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THE ENGINEER'S BOOKSHELF

By WILSON R. DUMBLE

VICTORIA REGINA—by *Laurence Housman*—
(Scribner's) (\$3.50)

POEMS—by *Joseph Russell Taylor*—(Charles A. Trowbridge Co.) (\$2.50)

Mutiny

Some few weeks ago before the Christmas holiday the Ohio Theatre screen showed *Mutiny on the Bounty*, that highly flavored cinema we had expected for some weeks. Months before when I had read the story in book form, I thought how superb it would be in the screen production. Then, finally came the announcement that Mr. Charles Laughton would play the part of Captain Bligh. I remembered with the greatest pleasure his gluttonous Henry, his stern papa Barrett, his gentlemanly Ruggles and his relentless Javert. I was pleased; but my cup of anticipation ran over when I learned that Frank Lloyd was to direct the production. So vividly I recalled the superb direction of "Cavalcade" that he gave us several years ago. So, you see, I was rather prepared for a splendid cinema "Mutiny" when I seated myself at the Ohio Theatre.

And was I disappointed? No, no indeed! For it is the best, the most exciting and the most beautifully constructed film of the season. Surely Charles Laughton as Captain Bligh and Clark Gable as Fletcher Christian and Franchot Tone as the understanding Midshipman Byam did more than justice to the Nordhoff-Hall story. Who, we ask, could see that picture and ever forget Laughton's expression when he roared: "Mr. Christian proceed with the flogging?" Forever Laughton's Bligh will live in our memory, as will his line, "Oh, the things we do for England" from his "Henry the Eighth." How fine that Hollywood has found Laughton, and long live Frank Lloyd for this perfect production! "Mutiny" should be on the required list of all movie-goers.

The Brothers Marx

Thanksgiving afternoon found me at the Broad Theatre seeing what the Brothers Marx could do if they were turned loose under certain circumstances in the flies of the Metropolitan Opera House. For once again, after too long an absence, during which time we missed them greatly, Groucho and Chico and Harpo returned with the highest low comedy it has been my pleasure to witness on the screen. The Brothers Marx are to low comedy what brandy is to black coffee after a very heavy turkey dinner. If you don't know what I mean see them

in "A Night at the Opera." Watch Groucho entertaining the ship's crew in a two-by-four stateroom; see Harpo swinging about the flies of the opera house during a Verdi performance and witness the series of drops that fall to mirror a serious operatic scene; hear a splendid orchestra slip from the *Il Trovatore* overture to "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" without losing a beat. Then it is, and possibly not until then, that you will get first hand information on low comedy. And you will like it, or we miss our guess. "A Night at the Opera" is, as it should be, caviar to the general.

Tobacco Road House

Over many a cup of coffee during the holidays did we hear discussion about "Tobacco Road." For at long last that much discussed play arrived at the Hartman Theatre during the final examination period. Did it portray the poor white of the deep South? Was there reason for stopping the performance in Chicago several months ago? Should the character of Ellie May be omitted from the production? These were just a few of the questions asked many times during heated debates about the production. And, sorry, to relate, these are the questions that I am unable to answer; for one cannot help but find a pro and con in each case. Yes and no are logical answers when you consider the subject matter of "Tobacco Road;" it all depends upon the individual, and probably even on the individual's mood when he sees the play. Frankly, I would not take the young nephew to see the production; nor do I think that Aunt Emma would enjoy the performance.

Yet, I honestly admit that I gained the greatest pleasure sitting at the Saturday matinee and watching objectively the antics of the Lester family. I say antics because that is what they were. At its worst, which was its best, it was as good as a three ring circus. And, as you see the slender threads of the plot being pulled together in the last act, you realize there is something there that the average theatre-goer misses. Jeeter's plea addressed to the Augusta realtors to remain on the land is better by far, than a New Dealer's argument for Home Owners Loan help. And too, if you are interested in beautifully timed final curtains, you will experience sheer delight at the very end of the play. To me there is something wrong with a person's legitimate stage education if he cannot leave a performance of *Tobacco Road* taking with him only the cursing and a memory of the first act seduction scene. For deep down underneath, *Tobacco*

Road tells a story, a story of life itself, a story of "earth to earth and dust to dust", a story as universal as birth and death themselves. And not until you understand that, could you or should you enjoy *Tobacco Road*.

The Old Maid

More to my liking than *Tobacco Road* was the splendid performance of *The Old Maid* which appeared at Columbus' Hartman Theatre on December 9. With few exceptions the Manhattan cast, including Miss Judith Anderson and Miss Helen Menken, unfolded the much discussed Pulitzer prize play of last year to a local audience. Miss Anderson's Delia effectively showed those rare shadings of emotion of which a really good actress is capable. Despite a miserable cold Miss Anderson's performance was truly remarkable. Of course no less successful was Miss Menken's Chatty, that delightful character who loved and suffered for her illegitimate daughter, Tina.

