

## The Knowledge Bank at The Ohio State University

### Ohio State Engineer

- Title:** The Engineer's Bookshelf
- Creators:** Dumble, Wilson R.
- Issue Date:** Feb-1937
- Publisher:** Ohio State University, College of Engineering
- Citation:** Ohio State Engineer, vol. 20, no. 3 (February, 1937), 14-16.
- URI:** <http://hdl.handle.net/1811/35361>
- Appears in Collections:** [Ohio State Engineer: Volume 20, no. 3 \(February, 1937\)](#)

# THE ENGINEER'S BOOKSHELF

By WILSON R. DUMBLE

**THE WINGLESS VICTORY**—by Maxwell Anderson  
—Anderson House—\$2.50

**AN AMERICAN OMNIBUS**—edited by Carl Van Doren—Doubleday—\$3.00

**VOYAGE TO GALAPAGOS**—by William A. Robinson—Harcourt Brace—\$3.00

## A Good Omnibus

Any one interested in a literary omnibus will be pleased if they turn to one published recently by Doubleday Doran Company. It is called *An American Omnibus* and contains a splendid introduction by Carl Van Doren.

Among the more lengthy pieces in the volume is Maxwell Anderson's play, "Mary of Scotland," that splendid theatrical vehicle that took Miss Helen Hayes about the country a number of seasons ago. Like his newer plays, it is written in blank verse, and reads just as well as it acts.

Further investigation of the contents tells us that Dorothy Parker's "Big Blonde," "Ernest Hemingway's "The Killers" and Sinclair Lewis' "Ring Around Rosy" are also included. Then too, one finds such names as George Ade, Don Marquis, Christopher Morley, Ring Lardner, Sherwood Anderson, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Robert Frost, Carl Sandburg and Robert Benchley. There are many others, and as far as anthologies are concerned I do not know of any published recently that can compare with this one. Indeed I am happy that a kind and considerate friend included it on my Christmas list.

## Operation at Sea

Travel books come and go in such great numbers that it is difficult to know just what is good and bad in that particular line of reading; but during the holiday I read one that grabbed my attention at once and although it was published almost a year ago it seems to have slipped my attention. I am referring to William Albert Robinson's *Voyage to Galapagos*.

You may remember that the Robinsons—there were three members in the family—set sail from New York in the Spring of 1933 for a trip to the South Seas. Everything went well until a year later when Robinson himself, while the ship was anchored off a secluded harbor, developed an attack of appendicitis. You will also remember, no doubt, that the United States Navy answered their call for help, and by means of seaplane and destroyer the stricken man was removed from his ship, operated

upon at sea and invalided to the hospital in the Canal Zone, where he recuperated nicely.

This volume makes splendid reading, 'dedicated as it is to the gallant men who effected his rescue, and is welcomingly illustrated by Daniel T. West, Robinson's cousin, who was with Mr. and Mrs. Robinson on the trip.

## "Never the Twain Shall Meet"

Once again Maxwell Anderson has proved to literary America that he can write a play in verse and make it a Broadway sensation. Of course, Mr. Anderson's new one, *The Wingless Victory*, is not the first of that kind that he has done; there were *Mary of Scotland* and more recently *Winterset*. Both of these were splendid pieces of work and incidentally proved to be good "theatre" when they were produced in New York. Likewise, they were taken on the road and there too were successful.

But *The Wingless Victory* is a far cry from Mr. Anderson's first step into the theatrical world. Shortly after the World War, with Laurence Stallings he wrote *What Price Glory?*, still the best of the war plays with its frankly salty lines, its intriguing situations and its ghastly second act. It was in *What Price Glory?* that Mr. Anderson definitely discovered his ability to perfect a play structurally. Mr. Stallings, of course, furnished the material for the piece; Mr. Anderson then took the material and wove it into the story.

Since those "Glory" days, however, Mr. Anderson has been doing his work alone, and has been writing plays which place him definitely in the class with Eugene O'Neill, the recent Pulitzer prize winner. Then too, Mr. Anderson has been attempting things that Mr. O'Neill has never tried to do; he has been writing his plays in blank verse. The latest of these to be published is *The Wingless Victory*, now running at a Manhattan playhouse. It had its opening performance at the National Theatre in Washington, D. C., on November 24 last, before a brilliant audience. From there it was taken to Cincinnati for a week and then to Cleveland for another six-day run. Miss Katherine Cornell is heading the cast.

*The Wingless Victory* is the age-old story of East versus West, with its setting in Salem, Massachusetts, in the 1880's. The smugness of the Puritans strikes hard at the tolerance of a Malayan princess brought back to Salem by Nathaniel McQueston, a sea-faring captain, after an absence of several years. Nathaniel and Oparre had been married in the eyes of God after a romantic

courtship in her father's palace; Oparre had then embraced the Christian religion; and, by the time they had arrived a few years later at Salem, had become the parents of two children. But, fancy the jolt Salem Puritanism received when this family of four accompanied by Oparre's maid and a small crew sailed into the Massachusetts harbor.

