

The Lady and the Tigers

UNDER THE CARIBBEAN

(Hans Hass-I.F.D.)

G Cert.

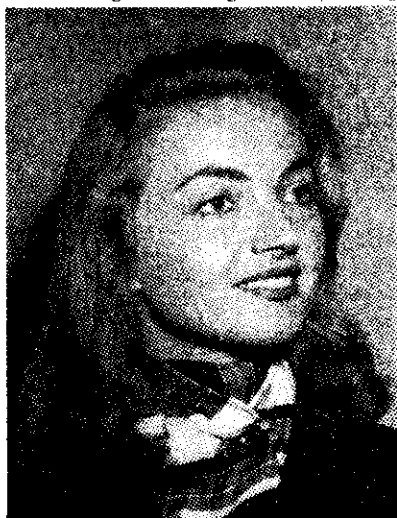
HANS, Lotte and their company of skin-divers had barely dunked themselves in the pellucid waters of the Caribbean before I found myself scribbling sceptically on the pad strapped to the wristband of my gents' natty foam-rubber suiting. *Quaere*, I wrote (Aubrey-wise), Is Mr Hass being too clever by half? And it proved, as the film reeled off, a fair comment.

Edmund Gosse has recorded, among the recollections of his life as a small boy at Oddicombe, that his consuming ambition was to walk out over the sea as far as he could, then lie flat on it, face downwards, and peer into the depths. Now there is a touch of the small Gosse in most of us. For most of us the wonders of the deep are sufficient in themselves. The stone flowers of the coral gardens, slow-nourished through dim centuries, need no adventitious attractions, no tricks to capture our imagination. The drama of life and death in the sea-caves scarcely requires a melodrama super-imposed upon it. Yet that is what Mr Hass appears to think we want.

This is, in fact, a most exasperating film for the enthusiast. It is not presented as a straightforward account of exploration. It has a "story"—palpably phoney—which requires Lotte to take risks under water which I'm certain, she would never dream of taking in actuality. There are a number of comic interludes—all of them rather contrived and not all of them excessively funny. The dialogue is sometimes laboriously didactic, and in the preparation of the English-language soundtrack little attention has been paid to matching words and lip-movements.

But I found the photography delightful, and tremendously exciting at times—even when, in a climax which might have come from the *Perils of Pauline*, I knew jolly well that my leg was being pulled.

Lotte Hass, of course, is cast as the star of the show and it's not difficult to see why Hans devotes so much footage to her (like the Caribbean natives with whom the film-makers foregather, Hans, too, knows the magic words Money and Dollars). Admittedly, for his blonde Lorelei I'd almost go overboard myself—if she'd only keep at a respectful distance from hammerheads and tiger-sharks. To watch her swim languidly, hair floating like a bright cloud, through



LOTTE HASS

BAROMETER

FAIR: "Under the Caribbean."
MAINLY FAIR: "The Ambassador's Daughter."
OVERCAST: "While the City Sleeps."

groves of brain-corals and dead-men's hands is to remember Odysseus and the sirens. Or it would be if Hans were not forever breaking in with snippets of useful information about Crinoids or Portuguese men o' war. The facts rain down, much (one fears) as the detritus of marine life drifts down into the vacant abyss.

It's in the Pacific, off Cocos Island, that the film has its phoney climax, with Lotte pinned down by a pack of prowling tiger sharks and only half a minute's air left. That may leave you laughing, but the sequence has a genuine climax, too, in which we get the first underwater glimpses of a sperm whale. These shots (nothing skimmed about them) are tremendous in their impact and superbly done. The marine photography—in Technicolor—all the way through is good, but for the sight of that vast jaw opening before my eyes and the water boiling under the broad flukes I'd willingly put up with the melodrama all over again.

THE AMBASSADOR'S DAUGHTER

(Norman Krasna-United Artists) G Cert.

"OH, but they're all too old," said the Young Person in the treader's pedal-pushers and maternity duffle-coat, peering over my shoulder at the display-cabinet. From her point of view perhaps Olivia de Havilland does seem a bit long in the tooth, but I found her charmingly well-preserved in this rather frothy serviceman-about-Paris comedy. She is, of course, the Ambassador's daughter, and to tell the truth, I was rather more interested in even older familiar faces here present—the late Edward Arnold, Adolphe Menjou, Francis Lederer (anyone remember *Pursuit of Happiness*?) and dear Myrna Loy. For their sakes I'd commend this film, with reservations, to the middle-aged. If one goes with one's guard down, it's possible to be amused and there's a nostalgic pleasure to be found in the tone and cadence of remembered voices. Admittedly, it would be hard to stick out some of Mr Krasna's script were one not more interested in the players, but there is a Dior fashion show for the women, and one or two other passages almost as funny. The appearance of Adolphe Menjou as a senator who wants to put Paris off-limits to U.S. troops is one of the wryest of these.

WHILE THE CITY SLEEPS

(RKO-Radio)

A Cert.

THERE are a few old familiar faces in this movie, too—George Sanders, Thomas Mitchell, Ida Lupino, Dana Andrews, Vincent Price—and one old and renowned name among the credits—that of Fritz Lang, the director. But *While the City Sleeps* is not likely to reinforce anyone's reputation. It's a low-budget effort and looks like it. The mounting is painfully commonplace, the writing at times sounds as if it came straight from a *True Confessions* magazine, and the picture it presents of life in a New York newspaper office is positively grotesque. Mitchell, Andrews, Lupino and Co. don't just speak out of the sides of their mouths; they even seem to think out of the sides of their minds. I have rarely come across a more unattractive set of pseudo-journalists.

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