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Film Reviews by G.M.

SPEAKING CANDIDLY

IT will be noticed that in two reviews this week, our Little Man is accompanied by his Little Boy (or, if you like, his Little Girl). This is an indication that in my opinion these two films are suitable for children; or, more precisely, that I consider them to be films which children will not be bored to see, but will probably enjoy, and will take no harm from enjoying. This method of grading will be adopted hereafter whenever such pictures come under my notice, in the hope that it may be of some use as a guide to parents and teachers. But I am not setting myself up as an authority on films for children; it is a purely personal expression of opinion, meaning no more than that these are films to which the Little Man would take his Little Boy with a comparatively clear conscience and would not be spoiling his own enjoyment of the entertainment by wondering all the time whether the lad should be there. Parents will follow the Little Man's example at their own risk, and neither I nor *The Listener* can be held responsible for any nightmares or ruined lives that may result.

For the purpose of this grading, the Little Boy (or Girl) may be regarded as being about nine years of age or over, but it is obviously impossible to give any detailed ruling on this point, for

children differ as much according to age and temperament as do the grown-ups who write letters to this paper. Similarly, I do not presume to indicate what the Little Boy's special reaction will be to any of the pictures he attends, as I do with the Little Man. That hardened and unrepentant picturegoer may be standing up to clap, sitting down to clap, just sitting or slumping, and it may well be that his young companion will be feeling the same way about a picture as his father is. On the other hand, he may be feeling almost the exact opposite. So far as I am concerned, he is just there sitting up and looking interested. The only thing I can guarantee is that this particular Little Boy will not be feeling like crawling under the seat; if he wanted to do that he would not be there at all.

THE FIGHTING LADY

(U.S. Navy-20th Century Fox)



THE other week I wrote with enthusiasm about a short documentary film called *To the Shores of Iwo Jima*. Since then I have seen two others of the same sort. One of them, *Battle of Britain*, was an old film, and there is no point now in describing it in detail. It belongs to a series called "Why We Fight," produced for the American Office of War Information by Frank Capra, and it is enough to say that no more moving tribute to the courage of the people of Britain in the dark days of 1940 has come out of this war. I suppose I should have seen it before, but I hadn't; for although *Battle of Britain* has apparently been widely shown to the Forces and also been given a number of special screenings to civilian groups, I can find no record that it, or the other films in this series, has ever been circulated for general exhibition in this country in the ordinary commercial way. In other words, perhaps one person in 1000 in New Zealand has had the opportunity to see *Battle of Britain*, whereas it should have been seen by at least one in 50. Something is wrong somewhere with our distribution system when this kind of thing happens. And it happens far too often.

THE FIGHTING LADY, however, has been generally released, and by running two weeks as the main attraction at a Wellington theatre confounded those who contend that the chief reason why such films are not shown more often to the public is because the public does not want to see them. Of course, if one were to accept the average film showman's idea of "what the public wants," *The Fighting Lady* would certainly seem to be box-office poison. It is simply the factual, made-on-the-spot account of about 14 months in the life of an American aircraft-carrier in the Pacific war. No blondes in the bomb-racks; no theme songs; no orations on the Four Freedoms; no love-versus-duty melodrama; no secret agent stowed away with a time-bomb in his pocket. Not a trace, in fact, of the conventional material of screen entertainment; only the solid substance of real experience—the monotony of

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