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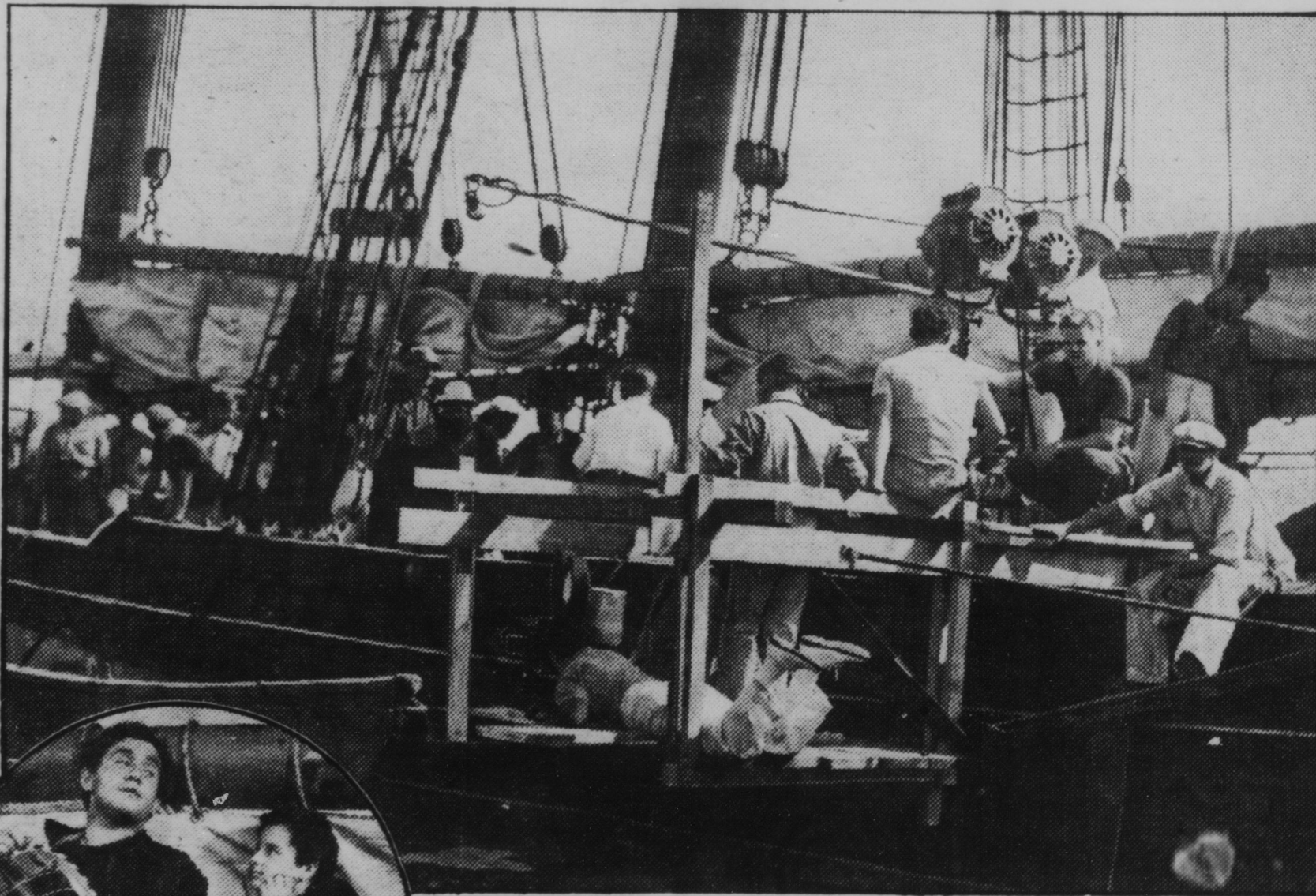
# What KIPLING and CODFISH did to the MOVIES

