

taught red-handed and looked like Edward Arnold.

I WONDER why it is that so many of the most popular characters of the screen are of the domineering, piratical breed of Major Parkington? I am thinking, for instance, of Rhett Butler in *Gone With the Wind* and the hero of *Cimarron*. I don't think it is that ordinary people *naturally* admire those qualities of ruthlessness, rugged individualism which are so pronounced in Major Parkington and Co. (they certainly disliked them in Hitler!), so much as that they are given every opportunity to do so—and the reason for that, I suspect, is because the people who make films do admire those qualities and would, rather like us to admire them, too.

I have not read the Louis Bromfield novel on which *Mrs. Parkington* is based, but I am assured by one who has that Walter Pidgeon is not the type at all to play the Major. The point seems to me quite irrelevant: a choice like that is determined in Hollywood by factors quite apart from resemblance to the original character. In other words, whenever they now decide to use Greer Garson as the egg, then inevitably Walter Pidgeon must be the bacon. Lest any readers think I might have meant ham, let me assure them that both he and Miss Garson do give good performances in this their fourth picture together.

SUNDAY DINNER FOR A SOLDIER

(20th Century Fox)



HAVING just used a gustatory metaphor, I will continue it by saying that I found the plain, homely fare of *Sunday Dinner for a Soldier* more acceptable to my present appetite than the lavish spread in *Mrs. Parkington*. Not that the dinner served for John Hodiak, the soldier in the story, is simple: fried chicken is the *piece de resistance*. But the family serving it is a desperately poor one (by movie standards anyway), living by the skin of their teeth and Grandpa's pension on a ramshackle houseboat in Florida, and part of the tale concerns their sacrifices to secure a chicken suitable for frying. The other part concerns their efforts to find a soldier to enjoy it. It is in the cinematic nature of things that this soldier will turn out to be such an attractive, lonely guy so much in need of affection that, when he leaves for the front in his bomber a few hours later, he will take the heart of the heroine (Ann Baxter) with him.

There are moments in the picture so resolutely arch as to be embarrassing—for instance, I found the practice of referring incessantly to Grandpa (Charles

Winner) as "Grandfeathers" very trying. But the general effect is pleasant and human: you do get (pardon me if I mention it) a real feeling of family life aboard the improvident houseboat, of the humour and affection that survives drudgery and cumulative domestic disasters. And though I have no direct evidence for this, I suspect that Tarpon Springs, Florida, where the story is told, is a real place and not just a studio set. It looks real anyway.

TO-MORROW THE WORLD

(United Artists)



THIS is a horribly disturbing film which should be widely seen for that very reason. As an added incentive, it is very well acted. It poses the problem of how the youth of Germany is to be re-educated, through the medium of a story about a 12-year-old German boy (played with diabolic skill by Skippy Homeier) who is adopted into a normal American home which is presided over by Fredric March, and who does his best to wreck the place by behaving in the way in which all good little Nazis are supposed to behave. He persecutes his benefactor's fiancée (Betty Field) because she is a Jewess, writes obscene remarks about her on the pavement, and breaks up the

marriage; terrorises some of his schoolmates and infuriates others; destroys the portrait of his father (who, he has been told in Germany, was a traitor to the Reich); tries to steal Government documents to help the Fuehrer's war effort; and ends up by bashing his nice little cousin over the head with a poker.

The film is fascinating and more intelligent than the average, but is probably guilty of two major over-simplifications: in the first place by suggesting that Emil is an average specimen of Hitler youth, whereas it is far more likely that he represents their quintessence; and in the second place by suggesting that all that is required to turn Nazis back into well-behaved human beings, responsive to reason and kindness, is to give them a good beating-up, followed by some applied psychology. Well, the Allies have carried out the first requirement pretty thoroughly; it now remains to be seen how they manage with the second.

NATIONAL FILM UNIT'S WEEKLY REVIEW

ONE of the highlights of the Government Film Studio's Weekly Review No. 214, released on October 5, is "Cairo Memories," showing the real Cairo as our troops saw it. Other items are: Children's Health Camp at Glenelg, Christchurch; and Hockey Tourney at Auckland.

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