

The Knowledge Bank at The Ohio State University

Ohio State Engineer

- Title:** The Engineer's Bookshelf
- Creators:** Dumble, Wilson R.
- Issue Date:** Apr-1937
- Publisher:** Ohio State University, College of Engineering
- Citation:** Ohio State Engineer, vol. 20, no. 5 (April, 1937), 15-16.
- URI:** <http://hdl.handle.net/1811/35392>
- Appears in Collections:** [Ohio State Engineer: Volume 20, no. 5 \(April, 1937\)](#)

THE ENGINEER'S BOOKSHELF

By WILSON R. DUMBLE

THE QUIET SHORE—by *Walter Havighurst*. Macmillan. \$2.50.

WE ARE NOT ALONE—by *James Hilton*. Little Brown. \$2.00.

VERY HEAVEN—by *Richard Aldington*. Doubleday, Doran. \$2.50.

The Quiet Shore

Miami University's Department of English may well be proud of their Walter Havighurst; for within the last twelve months he has turned out two splendid novels, the last one, *The Quiet Shore*, being the better of the two. Any one who knows the shore of Lake Erie between Sandusky and Lorain will be more than interested in the story. Like myself, the reader will try to identify town after town, city after city, and even crossroad after crossroad. If you have ever walked out the long pier at Huron, Ohio, and watched the sun sink fiery red into the Lake, as I have many an evening during the last ten summers, you should read *The Quiet Shore*. And then as you slowly return to the peaceful little town, often over-run with summer tourists in various stages of sport dress—and undress—you will notice the moon rising over the ore docks; and if by chance your gait is extremely leisurely you will spy the lights of Cedar Point and the Chaussee gradually appearing in the darkening sky. If, as I said, you are acquainted with this particular spot, you will want to read Mr. Havighurst's new novel.

But acquaintance with the Lake counties is not essential to enjoy *The Quiet Shore*. As a story it speaks for itself, written, as it is, in easy, flowing and beautiful prose. Roger Bradley had left the Virginia battlefields in the 1860's and struck out for the fertile lands of Ohio along Lake Erie. His travels took him across the Ohio river at Marietta, up the Muskingum valley to Zanesville and west along the National Trail to Columbus where, at the State House, he inquired the quickest and best route to the Lake. He was directed through Delaware, Morrow, and Richland counties, and one quiet summer evening he arrived at a point east of Sandusky where the blue of the Lake reached the red of the evening sky.

There it was that Roger Bradley settled and built up his little kingdom. There it was, in time, that he became a prosperous gentleman farmer with his broad expanse of fertile fields. And there it was that he married in turn, a plain farm girl, and after her death, the daughter of a Cleveland business man. To both unions were

born off-springs, and their clashings form the mainspring for the action of the story. Children by the first wife loved the farm; those by the second wife were more concerned with train schedules and stock quotations and desires to sell the old homestead.

The tale is unfolded through the eyes of Alan, one of the Bradley grandsons, recently returned from three years of European study. Alan loves the farm and possesses more than any of the children and grandchildren the power to recapture his grandfather's vision. Although he is not the hero of the story, he is by far the most interesting of the younger characters.

The Quiet Shore is a splendid story, well worth reading. Surely it does for the Lake counties what Louis Bromfield's *The Farm* did for Richland county; and I feel quite certain that it is as entertaining a story as the Bromfield tale.

We Are Not Alone

I should venture to say that almost any one who read and liked James Hilton's *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*, and *The Lost Horizon*, will not care particularly for his new novel, *We Are Not Alone*. It is not because of Mr. Hilton's style; the prose is just as lilting as in his former novels. Nor is it due to his technique; the design of the tale is probably even better than the two earlier novels. But it is the story itself that defeats the reader after the last page has been turned and the boards have been closed. Very briefly it is the time-worn plot of a country doctor, unhappily wed to one woman, in love with another, and hanged for the murder of his wife. Mr. Hilton's style may still be called gentle, but surely his plot cannot be termed that.

The locale is a Cathedral town in central Southern England, where Dr. Newcome lives with his wife Jessica and their neurotic nine-year-old son. One dark and stormy night—those words might even be placed in quotation marks—Dr. Newcome is called to the village playhouse to bind up the wound of a German actress who suffered a painful accident during the evening performance. Later he brings Leni into his home to act as a tutor for his son. Through a chain of circumstances surrounding Jessica's death, the finger of suspicion unjustly points to the doctor, who is arrested, accused, convicted and hanged in the little jail within the shadow of the Cathedral.

I am not so sure what is wrong with the story. I believe that it is too violent and stark a tale to be handled so casually. Mr. Hilton's casual style fits in so

beautifully with the life account of Mr. Chipps, that grand, gentle but stern schoolmaster, whose story recalled so pleasantly our own prep school Latin master. But that same casual manner of writing, apparently, in *We Are Not Alone*, does not travel hand in hand with Dr. Newcome.