It goes without saying that Salem intolerance enjoyed a wingless victory; for snubbed by all of Salem's first families, ridiculed by members of her husband's family, and finally denounced by Nathaniel himself, Oparre with her children retreat to the ship that had brought them to their unhappiness, where death soon awaits them. Oparre administers a potion of white hemlock to the children's evening meal, and after they are asleep, she too, drinks the remainder of the bottle of poison.

No, *The Wingless Victory* is not pleasant reading, but in the hands of Mr. Anderson the tale takes on a classic glow, etched with gorgeous ringing lines. The result is a satisfying indictment of narrow-minded Puritanism at its worst and a vibrant tale of sullen beauty.

Here is a notable sample of Mr. Anderson's verse; it is Oparre speaking in the first act:

"Yet seeing he loved me, and I stood  
before him flushed with that love, I have dared to  
say:

I, even I, Oparre, lower in blood,  
of pagan nurture, may I not step from darkness  
in this garment like a glory he puts around me,  
the garment of his love? Wearing this glory,  
and proud of it, yet timid in what I am  
and know myself to be, I have made my prayer  
that I may be found worthy of your god  
and your cities and your ways, to walk among you  
almost as you—not quite despised. If I  
am over-bold in this, my punishment  
is sure and deep and mortal."

## Russian Realists

In this column of the December issue, I spoke, in a review of Miss Willa S. Cather's new book, *Not Under Forty*, of a letter that I had received several years ago from Miss Cather's secretary concerning the influence that the works of Miss Sarah Orne Jewett had had on Miss Cather. Since it might be of interest to any one who likes to read the stories of Miss Cather, I wish to print the letter here.

Under the date of February 8, 1932, Miss Sarah J. Bloom sent me the following communication:

"Miss Cather is travelling at present, but I have had her dictation answering so many letters from men and women who were writing theses about her work that perhaps I can give you an outline of the form her answer to your question would take.

"Miss Cather has never been influenced by Mrs. Wharton's writing, for she has never been an admirer of Mrs. Wharton's work. She has deeply admired the work of Miss Jewett, but their two personalities are so differ-

ent, and they have attempted such different things in writing, that Miss Cather could hardly be said to have been influenced by Miss Jewett's work. The Russian realists have no doubt influenced all the writers of this generation, but influence of this sort is so indirect and unconscious that probably no writer could tell you just how far or in what ways he has been so influenced. It is like asking any one how much they have been influenced by the discovery of electricity. When I wrote a letter for Miss Cather in reply to some questions from one of the editors of 'Figaro' in Paris, I remember she said that probably the two writers who had most influenced her taste were Gogol and Prosper Merimée."

## Anniversary

For the past several years hardly a week passes without some new magazine appearing on our news stands. Some are interesting and helpful and are destined to last; others, alas, are doomed from the very first issue for one reason or other. But a magazine that has served its purpose throughout fifty years of splendid service is *Scribner's*, who with its January, 1937, issue, begins its fifty-first year.

This anniversary number of *Scribner's* is indeed worth reading if for no other reason than to see the several reprints that occur in it. John Galsworthy's "Quality" first appeared in *Scribner's*, as did Mrs. Edith Wharton's "Xingu," Bret Harte's "A Drift from Redwood Camp," and Ernest Hemingway's "The Killers." These splendid stories are among others in the anniversary issue.

But articles and stories are not the only reprints, for one finds delightful colored plates by Howard Chandler Christy, Rockwell Kent, Maxfield Parrish, and Howard Pyle. It seems to me that only on such occasions as anniversaries does one realize the service that a magazine such as the quality of *Scribner's* gives to its public. Long live *Scribner's Magazine*.

## "While There's Life . . . ."

One of the newer magazines destined to live a long and worthy existence is *Life*, published by Time, Inc. The old *Life*, the humorous magazine, died a natural death during November, and immediately plans were under way and presses were started for new *Life*. The result is not a humorous magazine, but a pictorial exhibit of the most unusual collection of candid photographs taken in all parts of the world and dealing with timely topics. *Life* is a weekly, and since their initial publication some eight weeks ago the circulation has increased with incredible speed. Certainly, for anyone who is interested in seeing what has happened in the world during the preceding seven days, *Life* is the answer.

## A New Novel

Word comes from the New York offices of Farrar and Rinehart that Professor Haylan H. Hatcher of the department of English is publishing his new novel the last of this month. Originally called *The Sun Goes Down at Noon*, the book will appear under the title of

*Central Standard Time.* Advance notices say that it is a story of the second lost generation, a story of those people who have been influenced by the disjointed economy of the depression.

