

FILM REVIEWS

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Darnell). Miss Hayworth has all it takes to be an enchantress, but does not overdo it, which is commendable in a film where flamboyance is the keynote. She even lets Juan down rather more lightly than he deserves, for in the original Ibanez story and Valentino film, if I remember rightly (there I go again!) Juan was spurned by Dona Sol because she was sickened by his boorish illiteracy, not merely because she had got herself another matador to play with. It is indeed, one of the faults of the insipid Mr. Power's performance—and consequently one of the major faults of the film's dramatic structure—that he does not bring out with sufficient emphasis the overweening egotism and crudity of Juan's character. What a pity that the star and the story of *Blood and Sand* could not have had the dash and the colour of its bulls, its scenery, and some of its players! Then I'd have stood up in my seat to applaud.

WHEN LADIES MEET (M.G.M.)

WHEN ladies meet, according to M.G.M., they invariably do so in sumptuous settings and in the most ravishing gowns. And although M.G.M. don't usually compete for originality Oscars I'd be inclined to award one to Adrian for the frocking in this picture. Indeed, so much do clothes make the story that I find myself describing the film from that viewpoint. (Aren't I versatile?) Joan Crawford is a young and earnest novelist and invariably wears white, in spite of the fact that she's the Other Woman and should therefore slink in sequins. Greer Garson takes the spotlight in black. Robert Taylor, who gets more like Don Ameche every day, wears either faultless tails and a gardenia or rather loud tweeds. Herbert Marshall has to be content with one tuxedo and a city suit which the director doesn't allow him to change out of much, and as the film goes on he gets more and more baggy at the knees.

When the film opens, Joan Crawford is struggling in the clutches of Robert Taylor, in a voluminous white dinner gown complete with hood. He's in love with her, you see, but she isn't in love with him because she's in love with her publisher Herbert Marshall, though why she should be we can't imagine because he will go round with hunched shoulders and a puzzled simian expression. So we see her next in her riverside garden wearing a gingham outfit with matching hat and a spotless white apron and gardening gloves and asking Herbert Marshall to have dinner with her because she wants to revise the last chapter of her novel. So she changes into another white evening frock with a jewelled clasp and an accordion-pleated skirt, while poor Herbert has to spend the whole evening in his pin-stripe city suit.

And where is Mrs. Herbert Marshall all this time? She's at another dinner party in black velvet banded with gold

lamé, meeting Robert Taylor in faultless evening clothes. The next day they go sailing together, with Miss Garson in a very becoming and mildly piratical tricolour outfit and Mr. Taylor in white duck with gold braid.

But the Big Scene, sartorially speaking, comes when Miss Garson and Miss Crawford, neither knowing the identity of the other, meet in *négligé* to discuss Miss Crawford's last chapter, which involves the question of whether a young woman is justified in taking away another woman's husband. Miss Garson's

outfit, black velvet again, is given a Regency flavour by the judicious use of lace ruffles, while Miss Crawford forms a pleasing contrast in classical draperies of flawless white. They both look very nice. Then suddenly there's a knock at the door—it's Herbert Marshall again and he's still wearing that pin-stripe suit. . . .

Apart from the sartorial splendour there isn't a great deal that's remarkable about *When Ladies Meet*. There's some smart dialogue — Anita Loos at her loosest — and Robert Taylor supplies

some comic relief by getting (a) drunk, (b) seasick. Greer Garson's personality manages to get itself across in spite of the pervading artificiality. Reasonably good entertainment perhaps, but just another of those brittle sophisticated comedies which leave one wondering whether Hollywood knows there's a war on.

(Confession: I'm not really so versatile. I had a companion with me at the screening, and she earned her free seat by acting as technical adviser.)

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