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# The Engineer's Bookshelf

By Wilson R. Dumble

**AND NOW GOOD-BYE**—by *James Hilton*—*William Morrow and Co., Inc. 1931.*

**VALLEY FORGE**—by *Maxwell Anderson*—*Anderson House. Washington, D.C. 1934.*

**THE CHILDREN'S HOUR**—by *Lillian Hellman*—*Alfred A. Knopf. New York. 1934.*

**JOSHUA TODD**—by *Fulton Oursler—Farrar and Rinehardt. New York. 1935.*

**OF TIME AND THE RIVER**—by *Thomas Wolfe*—*Scribner's. New York. 1935.*

**L**AST month on this page I made mention of "good-bye, Mr. Chipps" by James Hilton, the British author. Since then I have become acquainted with two of Mr. Hilton's other novels, and I found both just as delightful as the first one I read.

Mr. Hilton's "The Lost Horizon" could really be called a mystery story. It tells the tale of a mixed group of individuals who find themselves in a British aeroplane supposedly being taken to safety from a rebellion in India<sup>4</sup> but who in reality are at the mercy of a Chinese bandit. He pilots the plane to a forsaken plateau in Tibet, where, under difficult landing conditions he is accidentally killed but the passengers merely shaken up a bit. They are rescued from this windy territory by residents from a nearby monastery whose plan is to keep them sheltered in some unreal but delightful confinement. Curiously enough, all the passengers gradually succumb to the peaceful mode of living they find in the monastery and none expresses a desire to return to his native land.

Of course the story is a fantasy of the first water, but it is so delightfully told and made so startlingly real that the reader gradually falls under the spell of the author and secretly desires that he, too, might find that land where moderation is a virtue, even when it comes to vice. "The Lost Horizon" is well worth reading, regardless of what critics have said against it.

## More Hilton

Critics, however, have been more kind to Mr. Hilton's "And Now Good-bye," the story of Rev. Howat Freemantle, a young sensitive vicar of secluded Browdley, a charming little English village. By accident quite, the Reverend Mr. Freemantle finds himself the hero of a train wreck. This completely reverses his life for a short time, but in the end he returns to Browdley and his churchly flock.

To me "And Now Good-bye" lacks the verve that Mr.

Hilton has put into "The Lost Horizon." Nevertheless both books are well worth reading, and I have had at least two students in the College of Engineering tell me that they never stopped reading the monastery story until they had finished it. That, I believe, is a recommendation.

## Design for War Living

Maxwell Anderson has written a new play, and like his "Mary of Scotland" it is historical. "Valley Forge," a play in three acts, is one of the most successful hits of the present New York theatrical season, and besides, it has been published in book form. The locale of the play is Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, during the dreadful winter of 1778, and the action is punctuated with the distress of the soldiers, their desire to mutiny, their longing to return home to their families.

According to the reports from Times Square Philip Merivale is doing magnificent work in the role of George Washington.

## The Children's Hour

Still another successful Broadway production this winter, "The Children's Hour," is published in book form. Miss Lillian Hellman, the author, for no reason apparently, has dedicated the play to Dashiell (Thin Man) Hammett.

Some of my colleagues who recently have been fortunate to see the production in New York say that it is the most powerful and gripping of anything within their theatrical memory. Certainly I can well believe this statement, especially if the play acted is like the play read. And there is every reason to believe that it is even better on the stage than on the printed page, because, like all plays, it has been written to be acted and not to be read.

Miss Hellman, in this her first play, presents a powerful situation of two young women who manage a select school for girls in the environs of Boston. To this school comes a pupil, one child, Mary by name, age about fourteen years, who is the re-incarnation of the devil himself. Among her schoolmates she circulates a malicious story, unfounded, about the two headmistresses of the school, which ultimately results in their ruination, financially and socially, and the suicide of one of the women. The situation, highly theatrical, is no doubt as dramatic and drab and terrible as any on the current American stage; even worse it is than the situation in "Tobacco Road," still holding down the boards of a Times Square theater for considerably more than a year.

In reading "The Children's Hour" there are several

places where the reader may justly ask: Why did the author do this? Yet, any loose dramatic threads which apparently are left unravelled, are soon overlooked as the story unfolds itself and one sees innocent victims swept into the clutch of fate. For an hour of exciting reading look into a copy of "The Children Hour."

