

>> Modern Utopias <<

As Seen in Recent Books

WASHINGTON, D. C.

THE quest for Utopia is old and blood-stained. The modern world is privileged to witness three social experiments—Americanism, Communism, and Fascism—all of which lead to pretty much the same end. The panaceas of individualistic collectivism, of proletarian dictatorship, and of authoritarian syndicalism are put up in differently colored bottles, but they taste remarkably alike. A malcontent can get his skull cracked by the police in Moscow, Milan or Manhattan, and the Commissar, the Duce and the Millionaire work late and live frugally in order to keep things on an even keel. In the American Millennium there are five or ten million unemployed and the farmers riot for food. In Fascist Italy, there are prisons and punitive expedition. In the Communist Utopia there is the Ogpu and the road to Siberia. In each government there is a bitter struggle for power, a clash of ideas within the rigid dogmas of the Federal Constitution, the writings of Marx and Lenin, and the views of the Fascist Grand Council, and each system claims for itself world-wide validity.

The literature of these movements is voluminous and some of it is interesting. Professor Jerome Davis has compiled a tome of 900-odd pages on *Contemporary Social Movements* (Century), which gives documentation to the whole field, Americanism excepted, from the viewpoint of a scientific sociologist. Charles A. Beard and William Beard have produced over 800 pages more in *The American Leviathan: The Republic in the Machine Age* (Macmillan), a sardonic description of "government by consent of the governed" in the days of the "Power Trust" and the mimeograph. Particularly pleasing is the account of how American business has pushed the government into business paternalism, under the cry of "less government in business." *The American Leviathan* is one of those books which better repays desultory indulgence than cover-to-cover perusal. A footnote to the Beards' book is Alfred Lief's collection of *The Social and Economic Views of Mr. Justice Brandeis* (Vanguard Press), with an introduction by Professor Charles A. Beard. The opinions, dissenting and otherwise, of the Supreme Court's most conspicuous liberal lend peculiar poignancy to the note of dissatisfaction and criticism which is disturbing the triumphant worship of things as they are. That this note of dissent is already

driving the government into socialistic experiments is borne out by Messrs. E. A. Stokdyk and Charles H. West's *The Farm Board* (Macmillan), an account of the noble experiment to regulate the price of wheat and cotton.

For the scandal of over-production in the American Utopia is becoming too serious to be ignored. When the farmers, the most individualistic of our people, demand what is tantamount to economic Bolshevism, and when they get \$500,000,000 to help them get it, then indeed the old grey mare of the Federal Constitution ain't what she used to be. Scoville Hamlin has edited a symposium on *The Menace of Overproduction: Its Cause, Extent and Cure* (John Wiley), in which seventeen leaders of industry, including Sir Henri Deterding, present views which lead the editor to the revolutionary proposal that the maintenance of labor is part of the normal overhead of industry, and that profits shall be reckoned on the assumption that labor itself is an investment.

Calvin B. Hoover's *The Economic Life of Soviet Russia* (Macmillan) is the best recent criticism of the Soviet economy. Antiseptically descriptive in tone, the author's own views are hostile to Sovietism because of its apparent failure to take account of human nature. He concludes, however, that a Soviet success would convert half America:

"If the present crisis is passed, the Soviet Union, within a decade, will be in a position to offer a standard of living which will compare favorably with that of the more poorly paid manual workers in capitalistic countries. Unless in the meantime Capitalism has notably improved its technique of marketing and distribution, so that under-consumption and unemployment can be prevented, and unless the standard of living of such workers in the capitalistic world shall have been materially raised, the World Revolution will begin to make rapid strides."

Other books on Russia—such as Emile Burns' *Russia's Productive System* (Dutton) and Arthur Feiler's *The Russian Experiment* (Harcourt, Brace), translated by H. J. Stenning—no longer pretend that Soviet economics can be discounted and ignored.

Hence it is that the present age represents a race between Utopias, between Henry Ford and Karl Marx, between the Installment Plan and the Five-Year Plan. May the best plan win!

JOHN CARTER.

Gramophonia

Notable New Recordings

IT IS a couple of months since the Columbia Company brought out their admirable and interesting Spanish Album¹ containing five twelve-inch disks, including symphonic works by de Falla, Bretón, Albeniz and Turina. I don't imagine that the set they finally sent me is the last in stock, so I would advise anybody who wishes a finely recorded set of representative and highly nationalistic character (in spite of the obvious French influence on de Falla and Albeniz particularly) to give it a careful hearing. The orchestras are that of the *Theatre Royal de la Monnaie*, of Brussels, under M. Maurice Bustin, playing dances from *La Vida Breve* of de Falla, and the Madrid Symphony Orchestra playing the others, conducted by the competent Señor Enrique Fernandez Arbos.