This is the third novel that Professor Hatcher has written in the last four years.

## Lecture Series

Professor Robert S. Newdick and the members of his Committee on Public Relations of the department of English have announced a series of broadcasts on Wednesday evenings, 8:45 to 9:15, on WOSU. Already five lectures of the series have been given; Prof. Royal H. Snow on January 6 spoke on "Modern British Poetry," Prof. W. L. Graves, January 13, on A. E. Housman, Prof. T. C. Pollock, January 20, on T. S. Eliot, Mr. R. E. Brittain, January 27, on John Masefield, and Miss Edith Sniffen, February 3, on William Butley Yeats.

Scheduled for the remainder of the winter quarter, however, are the remaining interesting lectures:

- February 10: *Victorian Poetry*: Mr. J. V. Logan.
- February 17: *Alfred Lord Tennyson*: Mr. E. L. Beck.
- February 24: *Matthew Arnold*: Mr. R. S. Newdick.
- March 3: *Robert Browning*: Mr. J. F. Fullington.
- March 10: *Thomas Hardy*: Mr. R. H. Snow.

## The Wingless Victory

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The following is a review of the Cincinnati production of "The Wingless Victory" which Mr. J. Bradford Harrison, department of English, witnessed on Monday evening, December 7, in company with several other members of the faculty. In view of the fact that Mr. Dumble has featured a review of the book in THE ENGINEER'S BOOKSHELF, the editor requested Mr. Harrison to write a review of the play.*

Although six weeks or more have passed since I witnessed the first Cincinnati performance of *The Wingless Victory*, I find, on sitting down to write this article, that my reactions to the play are still divided between pleasure and disappointment. Considering the debit side first, the author seems to me to be largely responsible for the weaknesses which the production possesses.

To begin with, there is the matter of the theme, which is the old one about "East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." Now, there is no reason why Mr. Anderson should not develop his play around such a venerable idea. But, partly because he dates the action 1800, his treatment of race prejudice and religious hypocrisy lacks the force, for a contemporary audience, that his criticism of another form of injustice possessed in last year's *Winterset*. Surely, he could have found a more recent, and therefore more trenchant, illustration of his theme in the life of our own day.

Another weakness I find in the language of certain scenes of the play. Specifically, I have in mind the end of the second act, in which Oparre, the transplanted

Malay princess, condemns her husband, the rest of the McQueston family, and others of the Salem community, for their unreasoning prejudices, their hypocrisy, and their dollar morality. The scene calls for sincere and honest language, quietly intense language. Instead, Miss Cornell is forced to bombard the audience with a display of verbal pyrotechnics that is almost outrageous in its thunder and noise. That is Mr. Anderson's fault, and even Katharine the Great cannot make the lines sound like anything except hollow thunder. (I should probably add that the scene is just the sort of thing for the privilege of playing which any actress would gladly sell her mess of greasepaint.)

For the one other conspicuously disappointing feature of the play, Mr. Anderson can be held responsible only to the extent that he imposes the task of speaking blank verse upon actors who seem a little embarrassed by the assignment. Walter Abel, who portrays Nathaniel McQueston, Oparre's husband, was, on the night I saw the play, uncertain in both lines and part, and as a result, his acting was frequently as wooden and lifeless as the figure-head on one of the McQueston ships. But Mr. Abel is a capable actor, and hence, I feel sure that he has mastered his difficulties by now.

However, in spite of these weaknesses—and a few others might be cited—I came away from the theatre with the conviction that my trip to Cincinnati had been decidedly worth while. Much of the language of the play is beautiful indeed, many of Mr. Anderson's lines, even whole passages, are poetry of a very high order. Miss Cornell gave another one of her carefully wrought performances in a role which, unfortunately, affords little opportunity for true characterization, and it is a tribute to her powers that she warmed even her speeches at the end of the second act with a certain measure of authentic feeling and passion.

The rest of the cast were at least competent, and I particularly liked the quiet restraint of Effie Shannon as Mrs. McQueston, Nathaniel's mother. Jo Mielziner's setting for the first two acts is a good example of period design which escapes being offensively so, and his setting for the last act, a cabin in one of Nathaniel's ships, is likewise effectively realistic.

The popular reception of the play in New York indicates that we will not see *The Wingless Victory* at the Hartman for some time. Meanwhile, I feel reasonably safe in predicting that the movies will produce it, for the play seems to offer greater possibilities for cinematic transcription than *Winterset*.

---

Whether the enormous mass of water held back of the Boulder Dam will cause the crust of the earth to bend is a matter of opinion among various scientists. Most of the men of learning agree, however, that this force will cause some deviation in the earth's 17-75 mile thick crust. An expert has figured that over a 12 square mile area, the ground will sink six-tenths of a foot in two to three years.