Yet, if you like James Hilton, and can catch the music in his prose—I am told that it is there—you had better not miss knowing the curiously-passive little Dr. Newcome.

Very Heaven

If you wish to read a novel that shows the author to be consciously "smart," quite aware of his ability to make unworthy diatribes against struggling society, you should read the story of what happened to Christopher Heylin in Richard Aldington's *Very Heaven*. There was a time not more than eight or ten years ago that I could read and relish Aldington's novels. I recall that I thought his *Death of a Hero* was one of the better war novels, one of those better novels where "glory" had turned to "what price glory." But those days are past. In *Very Heaven* Mr. Aldington strives to say the smart thing, and in so doing his picture of society is a macabre make-believe, against a background of tangled surrealism.

Christopher Heylin, because of the declining family fortune, had to leave Oxford before his four years were completed. He arrives home to discover his father and mother and sister in varying stages of neuroses due to the crack-up of family finances. To be sure he revolts when he finds his sister entering into a loveless but financially firm marriage. Yet, what is there to do about it? Is not the entire world insane? Are not the business and sexual and political worlds composed of crazy patchwork ideas? Christopher cannot decide what is to be done, and like many others of us, remains passively rebellious, even when he contemplates dashing himself down a cliff in Portugal, of all places.

Very Heaven does not end; it stops. And if the reader can finish the story in one sitting without stopping, he is a better man than I am. If I must read Aldington I must forget *Very Heaven*. His theme of social maladjustment in the depression years has been handled much better by better novelists in better stories.

Maytime

Twenty years ago—I feel sure it was that long ago, although I don't like to admit it—I found my way one lovely June evening through the traffic of Times Square to the Astor theatre in order to hear Peggy Wood sing the role of Marcia in Romberg's then-new operetta, *Maytime*. With the performance I was delighted. The ever beautiful Miss Wood, the graceful tunes, the pleasantly sad story of dissappointed young love, all wove themselves into a fabric that made for a memorable evening.

Some five years after that performance of *Maytime*, on an August evening equally as graceful as the May Day adventure in the opera-story, I heard the piece for a

second time. It was presented by a rather inferior cast in the open air garden of my hotel along the shores of Lake Lucerne. On that August evening, the setting, most naturally, made up for any mistakes on the part of the actors; for in silent grandeur the Alps rose to cloudless skies while the little skiffs, their lanterns lighted, put out slowly across the lake. The fairyland qualities of Switzerland furnished ideal background for that sad but gentle story.

So, one may guess that it was with most pleasant memories I hastened to a Cleveland cinema palace during the Spring recess to see what Miss McDonald and Mr. Eddy might do with the roles of Marcia and Alan. What did I find? I found that Hollywood's and M-G-M's strong boxoffice hands had produced a stupenduously beautiful, even if often tedious story, no more like the *Maytime* I once knew than day is from night. The producers had dressed up the original leaving a bare skeleton of the lovely apple-blossom story. The Sweetheart song still remained, but added were bits of *Les Filles de Cadix*, the Page song from *Les Huguenots* and—of all things—*Carry Me Back to Old Virginny*. Besides these pieces they had concocted a Hollywood version of Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony that made the cold chills shiver my back.

To my amazement the Cleveland audience liked it. The gum-chewing blond in front of me thought John Barrymore was "just grand," and her collarless escort almost rolled in the aisle with laughter whenever Herman Bing spoke a line. But to me M-G-M had had a chance "to go to town," and took advantage of their opportunity. They had taken a beautiful story of a prima donna and her tragic love, set with lovely Romberg music, and had practically ruined it. Because Miss McDonald and Mr. Eddy could sing they had added arias from Bizet, Wagner, et al. Because audiences like it, they sprinkled the whole with what they thought to be "homey American Comedy," and dashed it with a kitchen scene where the principals cooked a Smithfield ham. Because they had the largest movie stage in the world on the M-G-M lot and because it was a sin not to use it, they set an elaborate scene at the court of Napoleon III. I suppose if I had not seen *Maytime* some twenty years ago, I could have enjoyed the Hollywood elaborateness. But, I'm glad I saw *Maytime* twenty years ago.

"Why are you eating with your knife?"

"My fork leaks." _____

Beggar—Have you got enough money for a cup of coffee?

Soph—Oh, I'll get along somehow, thank you.

Sweet Young Thing—Are you coming to my twentieth birthday party?

The Brute—No, I came last year.

Inquisitive—Why are your socks on wrong side out?

Smart Aleck—My feet were hot, so I turned the hose on them.