### Maryland's Eastern Shore

I was intensely interested in reading Fulton Oursler's "Joshua Todd," if for no other reason than it is the beloved Eastern Shore of Maryland. As a story it does not amount to much, but as a study of the quaintness of a flat interesting portion of the state of Maryland, laced and interlaced by salt water estuaries from Chesapeake Bay, it is very fine. Although I know the Eastern Shore quite well, I am not acquainted enough to place accurately the locale of the story. It might be Chestertown or Easton or Salisbury or St. Michaels. Still again it might be further down the peninsula. But regardless of where the story is placed, it still remains an interesting study of impoverished people resenting the arrival of moneyed Northerners. It might be interesting to note here that Hervey Allen and John Charles Thomas have recently purchased Eastern Shore homes.

### Wolfe, Wolfe!

I cannot do more than mention here something about the new Novel of Thomas Wolfe called, "Of Time and the River." Mr. Wolfe is the author of "Look Homeward Angel," an exceptionally fine first novel published four years ago. The new volume is equally as long in number of pages, for it boasts of some nine hundred, closely printed pages. I have not read far enough in the volume to write about it, but one of the interesting features to me is its size. It is amazing to note that of the recent very popular books, two, others besides the Wolfe novel are over one thousand pages. I refer, of course to Mr. Allen's "Anthony Adverse" and Ruth Suckow's "The Folks."

It also must be noted that other very popular novels during the last two years, are extremely short. James Hilton's novels mentioned in the first paragraphs of this article are not more than one hundred and fifty pages each. Apparently paradoxes exist, not only in nature, but also in literature.

### S. S. Titanic

The following item I clipped from the New York Times for Sunday, April 14:

The frantic C Q D-S O S of the S. S. Titanic, a new queen of the sea, flashed through the North Atlantic air twenty-three years ago tonight, April 14, 1912.

Harold Cottam, Marconi operator on board the Carpathia, had shut off his radio for the night, but some twist of fate sent him back to the apparatus in quest of news bulletins. Instead he heard MGY broadcasting C Q D and "We've struck a berg."

When the Carpathia and other vessels arrived at dawn it was too late. Ice had ripped out the bottom of the big

ship; 1,595 persons were gone and 745 saved. Jack Phillips, senior operator of the ill-fated craft, was lost. Harold Bride, the 22-year old junior operator, was picked up on a life raft by the Carpathia sailors.

I am always interested in anything I read about the sinking of the S. S. Titanic, not only because I so well remember the morning that the terrible news of the accident reached this country but also because of friends I made crossing the Atlantic some ten years later. In July, 1922, I sailed for Le Havre in the French liner Rochambeau and during the crossing I became acquainted with a delightful young couple from suburban New York who had crossed every summer for several years to visit relatives on the Island of Jersey. They gave me the information in a kind of second-handed fashion, that faulty construction had been to blame for the destruction of the Titanic and not an iceberg. In the British investigation that followed the accident, however, it was decided that sinking was accidental, by iceberg.

The most interesting feature about the affair is the fact that the real truth of what happened on board ship during that fatal evening will never be known. I have no reason to believe the story given me by my chance acquaintances; yet, adverse opinions always intrigue the mind.

### Prospecting for Road Metals by Geophysics

In the past years, man has depended upon materials of the earth which were seen beneath his feet for road purposes. Since the demand for such materials has increased, observations and theories have been formulated concerning the probability of oil and minerals occurring beneath the surface of the earth. The theories of geology are not specific. It therefore rests upon the principles of geophysics to give us the information needed concerning some distance from their source.

Materials have such properties as density, electrical conductivity, magnetic susceptibility, elasticity, temperature, and radioactivity content. All of these properties are measureable in the laboratory and they are capable of detection at a distance. Any buried mass contributes its part to the total gravitational field at any point on the surface of the earth. An electric current passed through the ground distributes itself according to well-known physical laws. The propagation of sound energy behaves in a like manner with elasticity the controlling factor. Heat has well-known distance effects, while radioactivity substances shoot out forms of energy capable of detection some distance from their source.

Using the above properties of minerals, several methods have been devised to locate and determine the quality of deposits. Several state highway departments are adopting these methods to locate sand and gravel deposits. The theory of the principles involved in the apparatus used is very complicated. The Minnesota department of highways made 100 tests in 30 counties in the past year and less than 2 per cent of the test holes dug failed to verify the predictions made by the earth-resistivity method.