

Hunting the Sperm Whale

DOWN TO THE SEA IN SHIPS

(20th Century-Fox)

THIS is not the story of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, but a remake of an old whaling picture of the '20s that featured the "It Girl," Clara Bow, who was rolled aboard in a barrel to cause all sorts of romantic disturbances among the crew. The new version has no love interest, but is none the worse for that. It describes the final voyage of one of the last of the old-time spermacetti whalers, stern, God-fearing Captain Bering Joy, of New Bedford (played by Lionel Barrymore) who, before setting sail, tells the crew that he aims to bring them back better men than when he got them, that they won't return until he has a ship full of oil (his last trip lasted four years and brought back a record of 2,246 barrels), and concludes with the prayer, "Oh Lord I call Thy blessing on these men, who go down to the sea in ships."

Although the voyage contains enough adventure, including some thrilling shots of a whale being harpooned, to satisfy the heart of any small boy, it is in some ways a sad one. The old man dies after saving the ship from sinking when it collides with an iceberg south of Cape Horn, but before this last act of heroism and seamanship he realises that his day is done, and that the old rule of thumb methods by which he was brought up must give way to the scientific spirit typified by the young First Mate, Dan Luncford. Luncford, the ostensible hero of the film, is none other than Richard Widmark, the deep-dyed villain of half-a-dozen gangster films, seen here in his first "sympathetic" role.

Widmark acquits himself well enough, but his performance seems almost insipid at times beside the powerful characterisation of the Captain, who dominates the picture from beginning to end. Although Lionel Barrymore's acting in most of his recent films has been confined in the main to a lot of chuckling and growling from a wheel chair, in this picture he gets up on his feet and walks (with the aid of crutches), and in so doing turns on one of his finest performances—one that will remind many people of the similar role he played in *Captains Courageous*, with Spencer Tracy and Freddie Bartholomew. His natural instincts are kept sufficiently in check this time for a strong, rounded picture of an old sea-dog on his last legs to emerge with surprising incisiveness. Particularly good use is made of camera and lighting to bring out the inherent strength of his granite-like features, and he stands out as the epitome of the puritanical, dictatorial old man of the sea whose inflexible moral code finds its ultimate expression in the determination to put what is right above his own feelings, even when it involves the life of his grandson (Dean Stockwell), who accompanies them on the voyage.

The plot of the film concerns the Captain's striving before he dies to make a whaler (and a man) of his grandson, and the conflict of loyalties

BAROMETER

FAIR: "Down to the Sea in Ships."
OVERCAST, WITH BRIGHT INTERVALS: "Words and Music."

in the boy's mind between his love for the old man and his affection for the College-educated Mate, who instructs him in the book learnin' that the self-taught Captain hates but grudgingly admires. The salty freshness of the story is, however, marred to some extent by a long drawn-out sentimental beginning that could have been generally deleted without loss of coherence—and a considerable gain in dramatic effectiveness.

WORDS AND MUSIC

(M.G.M.)

MICKEY ROONEY is the "words" end of the famous Rodgers and Hart song-writing team in the latest musical-comedy extravaganza to assault our battered senses, and although he puts a tremendous amount of energy into his work, about the only permanent impression that remains after it is all over is that his nose takes on a curious shiny red hue in Technicolor, and that his hair, per the same medium, looks rather peculiar at times too. Tom Drake comes off a little better as Richard Rodgers, but on the whole the biographical part of this film is not very convincing. Its main enjoyment lies in the singing of a generous number of Rodgers and Hart tunes (*A Blue Room*, *Thou Swell*, *The Lady is a Tramp*, etc.), by Perry Como, Judy Garland, Lena Horne, Gene Kelly, and others. The songs have a witty facility about them that is quite different from the sort of thing we hear these days.

NATIONAL FILM UNIT

RAOUL and Niue Islands are featured in "New Golden Hind Sails North," the National Film Unit's Weekly Review which will be released on September 2. Both have important meteorological stations operated by New Zealanders, and the film shows stores being landed on the precipitous coasts of Raoul, as well as the daily routine of life on these lonely islands.



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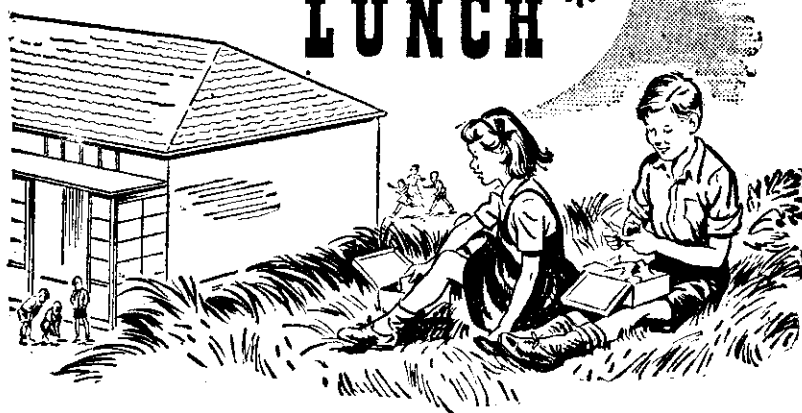
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THE SCHOOL LUNCH*



* Whether taken from home or bought at school, the school lunch should contain ...

MILK — as a bottle of milk brought from home, cocoa or a milk shake.

SANDWICHES buttered — all wholemeal bread or half wholemeal, half white bread, or

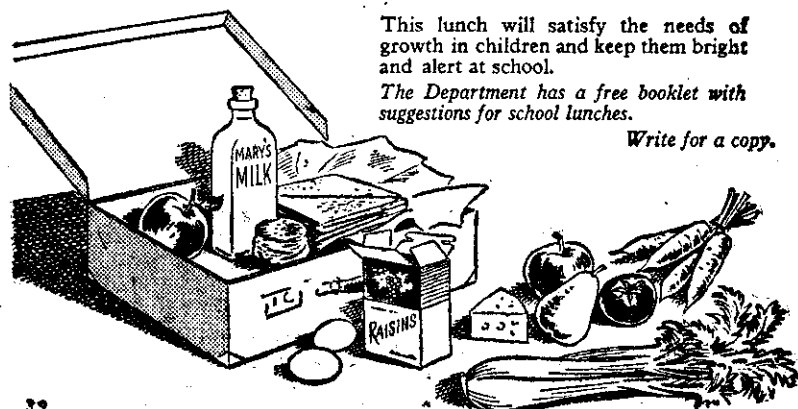
ROLLS buttered — preferably wholemeal.

FILLINGS — two-thirds protein; such as meat, egg, fish, cheese, peanut butter. With these may be included lettuce, tomato, celery, cucumber or any other vegetable.

One-third sweet; such as dates, raisins, black-currant jam.

NO MORE than one buttered scone or gem, plain cake, bun or biscuit.

RAW FRUIT or vegetable to finish.



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