


# SPEAKING CANDIDLY

## APPOINTMENT FOR LOVE

(Universal)

 WHEN I queued up for a five o'clock session of *Appointment for Love* I thought for one wild moment that I must have come to a picture passed by the censor "For Women Only." For, so far as I could see, I was the only representative of my sex in that throng of females pressing toward the box-office. Thus does M. Charles Boyer, the star of the picture, magnetically attract one sex and repel the other! Subsequently I did discover a few other men in the theatre, but they remained a tiny minority, and most of them seemed to wear a slightly self-conscious air. Personally I didn't feel in the least self-conscious. I like Mr. Boyer, I have always liked him, and I don't care who knows it; though I must admit that there have been occasions when I have liked him a good deal better than in *Appointment for Love*. Not being susceptible to his "boudoir eyes" and his sex-appeal, I am interested in him solely as an actor, and remembering his brilliant dramatic work in *Marie Walewska*, *Algiers*, *Mayerling*, and, yes, in *Hold Back the Dawn*, I think it is rather a pity that Hollywood should have seen fit to use his talents in a mildly crazy comedy. Too many other worthwhile stars have gone that way into artistic oblivion for one not to feel a twinge of uneasiness.


Perhaps, however, I am worrying myself unduly on Boyer's behalf. There is actually little in *Appointment for Love* to justify it. Granted that this is a rather light-weight vehicle for the star's solid talents, it nevertheless moves smoothly and at a good pace, apart from one comparatively slow period about half-way through. The story gets off to a snappy start when Dr. Jane Alexander (Margaret Sullavan) goes to sleep at a performance of André Cassil's successful new play. Under the impression that the beautiful lady has fainted, Playwright Cassil (Boyer) stops the performance, wakes her up. When she tells him that it was boredom that did it, he promptly

falls in love with her, whereupon this very practical woman doctor expounds her conviction that love is just a matter of chemical attraction, jealousy merely the result of an over-supply of adrenalin in the blood-stream, and so on. Willing to take his chance with the chemicals, the playwright at length persuades her to marry him, only to find that his medico-wife has other even more disturbing theories about separate apartments, professional people leading their own lives, and a doctor's place being in the hospital all day and most of the night. With these and other handicaps which crop up as the story progresses, neither the chemicals nor plain Mother Nature get much of a look-in. But of course they do eventually, thanks largely to a lift-man who, in spite of his lugubrious manner, is one of the brightest spots of a show that is seldom dull.

Such has been my preoccupation with Boyer that I have ungallantly omitted to make much reference to his partner, Margaret Sullavan. Yet she deserves a equal attention and equal praise. Indeed she is, by herself, a sufficiently good reason to see the picture. If, as is apparently the case, the majority of my fellow-men are unable to appreciate Boyer (are they jealous?), they are surely cutting off their noses to spite their faces when they include the charming and accomplished Miss Sullavan in their neglect.

## NIGHT ALONE

(Pathe)

 THE chief criticism I would make of Emlyn Williams as an actor is that we do not see nearly enough of him, and that when we do see him he is usually trying to hide away in some minor part. I first saw him in a small part in *Friday the Thirteenth*, about eight years ago, and he was still keeping pretty much in the background when *The Citadel* appeared. I had therefore no intention of missing *Night Alone*, in which he takes the leading part.



CHARLES BOYER, MARGARET SULLAVAN in "Appointment for Love"  
Increased heart-beats are more frequently registered by women

Though it has only recently been released, *Night Alone* — a matrimonial comedy not too original in pattern — gave me the impression that it had been snugly stowed away in the cans since before September, 1939. There is no hint of the war in it, nor is it one of those strident or crazy productions which are so obviously intended as escape mechanisms for the multitude. In fact, to me it resembled no other film so much as *Quiet Wedding*.

Emlyn Williams is introduced as a little country solicitor who has, throughout his eight years of married life, been completely domesticated, who has no wish for any more interesting company than that of his wife, or anything more exciting to do than tend his garden, read his library book, and solve the daily crossword in *The Times*. When the story opens he and his ever-loving wife, as Damon Runyon would call her, are in London en route to the home of friends in another county. Then fate steps in and he is forced to stay behind in London to attend to some affidavits: it is the first time he and his wife have been apart since they married.


