Buchenwald Becomes Box-office

L. Mac G.'s★ Review of the Films

WHEN pitifully emaciated bodies, skeletoned before they died, are flashed before your eyes by a carefully selective camera, the bodies being placed, unclothed, or ragged, in the positions which are most likely to arouse the emotion of revolt, two feelings begin to result—horror, and then distrust.

The Buchenwald film is being shown at Carlton and Corinthian. They are presented by Pathe, who state that they felt bound to show these things to the public as a warning regarding the future.

The sequences on the horror element come after some flashes of Nuremberg where comparison is made on the position of the German National Socialist Party before and after the war.

Mrs. Mavis Tate, M.P., who visited one of the concentration camps with other M.P.s, is commentator on the film describing both camps.

She interprets a conversation between a man who, she says, was a gauleiter, and an unknown, or, at least, unshown, questioner, as being a confession of guilt and lack of remorse. Apart from Mrs. Tate's voice, the film is silent. She also interprets the expressions on the faces of German girls being marched between American soldiers to dig graves, as ruthless and stubborn, etc.

The horror of death by starvation is there in the film. Bodies of those who died thus are seen being removed from incinerators. Close-ups of faces of survivors show marks of starvation.

The sequences are brief, except that the camera plays long on the heaps of dead bodies, which, according to Mrs. Tate, have been preserved, as shown, for the M.P.s to see.

To one rather used to watching films for possible flaws, doubt comes creeping, not with regard to what the camera shows, but as to what was behind what the camera shows. People have taken sides on this already. But all admit that there was incredibly horrible and slow death by starvation and disease in the two places, Belsen and Buchenwald. What part the collapse played, and what part deliberate cruelty, the film cannot show. Mrs. Tate, emphasising the horror, fails to clinch the argument for the one side by keeping her commentary to the line of general condemnation rather than detailed explanation.

But one thing is certain. Even if Pathe is genuinely interested in warning the world about the possibility of such things happening in future wars, they have not forgotten the fact that Buchenwald and Belsen are now box-office attractions and thousands are going to queue to see the cinematic versions. And the publicity they employ is no different from that used for Frankenstein and Dracula.

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In Which We Serve **Savoy**

MR. NOEL COWARD is actor, producer, director, scriptwriter for this epic of the British Navy. You might remember that when the film was made, the people in Britain who are anxious for morality in language wanted to cut out the cuss-words, and others said that as sailors say cuss-words, or as the public believe they do, the cuss-words should be allowed. The only cuss-words I heard at the Savoy yesterday I heard when Noel, as captain of the ship, made one of his many speeches to the crew.

In fact the fault of the film lay in these very speeches. Noel seems to have forgotten that when Nelson said his piece about every man doing his duty, he did it by flags. Noel uses the flags to show that the sailors are very patriotic, as indeed many sailors are, but they don't usually talk like flying banners to prove it.

Apart from this, the film is most engrossing, very thrilling, with startling photography confused only at one point, when the lens dashes around during the shipwreck. Heroism and grit are extolled cinematically and with good effect.

Don't blame Coward for the class distinctions he carefully reproduces, showing us the varying sizes, comforts and outlooks of the homes of the officers and men. The film is sincere, and Coward shows his impressions of English life as he sees it.

War is depicted in gripping sequences, and excitement is the keynote. There are unique photographic angles. At times the dialogue is overpoweringly sentimental and clashes with the realism of the action and the terse comments of the sailors. For eighty per cent. of the film Mr. Coward did a good job.

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Women In Bondage **Corinthian**

The publicity sheet for this film begins: "Here is the blueprint for womanhood; the facts about state control of love; pagan birth rites; "deputy" husbands; torture chambers for girls who dare to rebel; degradation and subjection of mothers . . . .

It goes on: "a film calculated to make one's blood boil, or else to run cold, depending on how one reacts to its revelations on conditions affecting the women in present-day (war-period) Germany.

Having assuded me that "the entire production staff of 'Women in Bondage' attest to the authenticity of this scathing indictment of the Nazi regime,' there follows the explanation that Herman Millakowsky, producer of the picture, made many pictures in Germany and hastily transferred his production headquarters to France, when Hitler came to power in 1933 . . . ." But it persists: "In Paris Millakowsky kept in close touch with his former associates in Berlin . . . . he again fled when the Nazis invaded France."

"See what they do to women . . ." shouts the blurb-sheet See what Herman Millakowsky has done to me!

But more publicity: "Steve Sekely, director, also formerly producing in Germany, left the country on the accession of Hitler . . ."

Nevertheless the film "represents the true facts in present-day Germany." (Gail Patrick and Nancy Kelly are the women in bondage).

Where Are Your Children? **Carlton**

OF the Crime Does Not Pay type, this timely reminder to wartime American parents to watch their young has Jackie Cooper, of the pouty lip, as leader of the adolescent set with too much money and ideas that the ice-cream-soda stage passes over to beer and debauchery for the duration. A dance hall, a drink and a car-ride being the day-to-day, or night-to-night, amusements of American femininity in its teens, the sequel, with its probation officers and juvenile courts, is not far to seek. Moderate fare.

Jean Parker of the dimples stages a comeback in comedy thriller "Detective Kitty O'Day."

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Dark Waters **Theatre Royal**

ATMOSPHERE, sinister and strange, plays the biggest part in this film of intrigue in the Louisiana swamps. The camera-work and direction play as important a role as the story, which deals with the adventures of a girl rescued from a torpedoed ship who finds an amazing adventure in the wilderness of the swamps.

Merle Oberon acts very well and Thomas Mitchell, who, it is said, can play any character his own size, steals most of the highlights in a more or less villainous role. Franchot Tone comes back as a hero.

There's murder in this.

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IN OTHER HOUSES.

Metropole: "Keys of the Kingdom"; **Capitol:** "Story of Dr. Wassell"; **Grafton:** "Gone With the Wind"; **Adelphi:** "Song to Remember"; **Green:** "Law of the Tropics"; **Grand Central:** "I Wanted Wings"; **Regal Rooms:** "Tunisian Victory."

The Anti-T.B. films, some of which have been sent by the American Red Cross, may still be seen at the Mansion House, the Exhibition there continuing for another week.