By Paul Harrison

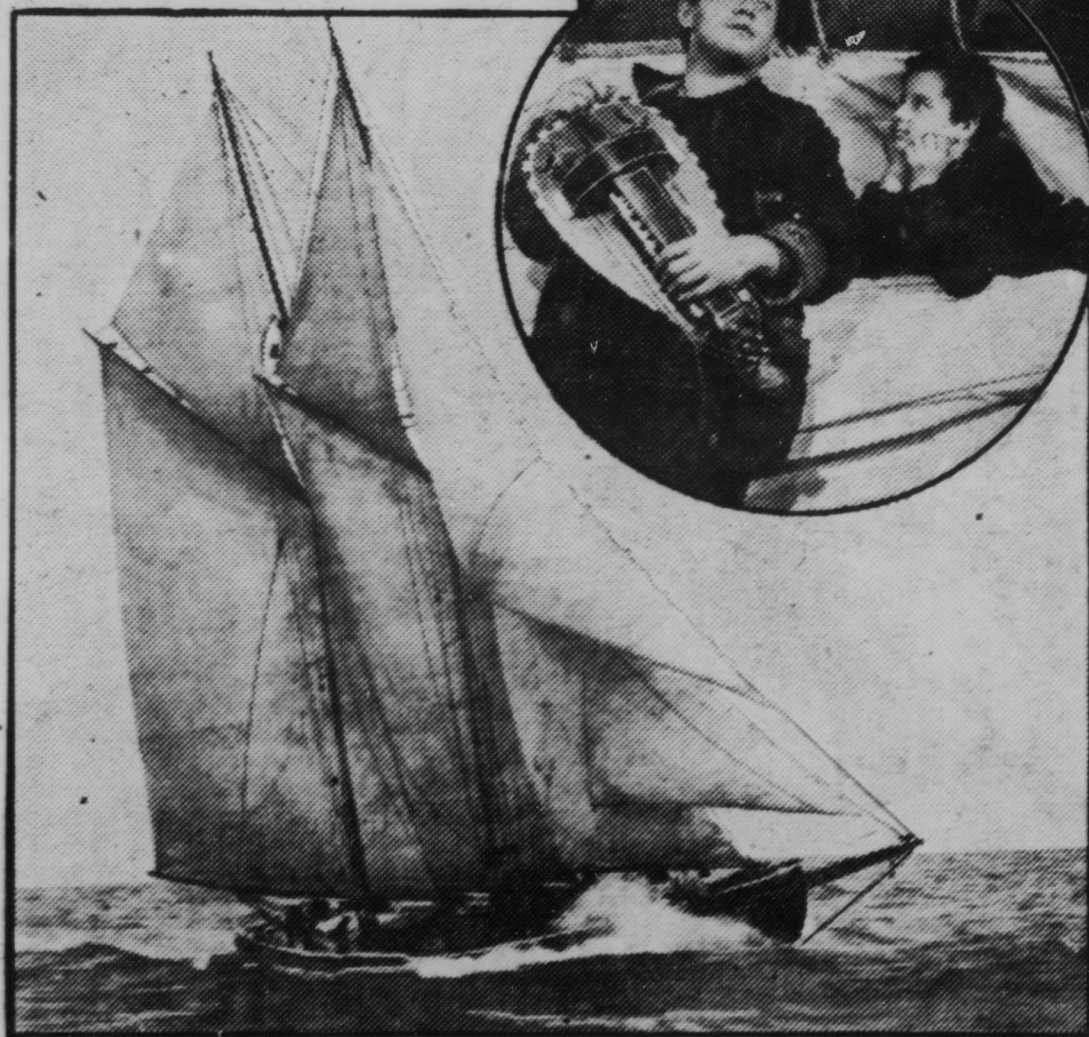
HOLLYWOOD

WELL, they finally have finished shooting "Captains Courageous." Thousands of fathoms of film are being reefed in the cutting rooms and stowed in round tin bulkheads. Freddie Bartholomew is still spitting curves in the wind, and Spencer Tracy remains drydocked in a barber shop for extensive repairs. Old Cap'n Lionel Barrymore is figuring on retiring, with his trusty sextant and his memories, to a little vine-grown cottage on the Cape Cod dunes. And the studio supercargo who has been auditing the enterprise is still pretty seasick.

It was a long voyage, mates. It made Columbus look like a week-end excursionist. Also it was the most expensive fishing expedition recorded in all



The special camera platform that was built out from the side of the We're Here. . . . At left, Spencer Tracy and Freddie Bartholomew snapped at one of the moments when Tracy bursts into song.



The schooner We're Here, which helped to make "Captains Courageous" an epic sea film—and which gave the cast many a severe headache.

the history of seafaring.

The cost has run to something like \$2,000,000, and the elapsed time was 18 months. In that period the principal ship sailed a total of about 25,000 miles and didn't catch enough fish to make salad for a Wednesday afternoon bridge club.