Unfortunately, after his wife has gone, the affidavits fail to turn up, he has solved the daily crossword, and his library book has not been changed. But *Night Must Fall* and, tempted by a snake in the grass wearing his old school tie, he goes to a night club without, one feels, quite knowing what a night club is. Before long he finds out. He balks at paying ten shillings for a cigar, only to get charged five for cigarettes and twenty-five for chocolates for a female s-in-the-g. Finally he passes out (to use the technical phrase) and comes to in the police cells next morning, having been picked up in suspicious surroundings with a suitcase full of counterfeit notes. A trying situation for a respectable solicitor and faithful husband, but one from which he finally extricates himself amid sighs of relief from the audience.

As I said, the comedy is not too original in pattern, but it provides the

star with plenty of scope for excellent characterisation, and the film is a little gem of its kind. How he portrays so photographically the ineffably boring, ultra-respectable life of the little solicitor without boring the audience to death is a mystery which only Mr. Williams could explain, but he does it splendidly and, as his wife's rather smart and stylish friend, Leonora Corbett is an appropriate foil. But though the latter has some of the best lines in the show, *Night Alone* is for all practical purposes Emlyn Williams alone, and no one who knows his calibre will quarrel with that.

## LADY BE GOOD

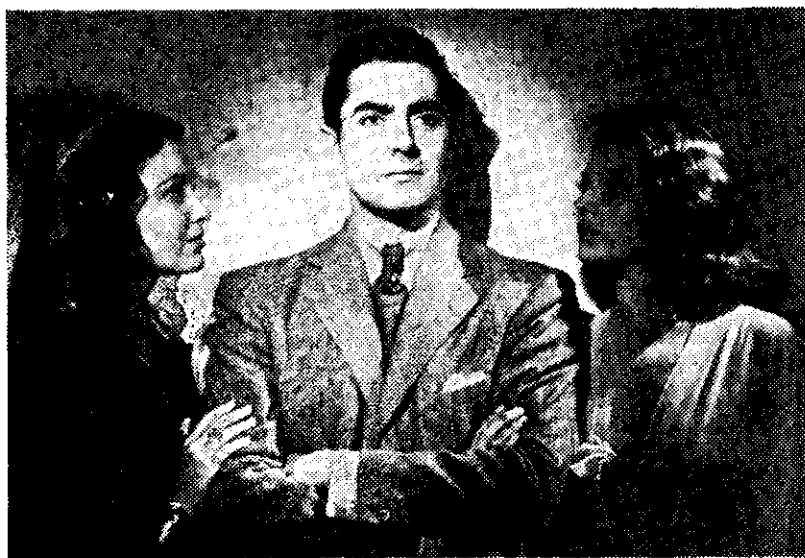
(M.G.M.)

 I ALMOST began by saying that *Lady Be Good* narrowly missed being good entertainment. On reflection "narrowly" appears to be the wrong word. It misses by at least two thousand of the film's ten thousand odd feet.

A pity, because there's a lot of good stuff in the show. There's Eleanor Powell's tap dancing. There's a lot of good fooling by Red Skelton. There's some acrobatic crooning by a fetching young woman (Virginia O'Brien?) who appears to move only her collar-bones when she yodels. There's a dog called Buttons who could claim an Oscar for the best canine performance of the year. There's at least one quite attractive song hit—"Lady Be Good." And there are excellent performances by Ann Sothern and Robert Young.

With all these advantages you might reasonably expect an A-grade film to emerge. But it doesn't, and the fault, I feel sure, is the director's. A little judicious pruning would have made all the difference, but far from doing any pruning, Mr. N. Z. McLeod seems to have gone out of his way to graft on little extra branches. There's the Testimonial Dinner, for instance, as spurious as most testimonials. It serves merely to provide a setting for a full-length and realistically boring speech by a minor

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IN VALENTINO'S FOOTSTEPS: The silent film "Blood and Sand" was perhaps Rudolph Valentino's greatest success. The new technicolour version stars Tyrone Power, with Linda Darnell and Rita Hayworth (above)