo-American understanding which this film purports to serve, it would be better for such obnoxious characterisations to be placed on the U.S.A.'s list of banned exports. And, as Mr. Roosevelt might say, you can quote me on that.

LESSONS IN FRENCH (20)

★ Exercice d'Intonation: Phrases contenant trois groupes ou davantage. ★

Modèle à suivre

— | — — — | — — \

Exemples: Les enfants / partiront demain / s'il fait beau. Nos livres / et nos cahiers / sont dans nos sacs. J'ai écrit / à mon professeur / pour lui dire / que vous allez mieux. Enfin / nous voici arrivés / au beau milieu / du village.

Chanson: Il était un petit navire (Voir Leçon 11).

Causerie:

Versailles

A. Dites-moi, mon ami, connaissez-vous Versailles?

B. Si je connais Versailles? Ah, mais oui, en effet, chaque Parisien connaît très bien Versailles. En été on y va le premier dimanche de chaque mois pour voir jouer les fontaines.

A. Oui, les fontaines de Versailles! Elles sont bien célèbres, n'est-ce pas. On dit que ce sont quelques unes des plus belles du monde entier.

B. Je crois que oui. Mais malheureusement elles sont si grandes, et il faut tant d'eau pour les faire jouer que l'on ne peut les voir que sept fois par an environ. Mais ces jours-là il y a tant de monde dans les jardins de Versailles que l'on dirait que tout Paris y était.

A. C'est tout près de Paris, alors. Quelle est la distance de Paris à Versailles?

B. Oui, c'est tout près. Il n'y a que 18 kilomètres de Paris à Versailles. On peut y aller en autobus. Dans le temps

on pouvait y aller sur le tramway, ligne numéro 1; mais il y a quelques ans les tramways parisiens ont disparu.

A. Oui, c'est vrai, les tramways n'ont aucune place dans la ville moderne; on circule trop vite. Le château est entouré d'un grand parc, n'est-ce pas?

B. Le parc est magnifique! C'est très grand, vous savez. Il a servi d'abord à réserve de chasse. Mais, au dix-septième siècle Louis XIV a fait changer le parc en jardins magnifiques.

A. Son jardinier est très célèbre, n'est-ce pas? Comment s'appelait-il?

B. Il s'appelait Le Nôtre. Mais ce n'est pas du tout comme un jardin anglais, ce jardin de Versailles, vous savez. C'est un jardin véritablement français, d'un style inspiré de l'Italie. A première vue on dirait une forêt, mais plus tard on découvre de nobles bosquets, de longues allées, de vastes perspectives, et des nappes d'eau reflétant le ciel comme des miroirs. Tout est d'un charme inoubliable. Et partout on trouve des vases de marbre et de bronze, des statues, des fontaines conçues et ornementées toutes différemment, et de beaux jets d'eau jaillissants.

A. Il y a même un petit théâtre parmi les arbres, à ce que l'on dit.

B. Vous parlez sans doute de la Colonnade. Oui, c'est très beau. On y faisait jouer parfois des pièces de théâtre. C'est entièrement en marbre et de forme circulaire. Il se compose de trente-deux colonnes cylindriques, rouges, grises et violettes. Elles soutiennent trente-deux arcades de marbre blanc.

(Continued on next page)