But it did catch a good deal of excitement, together with one of those hyper-tremendous pictures which will have a place in the nautical season with "Souls at Sea," "Slave Ship" and other epics of the ships-of-wood-and-men-of-steel tradition.

It was a year ago last autumn that an M-G-M crew left Hollywood for Gloucester, Mass., to set sail on the salty saga. There were a couple of marine technicians, two business managers, and cameramen Harold Marzorati and Bob Roberts. Also Capt. J. M. Hersey, a Metro skipper who sailed

H. M. S. Bounty to Tahiti and back.

FIRST thing they did was plunk down \$23,000 for a ship, the Oretha F. Spinney, a 110-foot two-masted schooner. It was refitted, renamed We're Here and ballasted with scrap iron because everyone suspected that the holds never again would be filled with fish.

First they took lots of shots around Gloucester. Then they sailed to the Newfoundland Banks, proper locale of the story. Some genuine codfishing scenes were taken there, with a hired fleet of as many as 13 schooners. Next to Nova Scotia for a bit of heavy weather, thence to the tropic West Indies for some fancy cloud shots off the Cuba Keys and in the Gulf of Mexico.

After a good many months of atmosphere photography, the We're Here cleared the Panama Canal and began

combing the Pacific Coast for likely locations. After actual production began it was necessary to sail off Washington and Oregon for fog and wind, and off California and Lower California for rugged shorelines.

The We're Here has a rival in the story, and for the role of the Jennie Cushman the studio rented the Mariner, a schooner once owned by John Barrymore. In 1928, in the annual race to Honolulu, this schooner established a record of 11 days and 23 hours.

Other members of the movie fleet included two camera barges, a tugboat, two 50-passenger water taxis and five speedboats. For a few of the sequences some Alaskan halibut boats were sailed down from Seattle.

There were times when the company wasn't quite sure what it was doing, because the weather was perverse for weeks at a time. Periods of idleness would have been even longer but for occasional shots which were made at the studio. The Gloucester waterfront was reproduced in detail on M-G-M's back lot.

A partial replica of the We're Here also was constructed on a studio sound stage. While wind machines whooshed and waves poured down wooden chutes, Spencer Tracy met a hero's death when he was caught and drowned in a welter of wrecked rigging. Galley, forecabin and aft cabin also were reproduced in detail at the studio. The sets were mounted on rockers.

THE flicker actors didn't always accompany ships on the longer voyages. Part of the time they were headquartered in Hollywood and went down to the sea in limousines. And for several intervals of several weeks they lived at the leading hotel on Mr. Wrigley's Santa Catalina Island. The hotel didn't mind that they tramped into the lobby of an evening in redolent oilskins and boots slimy with fish scales and gurry. It was, fortunately, the off-season, and the screen players were the sole guests in the establishment.

A camera platform was built out from the port side of the schooner so that the lens might take in the ocean, the side of the schooner and the entire deck. In the forecabin Harold Minniar, a school teacher, conducted classes for Bartholomew and Mickey Rooney, for they're obliged to study a minimum of three hours a day even while at sea.

The property man on this picture was Johnny Miller. As property man on "The Good Earth," for which he collected and handled some 10,000 items ranging from joss sticks to water buffalo, Miller figured he had encountered all the headaches to be had on this mortal coil. But that was before he found out about codfish.

Since this is a codfishing story, even though mostly filmed off the Grand Banks of Hollywood, it was apparent that genuine cod would have to appear in the picture. So he began by shipping them in from Boston, 1000 pounds at a time, packed in ice.

Pretty soon they were arriving a ton at a time. The patient, cod-fearing Miller learned to unpack, head, split and gut codfish until every cat in Greater Los Angeles would follow him wherever he went.

They had a tough time getting the final storm sequences, for although the weather was beastly, the sea was calm. Up and down the coast cruised the We're Here and the Jennie Cushman. In despair they finally proceeded to Mazatlan and lay there awaiting orders to proceed through the canal and find a storm off Florida.

And then, simultaneously with the sailing orders, came a hurricane off Cape San Lucas. It nearly wrecked the ships.

That storm and the deliberate dismantling of the We're Here during a race with the Cushman provided the most perilous moments of the long voyage. Breaking of the mast was accomplished by sawing it half in two and then piling on canvas until it popped and came down.