

# "TARGET FOR TO-NIGHT"

[The review of the British documentary film "Target for To-night" which appears below is contributed by "Mac". I, myself, was on holiday when the film was first released; but although some readers of this page will already have seen it, there will be many others who have not yet had a chance to do so, and who should therefore be specially interested in this notice about it.—G.M.]

**TARGET** for To-Night is in my view the best piece of war propaganda that has yet come out of Britain. I do not say that lightly. I remember, for example, that Priestley's Postscripts were propaganda, that the exhibition of war art recently noticed in *The Listener* was also propaganda. But *Target for To-night* does not tell us what the enemy has done—or what we will do. It shows us what the Bomber Command crews are doing. It is the propaganda of facts—of necessity more telling than the propaganda of ideas, but there is more to it even than that. For here the Crown Film Unit is concerned with showing that Britain can give as well as "take it", and that is the real source of the film's inspirational quality. And make no mistake, it is inspiring.

The story-material of *Target for To-night* is by now commonplace enough, for the film simply describes the operations which end for us, with the bald BBC announcement that "Aircraft of Bomber Command attacked industrial targets in Western Germany last night. All our 'planes returned safely." Few who see the film will again hear such brief communiqués read with their old detachment.

Though my acquaintance with German propaganda films is limited to stills published occasionally in magazines and newspapers, or an occasional brief excerpt in a newsreel, I could not help contrasting the treatment of *Target for To-night* with what I knew of its enemy equivalents. Shockers like *Sieg im Westen* ("Victory in the West"), for example, seem to concentrate solely on showing the might of the Nazi war-machine as a machine.

But Harry Watts has directed *Target for To-night* with such deftness that while he has placed proper emphasis on the organisation of war he has lifted the human element into the foreground and kept it there, as a democratic propagandist should.

The story begins with the development of reconnaissance photographs showing a potential bomber-target, follows the photographs to headquarters and then follows the resultant operational orders back to a bomber station. A squadron of Wellingtons—"well-tried hack bombers" as they were described in a cable message the other day—are detailed for the operation. Bombs are loaded—incendiaries for the leading plane, high-explosive and delayed action bombs of varying size for the others—pilots are briefed and given weather forecasts and navigational instructions. Wing-Commander P. C. Picard, who distinguished himself in the Channel engagement with the German battle-cruisers, describes the job to his men, answers questions, finally sees them off. The heavy planes roll down the runways and each operator calls up his commander. "F-for-Freddy, calling Father, can we take off now, can we take off now?"

F-for-Freddy takes off and the camera follows it eastward in the gathering darkness. Over the objective it dives through a barrage of flak that will give even the audience a headache, with the screen slashed by the glowing tracks of tracer shells and bullets.

Back at the aerodrome the other planes clock in, but there is no news of F-for-Freddy, and fog blankets the landing-ground. The few minutes of actual film-time in which the ground officers are waiting for the lame duck, and the bomber's crew are fighting to get their machine back, are among the most dramatic I have sat through in any war film, and the tension is not lessened by the knowledge that F-for-Freddy does not always come back to make a happy landing, and, to that extent, a happy ending.

What I have told you of the story will not spoil the film in any way for you—history in any case is not meant to be read once and then forgotten. It is not a long film, but it is worth going a long way to see and I suggest that you make it your target for some night or other.

—"MAC"

## INTERNATIONAL LADY

(United Artists)

**D**ESPITE a considerable amount of factual evidence to the contrary, Hollywood's favourite conception of a spy is still a beauteous foreign damsel who is willing to put the claims of country before everything except those of True Love. So, instead of ending in front of a firing squad she usually manages to end in front of the altar, since G-Men and Scotland Yard officials are notoriously sentimental. The *International Lady* of this particular piece of romantic frippery doesn't quite get to the altar, but having been put to bed with a bullet wound gained in saving the G-Man's life she is apparently quite content to remain there until the war is over and the G-Man is free to claim her as his bride.

