

cannot do more than make it mechanically competent; and he is eclipsed by Rosalind Russell, and Robert Benchley. Less restricted by formula, Miss Russell endows her part with spontaneous gaiety in the early sequences and with constricting bitterness in the later ones, as she sees what filthy lucre is doing to her husband.

Good Old Oscar

IT is, however, Robert Benchley's picture. From the moment he staggers in as Oscar with a full load of liquid comfort, goes to kiss Miss Russell's hand with a gallant gesture and collapses in a heap at her feet, the story takes new life, and never quite loses it when he is on the scene, even in the duller patches.

Once again it is my pleasant duty to compliment M-G-M on their consistently good casting of supporting roles. Helen Vinson, as the blonde menace, and Monty Woolley, as the art dealer, couldn't have been better chosen.

[*"Live, Love and Learn."* M-G-M. Directed by George Fitzmaurice. Starring Robert Montgomery, Rosalind Russell, Robert Benchley. First release: April 1, Wellington.]

Made To Order?

RAH! Rah! Rah! Blah! Blah! Blah! I've just been enduring another American Navy pep talk. If I were a patriotic American I might now be whistling the "Stars and Stripes" as a result of seeing M-G-M's "Navy Blue and Gold." As it is, having already at various times seen at least half-a-dozen pictures with exactly the same theme and purpose (to wit, "Annapolis Salute," "Annapolis Farewell," "West Point of the Air," "Shipmates Forever," "Flirtation Walk" and "The Singing Marine"), I now find myself more in the mood for the Funeral March.

I strongly suspect that all these "epics of the service" are being made to order.

Tied up with the recruiting propaganda of "Navy Blue and Gold" is the football—plenty of it. That quaint American variety in which they interrupt the game every minute or so to go into a huddle. Then somebody mumbles a lot of telephone numbers and off they go chasing in all directions. Whenever I see this, I am reminded of that cartoon in "Esquire" depicting husky players gathered in a circle while one of them imparts the information: "3, 4, 6, 8, 7—and the name's Mabel!"

For Dear Old Navy

"NAVY BLUE AND GOLD" is imposing enough to be the navy football picture to end all navy football pictures. Only that's too much to hope for. Nothing is missing, and everything is done a good deal more thoroughly than ever before. For a start, there's the playboy (Robert Young), who's Not Navy, and who looks on his uniform and his years at Annapolis Academy as useful only because of the extra sex-appeal they give him.

In contrast to this wretch, there are the two true-blue lads (James Stewart and Tom Brown), who have Navy in their blood and are simply bubbling over with traditions and all that.

And then, of course, there's the girl (Florence Rice). She's frightfully

Navy, too (and charming in spite of it), and she prefers the shy Mr. Stewart to the effervescent Mr. Young.

There's also the awfully navy-blue retired captain (Lionel Barrymore), who can remember every jolly football match right back to 1850 or thereabouts, and who goes round exhorting the boys to play the game for the game's sake.

The Big Match

"NAVY doesn't care if you win. It's how you play that matters," says the aged Barrymore—a sentiment rather curiously contradicted by the subsequent behaviour of the academy in treating the annual match with the Army as the most important event since Creation.

Rather conveniently for Navy morale, Captain Barrymore arrives at death's door just as the match is about to start. "I'm not going to give you boys a pep talk," says Navy's coach, and then proceeds to prove himself a liar by adding. "But don't forget that old



The girl in the life of Pirate Jean Lafitte. Franciska Gaal, Cecil B. de Mille's Hungarian "find," as she appears in "The Buccaneer," starring Fredric March.

man lying there in hospital, mebbe dying, and he's depending on us winning, and it's up to us." Rah! Rah!

Another couple of rahs for that scene where Tom Brown takes his stalwarts into a huddle in the Last Five Minutes and pleads with them for a final great effort for the sake of the Old Man. Heroic stuff, my hearties!

As a matter of fact, the football scenes are quite exciting, in spite of being unintelligible.

Childish

WELL, I don't need to tell you much more about the story of "Navy Blue and Gold," because, of course, you know that the bad boy who is Not Navy at the start will eventually become Very Much Navy, under the influence of his high-minded room-mates and the girl, and the pep talks and the football. Oh, and I nearly forgot the ragging—all that childish standing-on-one-leg-on-the-table-and-being-whacked-by-the-seniors-stuff—which is supposed to be so good for character building.

Still, you may enjoy it. The atmosphere is at least well sustained, the character studies surprisingly well

CRITICS' AWARD

Double Honour For "Emile Zola"

AS a preliminary to the 1937 awards by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the New York Film Critics have announced their selection of the best picture and the best acting performances of the past year.

"The Life of Emile Zola," produced by Warner Brothers, received a double honour in that it was chosen as the most distinguished motion picture of 1937, while Paul Muni, who played the title role in it, was named as the actor who gave the best performance of the year.

Greta Garbo was acclaimed as the actress who gave the finest performance of the year for her work as Marguerite Gautier in "Camille"; and Gregory La Cava was named as the outstanding director on the basis of his handling of "Stage Door."

drawn and not quite so cloyingly sentimental as you might expect. Barnett Parker gives an exquisite portrayal of an English butler who has taught the young master how to play American football without ever having seen a game; and the direction leaves nothing to chance.

It all rather reminded me of "Tom Brown's Schooldays" in a handsome navy blue and gold American binding, and I can well imagine its being sure-fire box-office entertainment in the States.

But pray grant me indulgence if you see me navy-blue in the face with the effort of suppressing my caddish, cynical laughter.

[*"Navy Blue and Gold."* M-G-M. Directed by Sam Wood, starring Robert Young, James Stewart. First release: April 8, Wellington and Auckland.]

First Fiddle

FOR years Frank Morgan has been playing second fiddle to some of the screen's biggest stars, and, more often than not, has stolen much of the limelight from them by the unvarying excellence of his performance. And now M-G-M have shown sound common sense by giving him a chance to show what he can do when allowed to lead the orchestra. This happens in "Beg, Borrow or Steal." I suggest that you beg, borrow—or even steal—the admission money to see this very excellent comedy.

If my memory is not at fault, Frank Morgan was given a similar opportunity in a somewhat similar type of film called "The Perfect Gentleman." That picture, and now this one, incontrovertibly prove his right to stardom.

There still seem to be many people who get mixed up between Frank Morgan and his brother Ralph. Ralph is the one who goes round nursing a secret sorrow and looking as if every man's hand were against him, while Frank always looks as if he would like to shake everyone by the hand—