

THE GUN THAT BACK-FIRED

49th PARALLEL

(Gaumont British)

TO be rather blunt, if it is true (and it apparently is) that the British Ministry of Information put up £25,000 toward the cost of making *49th Parallel*, on the ground that it would be very good propaganda for the war effort, then I can only say that the British taxpayers' money has been wasted. Actually, questions were asked in the House of Commons when the appropriation was made and before production had begun, and the Select Committee on National Expenditure recorded its "gravest misgivings" about the venture; and while I certainly don't disapprove on principle of spending public money on film-making, in this case, as it has turned out, those misgivings were fully justified. Maybe some more questions will now be asked.

49th Parallel is frankly a propaganda picture and in the circumstances would not necessarily be the worse for that. What makes its value extremely ques-

tionable is that the propaganda has misfired; or, to be more accurate, it has back-fired. It shoots in almost exactly the opposite direction from what I imagine was intended. The trouble is that somebody (producer, director, sponsor, individually or collectively) has completely overlooked a simple, fundamental, psychological fact — which is that if you have six men against six hundred, and the six make a fight of it, the sympathies of every normal person tend to be with the six and not with the six hundred. You can't help yourself, it's human nature, no matter how wicked the six may be, no matter how upright the others. Heaven forbid that I should try to baffle you with the science of the "psycho boys" (as Eric Gill calls them) but this is elementary psychology, known to every author of boyhood adventure stories, the stock-in-trade of nearly every writer of adult thrillers. It's bred into us, this respect for the man who battles against super-human odds, this sympathy for the hunted rather than the hunters. We lap it up almost from the cradle, with stories of

Robin Hood, of how Horatius held the bridge, and of the gallant few at Thermopylae. And, as I say, it doesn't make much difference even when the Few are bad and the Many are good; instinctively we take sides with the person who fights in a tight corner. Which explains the popularity of all the novels about heroic crooks, of half the films about gangsters, and why, for example, in another film which I saw last week, *Ladies in Retirement*, one's sympathy goes out to the "heroine," a calculating murderess. And don't forget our own Graham case. Yes, and the psychology holds good, I submit, even when, as in *49th Parallel*, the hunted happen to be Nazis and the hunters are ourselves, the fighters for democracy.

FOR the story of *49th Parallel* is about six Nazis, survivors of the crew of a U-boat sunk in Hudson's Bay, who get ashore in Canada up there near the Arctic Circle, and who battle their way, with tooth and claw, right down the map in an effort to cross the border into the

neutral United States. Their methods are not pretty, but practically the whole of Canada's population of eleven millions, plus all their resources, are in the man-hunt against them; and so that basic psychological law is in full operation. And if this were not in itself enough to make the film of dubious propaganda value, there is the additional fact that the Nazis are so realistically and powerfully portrayed (particularly by Eric Portman, as their leader) that you are left with the uncomfortable impression — doubly uncomfortable in a propaganda film — that a true Nazi is imbued with unswerving and completely selfless purpose, untiring energy, boundless resourcefulness, and great courage, and is only to be beaten by trickery. He is more than tough. The picture shows him to be also brutal, callous, and cunning; but nothing else than those other qualities I have mentioned could have taken Lieutenant Hirth (Eric Portman) all the way from Hudson's Bay to the frontier at Niagara Falls. The five other Germans in the original party fall out one by one, but the fact remains that, despite the terrific odds against him, the leading Nazi does what he sets out to do and crosses the border into America; and he is eventually foiled by what can only be described as a piece of chicanery. He

(Continued on next page)

For Supreme
Freshness
it's EVEREADY

FRESHEST BATTERIES
YOU CAN BUY . . . MADE
IN NEW ZEALAND ONE
WEEK . . . IN USE THE
NEXT WEEK!

Demand—and get—absolute freshness when you buy Torch or Radio Batteries. Insist on EVEREADY! Developed under most intensive scientific research by the world's largest dry battery manufacturers. Now manufactured in New Zealand for genuine Factory-Freshness — your guarantee of Dependability and Extra Long Life.

Insist upon EVEREADY
—the World's Best Batteries
NATIONAL CARBON COMPANY PRODUCT.

EVEREADY
TRADE-MARK
TORCH and Radio BATTERIES

ER/41/B11

BACKACHE BANISHED DE WITT'S PILLS GIVE LASTING BENEFIT



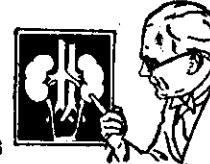
When backache arises from kidney trouble, as it often does, you won't get rid of those stabbing pains or that dull ache until your kidneys are well again. But let De Witt's Pills tone up and cleanse the kidneys and then mark the quick relief from pain. Read the following report and be convinced.

Mrs. C. N. writes:—"For four years I suffered very badly with pains in the back and bladder trouble. I was constantly in pain. I saw De Witt's Pills advertised and decided to try them. After taking one bottle I noticed improvement, so I carried on and before long was in perfect health. I have told others of the benefit I received from De Witt's Pills. I have had no attacks for two years."

Five Years Later. "Pleased to be able to say I am still in good health through taking De Witt's Pills."

WEAK KIDNEYS

lead to
Backache
Cystitis
Lumbago
Joint Pains
Rheumatism
Sciatica



Disturbed Nights

Trust De Witt's Pills; rely on them as countless other women have done, and you will understand why so many women speak so well of De Witt's Pills. Your suffering will end, your vigour and vitality will increase.

DeWitt's KIDNEY AND BLADDER PILLS

Made specially to end the pain of Rheumatism, Lumbago, Sciatica, Joint Pains and all forms of Kidney Trouble. Of chemists and storekeepers everywhere, prices 3/6 and 6/6 (including Sales Tax).