Tracking down a Nazi spy ring engaged in sabotaging American supplies of war 'planes to Britain is the general assignment of the F.B.I.'s George Brent and the C.I.D.'s Basil Rathbone: keeping an eye on Germany's singing secret agent Iona Massey soon turns out to be their special job, with occasional diversions in the way of attending parties given by wealthy American fifth column-

## We Were Right About "York"

**ON** this page last week, "G.M." predicted that Gary Cooper's performance in "Sergeant York" (Warner Bros.) would win the Academy Award. It did. Cabled advice just received in New Zealand gives this information; also that Joan Fontaine's acting in "Suspicion" (RKO) won the Academy Award for the best performance by a woman. Of Miss Fontaine's work in this picture "The Listener" said that it "marks her as one of the screen's top-flight dramatic actresses."

Other details so far to hand show that RKO releases have landed six out of the 11 "Oscars," including two to Disney's "Fantasia" (best music and best sound effects), one to Disney for the best short cartoon of the year ("Give a Paw"), and one to Orson Welles for the most original screen story ("Citizen Kane").

ists, and friendly rivalry over who shall get to home base first with (a) the girl, and (b), the credit for smashing the spy ring.

Handsomely produced, *International Lady* is often amusing but seldom genuinely exciting. It is too polite and too cut-and-dried for that. Therefore I can only suggest that the reason why it is attracting large crowds is that it takes one's mind off the war!

## MORSE TESTS

No. 9 Course

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11 (Early)

1—W, E, B, P, Y; 2—L, E, G, O, Q; 3—T, U, G, L, C; 4—S, U, M, N, H; 5—B, A, K, L, S; 6—F, A, D, M, O; 7—N, U, M, S, O; 8—G, E, C, A, Z; 9—Z, I, S, U, P; 10—H, E, W, P, O; 11—A, L, A, V, O; 12—J, U, F, T, Y; 13—B, O, A, K, W; 14—D, U, S, C, N; 15—T, O, H, R, W; 16—K, A, P, B, E; 17—V, E, Q, W, O; 18—L, E, S, H, Y; 19—B, O, S, V, P; 20—U, G, Y, I, T; 21—W, N, A, N, Y; 22—F, K, L, D; 23—N, B, O, J, T; 24—R, G, I, Q, H.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11 (Late)

1—K, A, Y, C, Q; 2—B, U, Z, V, N; 3—N, P, F, L, E; 4—P, V, Z, Q, X; 5—F, W, B, A, K; 6—T, U, V, X, R; 7—N, I, J, E, C; 8—G, E, H, O, P; 9—P, U, S, I, Z; 10—B, E, W, K, U; 11—X, I, A, Z, V; 12—Q, R, V, L, D; 13—B, A, N, T, Y; 14—C, E, G, L, F; 15—S, O, H, P, N; 16—B, I, C, W, R; 17—M, U, S, N, H; 18—K, A, B, L, S; 19—F, A, D, M, O; 20—H, E, W, P, Q; 21—L, C, Y, F, Z; 22—G, I, K, T, V; 23—S, U, N, M, O; 24—W, E, B, P, D.

THURSDAY, MARCH 12 (Early)

1—B, O, Z, K, A; 2—A, Q, R, W, E; 3—S, U, D, C, M; 4—F, O, L, C, Y; 5—G, H, I, J, N; 6—T, U, H, R, W; 7—P, B, A, K, E; 8—M, I, E, F, K; 9—V, E, O, Z, O; 10—M, A, L, N, W; 11—D, U, R, F, G; 12—L, O, Y, N, P; 13—S, E, L, H, J; 14—T, R, B, N, L; 15—B, A, K, L, S; 16—W, E, H, O, F; 17—C, I, B, W, R; 18—P, V, B, O, S; 19—C, U, L, J, K; 20—T, X, O, W, J; 21—O, L, Y, N, E; 22—C, I, M, P, L; 23—C, K, Y, L, F; 24—L, A, M, R, S.

THURSDAY, MARCH 12 (Late)

1—K, U, L, C, J; 2—A, G, S, F, L; 3—R, V, O, R, O; 4—D, T, W, Y, H; 5—I, M, C, P, Q; 6—U, D, R, F, G; 7—Z, X, O,

(Continued on next page)

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