

## The Knowledge Bank at The Ohio State University

### Ohio State Engineer

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# THE ENGINEER'S BOOKSHELF

By WILSON R. DUMBLE

**THE WOMEN**—by *Clare Boothe*—*Randon House*—\$2.00.

**YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU**—by *Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman*—*Farrar & Rinehart*—\$2.00.

**WAR MADNESS**—by *Stephen and Joan Raushenbush*—*National Home Library Foundation*—25c.

**COMPANY K**—by *William March*—*The American Mercury*—25c.

**ESSAY ANNUAL-1937**—edited by *Erich A. Walter*—*Scott, Foresman and Company*—\$1.50.

**THEATRE**—by *W. Somerset Maugham*—*Doubleday Doran*—\$2.50.

## ... More Deadly Than the Male

One of the most amusing plays, still running on the boards in Manhattan, is Clare Boothe's *The Women*, a sharp, cutting account of the fair ladies on all the Park Avenues in America. Often plays, even plays of the modern theatre, do not make good reading; but such is not the case of *The Women*. One can sit in his comfortable chair at home, with a light properly poised, with a brand of his famous cigarettes, and enjoy Miss Boothe's contribution to the current theatre, without sitting in the playhouse and having his neighbors clamber back and forth over him during the intermissions.

*The Women* is convincing and witty proof that the female of the species is more deadly than the male; it is proof that a group of women, when they get together, talk in the same overtones as do men when they get together, whether it be at the nineteenth hole or over the coffee cups after the ladies have retired to the drawing room; it is proof that in the female of the species there is both good and bad, and that the young matrons, in no uncertain terms, at an afternoon bridge session not only undo their hair but also take it down, all the way.

The story in general is about all women, but in particular it concerns Mrs. Mary Haines, whose husband, Stephen, has found life more or less interesting and inspiring through a liaison with one Crystal Allen. Crystal is a go-getter, and believes that "the bigger they come the harder they fall." And Stephen is no exception.

Through some of her bridge-playing friends,

Mary learns of Stephen's affair with Crystal, and after considerable deliberation decides on a Reno divorce. Needless to say, however, Stephen's marriage to Crystal gradually drifts toward the rock-ribbed divorce courts, and Mary, in the end, is happily re-united with her former husband.

*The Women* is a long play, with its three acts divided into some twelve scenes which shift from Mary's homey living room to a hairdresser's, to a fitting room in one of Fifth Avenue's exclusive women's shops, to an exercise room in a ladies' gymnasium, to a room in the maternity wing of a hospital, and finally back to Mary's living room. And the women in *The Women* can rightfully be called any of a long list of descriptive adjectives and nouns, beginning with cats and ending with hussies. Nevertheless, the play is entertaining reading, if you care to read a play.

## No Pockets in Shrouds

Still another play, also running in Manhattan, that affords good reading is *You Can't Take It With You*, by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman. They are the gentlemen, you may remember, who wrote, a number of years ago, *Once in a Lifetime*, so splendidly produced by Strollers on our campus. But their new piece is much better and even funnier than their first. *You Can't Take It With You* deals with riotously funny episodes in the lives of the Sycamore family, a nondescript bunch of relatives living under the same roof in the neighborhood of Columbia University in New York City. Penelope Sycamore, for example, writes plays only because someone, by mistake, several years previously, left a typewriter at the apartment. Her husband, Paul, has no set job, but tinkers with pyrotechnics in the basement of the building, making pin wheels and Roman candles and all such contraptions that delight the hearts of the young on the Fourth of July. Then, there is Penelope's father, Martin Vanderhof, who suddenly decided that since he "could not take his money with him when he died," he would give up his business, stay about his home, feed his pet snakes, and attend lectures and commencement exercises at Columbia whenever he wished. Add to these four creatures, Essie who makes candy and studies dancing, Ed who plays a large variety of musical instruments, black Rheba who cooks for them devotedly, Donald who never goes any place "because he's on relief," and Gay Wellington who awakens from a

drunken stupor at the wrong time; see then, what the final effect will be.

Every member of the Sycamore family is to a certain extent the envy of every member in the nightly audiences that are witnessing the productions at the Booth Theatre, because no person living is ever wholly contented with what he is doing all the time. There comes an hour in the day of every human, when he would like to "chuck his work," go to the golf course, strike out across the hills on a beautiful autumn afternoon, or sit contentedly back in his easy chair and follow the adventures of a favorite hero in a favorite magazine. For that very reason, the play is at the same time both funny and heart-breaking.

It is possible that *You Can't Take It With You* suffers slightly in reading. It is possible that owing to the great number of "business lines," to really enjoy the play it should be seen rather than read. Yet, anyone with even half an imagination will thoroughly enjoy reading it.

### More Maugham

*Theatre* by W. Somerset Maugham is not one of his best novels; but if you liked *Of Human Bondage*—and who does not like it, I ask—you might be interested in his latest book, off the press early last spring. As the name implies, it is a story of the theatre, a story of Julia and Michael and their rise to theatrical fame in the London playhouses. In their early show days, Julia and Michael played in stock company, fell in love, and were married. By the time Mr. Maugham starts the action of his novel, Michael has given up the playing end of the theatre and is devoting his time to managing the productions in which his wife appears.

