

ON THE SCREEN

The Girl in the News

A Gaumont British Production released by 20th Century-Fox. Directed by Carol Reed. In the leading parts: Margaret Lockwood (Nurse Graham), Barry K. Barnes (Faringdon), Margaretta Scott (Mrs. Bentley), Emlyn Williams (Tracy), Roger Livesey (Detective Mather).

In a British picture made during the war and set, as the announcement in the newspapers said, against a background of air raids and London at war, one would expect a story, if not of the war itself, at least closely related to it. The greater is one's relief to find an excellent mystery film in which the background of the war is so unobtrusive that it is hardly noticed by the audience. Moreover no attempt at propaganda is made.

Nurse Graham has been innocently involved in the death of a patient who took too many sleeping tablets. Although acquitted, she is unable to find a new position and finally changes her name. This is known to Tracy, the butler in the wealthy Bentley home, and Mrs. Bentley who is in love with him. Deciding to murder Mr. Bentley, they engage the nurse. When Mr. Bentley dies of an overdose of sleeping tablets, the nurse, implicated by circumstantial evidence, faces the gallows, since the jury, remembering her first trial, is likely to see in her a homicidal maniac who has made a habit of killing her patients with sleeping tablets. It is only due to the efforts of the talented young lawyer Faringdon, who is in love with the nurse, that she is saved.

The film has all the advantages of a thriller in keeping the audience constantly in suspense. Yet it avoids the pitfalls of many mystery films which cram too much action, excitement, and horror together until the audience is completely confused and unable to follow the plot.

The acting is excellent, particularly that of the two leading actresses. The only reference to air raids is when the nurse, hidden in the lawyer's room, escapes discovery because the detective cannot switch on the light as the blackout curtains are not drawn.

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In the Navy and Buck Privates

Universal Pictures. In the leading parts: Lou Costello and Bud Abbott, and the three Andrews Sisters.

Anyone wishing to compare the characters of different nations should look at movie comedies with a military or naval background produced in various countries during the last few years. Take, for instance, those of

America, Germany, and the USSR. You will find that they are totally different and that the American film with its peculiar combination of patriotism, swing, and gay nonsense stands in a group by itself.

For us who live on the shore of the Pacific and read every day about the importance of the US Navy for the political future of this area, a film that can, like *In the Navy*, boast of the co-operation of the naval authorities in San Diego and San Pedro is of special interest. What this film shows, however, is not the American navy but a slapstick comedy which accidentally takes places among navy uniforms and battleships.

The plot is as usual very simple. Russ Raymond (Dick Powell), much-adored radio crooner, disappears from sight by secretly joining the navy. His female admirers are desolate. A pretty girl reporter (Claire Dodd) succeeds in tracking him down. When she pursues him, first to the training camp and finally on a battleship to Honolulu, many hilarious situations result until the happy ending brings the girl reporter into the arms of the singer. *Buck Privates* has hardly any plot at all and is just a series of amusing incidents of so-called army life.

The very motives for entering the navy or army are characteristic. In other countries they would join for patriotic or other heroic reasons; but Russ Raymond does it because he has become tired of being a crooning glamour boy and wants a vacation away from adoring females, while the "Buck Privates" are caught in the army when they run away from a cop and by mistake get into an enlistment center. Both films are done in the same spirit surprising to any save the Anglo-Saxon spectator. There is, for example, a huge naval review. Thousands of sailors and officers are lined up on a vast field and listen to the admiral's patriotic speech. After finishing his speech the admiral hardly has time to step back when the three Andrews Sisters appear on the platform in fanciful naval uniforms, dancing and singing for the men. Then there is a celebration on board the battleship with the unforgettable picture of a tap dancer performing between the barrels of huge naval guns. And in *Buck Privates* there are scenes which resemble a musical comedy much more than life in the army.

It is, we believe, characteristic of the attitude and humor of America that, at a time when a large part of the world is in flames, America's main weapon, the navy, lends its good-natured co-operation to a film of this carefree type.

Lou Costello steals the show in both films with his exceedingly funny acting and lines.