I recall so well the first time I ever saw Miss Anderson on the American stage. It was the night after I had returned from Europe the last of January, 1919, where I had been the guest of the United States Government, helping to make the world safe for Democracy. At a little theatre off Times Square Miss Anderson had a small role in William Gillette's production of Sir James M. Barrie's *Dear Brutus*, that most remarkable story of the childless artist who met, one day, quite by chance, the child he might have had. And that child, by the way, was none other than one Miss Helen Hayes, who, in these sixteen years has reached a theatrical height of enviable proportions. But Miss Anderson definitely came to the immediate attention of theatre goers. Later, of course, her Nina Leeds in O'Neil's *Strange Interlude* was a crowning success.

Life Began in 1919

As I look back over the years, I see now how little did I realize what I was witnessing that memorable January night in 1919. There I was, still wearing the United States military uniform, fresh from a late war—a war to end wars, by the way—and a guest of a former English instructor from a private school in Maryland which I had attended before I joined the service. We had had one of those satisfying dinners in the grill room of the late Knickerbocker Hotel, and he had tickets to a new Barrie play. I recall so well, it was at the end of the second act of *Dear Brutus*, in the smoke-filled lobby of the Forty-first Street Theatre, that my host said to me, "My boy, you are seeing theatrical history made tonight." That remark, I admit, meant little to me at that time; but I still remember it and realize now its grand significance. For *Dear Brutus* was the last and probably the best, except *Peter Pan*, of a long list of fine plays from a finished British playwright. Its cast contained Mr. Gillette, who recently celebrated his eightieth birthday and who soon is to revive the play in Manhattan; and Miss Anderson, now loyally trouping the country giving to the provincials

the best of the legitimate stage; and also Miss Helen Hayes, now considered the first lady of the theatre, regardless of what the Barrymores say.

Yes, it was a memorable performance and I failed to sense the true situation. I guess I was at the time, too filled with the art and science of killing, the one and only study which comprised my curriculum during that strange interlude of the war to end wars.

Timely Square

Recent reports from Times Square give accent to two very fine plays which are now the drawing cards on Broadway. One is *Dead End* where social injustice is sharply dramatized. It is from the pen of Sidney Kingsley, the author of *Men In White*. *Dead End* is a tragedy in which the gutter urchins of today, ignored by society, become the gangsters of tomorrow. I am told it is very fine, quite searching, and apparently the social rip-tide of 1936.

The other success of the season opened the night after Christmas to a brilliant first night audience. It is *Victoria Regina*, starring Miss Helen Hayes and selecting short sketches from the life of England's Queen Victoria.

Victoria Regina is published in book form and presents the most delightful reading in dramatic biography that I have seen. The sketches, about thirty-five in number, are written by Laurence Housman, a brother of Alfred E. Housman, famous for *The Shropshire Lad*. They are courtly in their setting; but they are also domestic, and in a couple of cases even homely. Chronologically arranged, the first sketch deals with the early life of the young queen and is placed in the year 1837. The last is centered about Victoria's Diamond Jubilee Procession when she both laughed and cried at the mob's shouts of "Go it, old girl! You've done it well!" That, of course, is 1897.

The book is splendid reading, and with Miss Hayes I easily can understand how the play is much better. I wonder when we of Columbus will be able to see *Dead End* and *Victoria Regina*?

Joseph Russell Taylor

It seems incredible, as I sit here writing, to think that I am penning a few lines about a book of *Poems* by Joseph Russell Taylor. It seems incredible that only a few short years ago "Joey" was with us, every day, in the classroom, in the office. Yet, he is still with us. Above my desk hangs one of his water colors which he gave me on his last Christmas. On my wall, framed, hangs a charming note addressed to me by Mrs. Dorothy Canfield Fisher and written at his suggestion. Better still, in my heart are priceless memories of contacts, of kind encouraging advice, of new common sense literary angles, of things left unsaid.

And now we have his *Poems*, recently published in a splendid little volume which shall live forever in my library. It contains the famous George Bellows' portrait of "Joey," and interspersed on its pages are good repro-

ductions of his own water colors. But best of all are the near two hundred pages of poems that are his. And as I read them I recall many things. I recall, for instance, one of the most superb lectures I ever heard in a class room, a lecture on Tennyson's *The Lady of Shalott*. I recall *The Cloud* and *The Eve of St. Agnes*, and yes, even Rupert Brook's *The Soldier*. As long as I live I shall re-

member "Joey" reading, one dull wintry afternoon, in a seminar.

"If I should die think only this of me"

And now, his own poems! Read *Olentangy Valley* or *The Russian Church in Paris* or *Midsummer Eve* and then realize, you students of 1936, what you have missed. A great teacher, a fine friend, a real gentleman!
