

The keenness  
that counts

Those who are surprised at the efficiency and soldierly bearing of our Home Guard forget that this great body was born and nurtured in keenness to serve. No element of smartness do they omit—from the unseen care of arms to the equally unseen shave before duty, with that other great symbol of keen service—Gillette.



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B.G. 25

Film Reviews by G.M.

## SPEAKING CANDIDLY

### STAND BY FOR ACTION

(M-G-M)

IN which Mr. Tuttle (of Tahiti) and Mr. Ruggles (of Red Gap) combine to form a spruced-up, very enjoyable version of Charles Laughton as an Admiral of the United States fleet; and in which Robert Taylor, Harvard-synthetic Lieutenant, goes to sea and likes it, in spite of being subordinate to Brian Donlevy, the officer who came up the hard way, with John Paul Jones as his hero. They may not strike you as real people, but they are amusing people.

Picture, then, Lieutenant Taylor playing a beautiful game of tennis, playing a beautiful brace of girls, playing the playboy in the nice soft job as the Admiral's aide; picture Brian Donlevy, with a hole in his ship, in a fury of impatience to get back to sea; and Charles Laughton in his swing chair saying "Yes, Mr. Secretary, no, Mr. Secretary, quite so, Mr. Secretary" ("That's what I like about a telephone; gives you a chance to express yourself"), and in three furies of impatience to get back to sea. . . . But he can help Donlevy: so he makes him captain of the old Warren, recommissioned after 20 years or so as a hulk; and he decides also to help Taylor with a good, sharp kick into the tough job of first officer on the Warren. Does Taylor like it? Well, he has that Harvard way of looking as though it's no odds to him. "Makes me feel as if m' neck-tie's not clean," says Admiral Laughton, running an uneasy finger round his neck.

So the destroyer Warren goes to sea with Commander Donlevy and Lt. Taylor—and Chief Yeoman Walter Brennan (a hat-off to him), who went to sea in the Warren in 1916, served in actions in the North Sea, served at Scapa Flow, and was pensioned off with his ship.

They're in the Pacific and so is the Admiral and so are the Japanese. And so is a lifeboat with 20 orphan babies and two women to be saved. "Stand out all married men with children," says Lt. Taylor to the crew, when he learns with horror that he has to arrange for the welfare of the babies. And that's a Hollywood knock-out: 20 husky sailors each with a baby to mind. Good comedy—and not overdone. The overdoing comes when first one woman and then the other gives birth to a baby. Last week I complained of a feeling of *embarrass des richesses*. Complaint repeated *fortissimo*.

Of course the Warren goes home covered with glory—as well as babies. Alone she sinks a Japanese battleship, protecting the Admiral's crippled flagship with a smokescreen, and then manoeuvring cunningly (so cunningly that I, for one, couldn't follow all her crossing and double-crossing) through her own screen, and while she's getting on with the war, the woman down below gets on with having her baby.

Department for the Preservation of Immortal Moments on the Screen: "You are now about to hear," says Admiral Laughton, "a message that will go down into history" as the Warren's first message after the sinking is received. Hands clasped behind his back, head tilted,

rocking portentously on his feet, he announces the Warren's historic words. They are: "It's a boy!"

After that, black coffee in the lounge, so to speak, with medals being presented and everybody saying the only place for a sailor is at sea. The U.S. Navy carries on; and M-G-M have made a winner.

### DR. GILLESPIE'S NEW ASSISTANT

(M-G-M)

ANOTHER episode in the Dr. Kildare series without Dr. Kildare, but with Dr. Gillespie (Lionel Barrymore) still very much in evidence. He has not one new assistant, but three—a young American, a young Chinese, and what passes for a young Australian (but he wouldn't pass in Australia, not with that accent). Under the hectoring supervision of the senile Dr. Gillespie, they are assigned to wrestle respectively with apparent cases of amnesia, hives and total deafness. The great man himself patches up a broken romance and baffles everyone, including the audience, with medical science.

Like most others in the series, the film is an extraordinary conglomeration of romance, melodrama, philosophy, wisecracks which the B.M.A. might not appreciate, horseplay by Nat Pendleton, pseudo-Australian slang, and a large amount of medical jargon and scientific lore—the Filmgoer's Complete Popular Pharmacopoeia. Most of this I can stomach with an effort, but not that Australian.

### FLIGHT FOR FREEDOM

(RKO Radio)

MORE film heroines than anybody could remember have been faced with the problem of choosing between two men, but few have been presented with such a conclusive and at the same time such a patriotic way out of the difficulty as Rosalind Russell is in *Flight for Freedom*. She is a world-famous woman flyer. The U.S. Navy want her to "lose" herself deliberately near some Japanese-mandated territory in the Pacific (the time is pre-Pearl Harbour), so that they can have a valid excuse to cruise around the area while searching for her and at the same time take some nice aerial photographs of Japanese fortifications. But the Japs, getting wind of the scheme, inform Miss Russell that they know where to look, and will find her first.

In this situation, how can she best serve her country? Confronted also with the embarrassing necessity of making a choice between Fred MacMurray and Herbert Marshall, both of whom have fairly good claims on her heart, the heroine decides to kill two birds with one stone—and one of the birds is herself. Diving her plane straight into the Pacific near the Japanese islands, she ensures that nobody will be able to find her, nobody will be able to marry her.

Miss Russell's dilemma and her solution of it is the only remarkable thing about the picture, and since this actually occupies only a few minutes of running

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