In *Theatre* Julia is directly in conflict with herself; for when we first see her she is finding attractions with men the outstanding features of her existence, although she is a loyal wife and a devoted mother. But, like so many theatrical people, when they have the world at their feet following successful careers, they waver always "to the left."

Probably it is not the story in this Maugham novel that fascinates the reader. Possibly the reader is attracted more to the splendid structure of the book than to the characterizations. But in *Theatre*, Maugham, as only he can do, always uses the right word in the right place, an achievement that many novelists wish to accomplish, but rarely do.

### War Madness

Of all the books that I have seen dealing with the possibilities of America getting into another war, probably the best is *War Madness* by Stephen and Joan Raushenbush, a little twenty-five cent volume, with its material based largely upon the disclosures made before the United States Senate Munitions Investi-

gating Committee. American gun peddlers and the profits in a big navy are thoroughly discussed and exposed. This is an enlightening book to read if you are interested in the apparent fact that we, as Americans, are at the mercy of the munitions dealers. I can thoroughly recommend it as great reading, shocking and bitter as it is.

### Company K

Speaking of war madness, I feel sure that some of the former students who have sat through my class periods dealing with the short story will remember a few of the ones coming under the title of *The Men in Company K* by William March. Probably those very students will be more than interested to learn that Mr. March has added to the early collection and published the whole in a small volume called *Company K*. The jacket describes it as a "full-length novel"; but investigation will prove that it is not a novel in the true sense of the word, although the author has done a splendid job of weaving and arranging his material so that the continuity has not been lost. *Company K* is a Mercury Book and retails for twenty-five cents.

### Movie Notes

The runs of good moving pictures during the summer and early Autumn have been quite remarkable. The warm days of June brought the perennial favorites, the Marx Brothers, in a lively demonstration of their philosophy of lunacy, called *A Day at the Races*. Unfortunately it was not up to the best moments of their *Night at the Opera*, but it was frenzied enough to delight their following, of whom I happen to be one.

Then, there was *The Last Train from Madrid*, where Hollywood employed the Spanish civil war as a kind of Grand Hotel for the working out of ten assorted and sometimes nondescript destinies. I found it apparently pure fiction and pure melodrama, and sorry to say, most of the time, pure hokum.

Of course some thought should be given *The Road Back*. If you read the novel by the same name when it was published some five or six years ago, you may have been disappointed with the film production. As I recall it now, with the first reading mildly in mind, I was somewhat overwhelmed with the power of the author's idea that, after all, there is no road back. But when I saw the picture, I apparently gained the idea that what Eric Remarque thought was that there is a road back, even for the ex-soldier. In the novel I recall rather vividly the character of Ernst, who felt things more keenly than his fellow soldiers; Ludwig, who committed suicide after contracting a dreaded disease; and Albert who found his sweetheart in the arms of a swinish profiteer. I recall it all as morbid writing, a kind of record of bitterness and utter woe. How I regret that I did not get the same impression from the

picture. I feel that the comic men—Slim Summerville was one—good as they were in their parts, tipped the scales in the wrong direction. I am almost sorry that I saw *The Road Back*. Mr. Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* made better Hollywood material.

Then too, there were *Captains Courageous*, *Souls at Sea* and *Stella Dallas*. I walked out on the last picture about fifteen minutes after it started. But I liked *Topper* and *You Can't Have Everything*.

Yes, the summer and early autumn have been good to us in the realms of the cinema. But the best, I hear, is yet to come. By the time these lines reach the composing rooms we will have seen *The Life of Emile Zola*, acclaimed as accurate biography and magnificent cinema.

### Strollers' "First Lady"

It is generally understood that work is progressing rapidly on the first Strollers' production for the year. On Friday and Saturday, December 10 and 11, they expect to stage *First Lady*, under the able direction of Darrell Yokum, a member of the Columbus Players' Club.

If you were fortunate enough to see the road production at the Hartman theatre last February, no doubt you will wish to see this clever comedy once again. It has been aptly described as a battle of tea cups in social Washington, where political leaders are made and broken at dinner parties. My one and delightful memory of the Hartman performance is the character of Mrs. Louella Mae Creevy, all bust and

flowers, an ardent campaigner for all that women's clubs stand for. More power to Strollers for attempting *First Lady*. I feel sure that it will be a success.

### The Essay

For students interested in reading essays, I heartily recommend the new *1937 Essay Annual*, edited by Erich A. Walter of the Department of English, University of Michigan. This volume is the yearly collection of significant essays, both personal, critical, controversial and humorous; it is the fifth in a series begun in 1933.

The list of authors represented in the volume reads like a Who's Who in literary America, and the selections come from such magazines as the *New Yorker*, *Atlantic*, *Harper's* and *Scribner's*. Collected as they are, under various headings, they make excellent reading matter.

### Attention Engineers

A browsing library for Engineering students has been desired for many months. Now, a small alcove in which both recent magazines and books will be found has been set aside for recreational reading in the Lord Hall Library, on the second floor of Lord Hall. If only a half hour is available, certainly you will enjoy glancing through some of the recent copies of *Life*, or *Time*, or *Readers' Digest*, or browsing through collections of short stories or dipping into a novel. It is hoped students will avail themselves of the opportunity offered on the second floor of Lord Hall.