One of Italy's greatest composer's greatest works, Verdi's *Requiem Mass*², is now issued by Victor on ten glorious records in their Masterpiece Series. The artists are the orchestra and chorus of *La Scala*, in Milan, and the soloists include Fanelli, Cattaneo, Lo Giudice and Pinza. The whole work is brilliantly conducted by Carlo Sabajno. It is an impressive testimony to the initiative of the Victor Company in bringing out such a formidable composition complete, a great artistic achievement on the part of the performers, and the assumption that there will be a market for it is a handsome and unexpected compliment to the discrimination of the record buying public.

Chamber music lovers will assuredly be pleased at the appearance of the Mozart *Quintet in G Minor* (K.516) in a Columbia Masterworks Album³. The Léner String Quartet and L. d'Oliviera, on the spare viola, play it with all the necessary delicacy, precision and sparkle.

Even if you are so unfortunate as not to be able to get to see *Private Lives*, Noel Coward's new play (see dramatic department of this issue), there is some consolation to be found in the fact that a delightful recording of two scenes from it played by Mr. Coward and Miss Gertrude Lawrence is available at the importers⁴. Don't think of missing it. It is unique and utterly charming. They talk Mr. Coward's inimitable dialogue and sing his and other people's songs in most disarming fashion.

O. C.-T.

1. Columbia Masterworks Album, No. 146.
2. Victor Masterpieces, No. 96.
3. Columbia Masterworks Album, No. 150.
4. H. M. V., C. 2043.

➤ The Movies ◀

➤ "Cimarron"

EDNA FERBER'S story of the settling of Oklahoma has been done into an exciting and completely satisfying film. Under Wesley Ruggles' vigorous direction the flamboyant Yancy Cravat and his wife Sabra come to life as characters seldom do on the screen. Certainly *Cimarron* is at once the finest and at the same time the most thrilling film yet made about the settling of the west. Miss Ferber starts her people many years after the first pioneering expeditions recorded in the *Covered Wagon*. Her opening incident is the land rush into the Oklahoma territory, when thousands of men with horses, wagons, buggies and coaches raced across the plains to stake out homesteads. During the two hours the picture lasts the barren prairie slowly turns into a modern city of 1929.

But infinitely more interesting are Yancy (Richard Dix) and Sabra (Irene Dunne), who move through this pioneer world. To those who have until now thought of Richard Dix as merely another beaming movie actor, it should be said that he has at last found something he can do perfectly and convincingly. Mr. Ruggles has done very well indeed by Miss Ferber, much of his dialogue coming direct from the novel. It is a fact which few people in Hollywood appear to realize—that novels are so similar to motion pictures in form that the transfer is accomplished with much less loss than from the stage. *Cimarron* is strong stuff—simple, honest, and direct in the telling—but endowed with a tang and gusto which have somehow gone out of the world in which we live today. "In those days there were giants." Take Yancy, who shoots from the hip and unfailingly gets his man at twenty yards; Yancy who preaches the first sermon in Osage in the gambling tent under the painting of an opulent nude; Yancy who bubbles with classical quotations and runs his newspaper with an iron hand until civilization bores him; Yancy who returns suddenly in a Spanish war uniform to plead the case of Dixie Lee, "that disreputable woman," whom Sabra was trying to run out of town; and Yancy who dies smothering a charge of dynamite in a muddy oil field. Irene Dunne does admirably as Sabra, and Estelle Taylor makes a fine Dixie Lee. As Jess Rickey, the stuttering printer, Roscoe Ates is often amusing.

By CREIGHTON PEET

After two years of effort Radio Pictures has finally made a film which can

Worth Seeing

The Blue Angel: Again poor old Emil Jannings has blonde trouble . . . this time Marlene Dietrich.

The Criminal Code: Excellent reproduction of Martin Flavin's play about penitentiary life.

Illicit: The lady says marriage ends romance; the gentleman favors a wedding. A serious but not too heavy discussion.

Laughter: Gay nonsense by Donald Ogden Stewart.

Little Caesar: Top notch gang story with Edward G. Robinson shooting the works.

Reaching for the Moon: Doug Fairbanks in modern clothes, and a few barroom jokes.

The Right to Love: Ruth Chatterton in an interesting and unusual story.

The Royal Family: Wild amusement at the expense of the Barrymore family. Frederic March is grand.

Tom Sawyer: Jackie Coogan, Mitzi Green and Junior Durkin in Mark Twain's story.

Morocco: Marlene Dietrich, Gary Cooper and Adolphe Menjou go down to Africa "to forget."

Paid: Joan Crawford in something for ladies who cry easily. Known on the stage as *Within the Law*.

Min and Bill: Marie Dressler and Wallace Beery in a more or less serious waterfront drama.

be put down as one of the "best" of this and many other seasons.

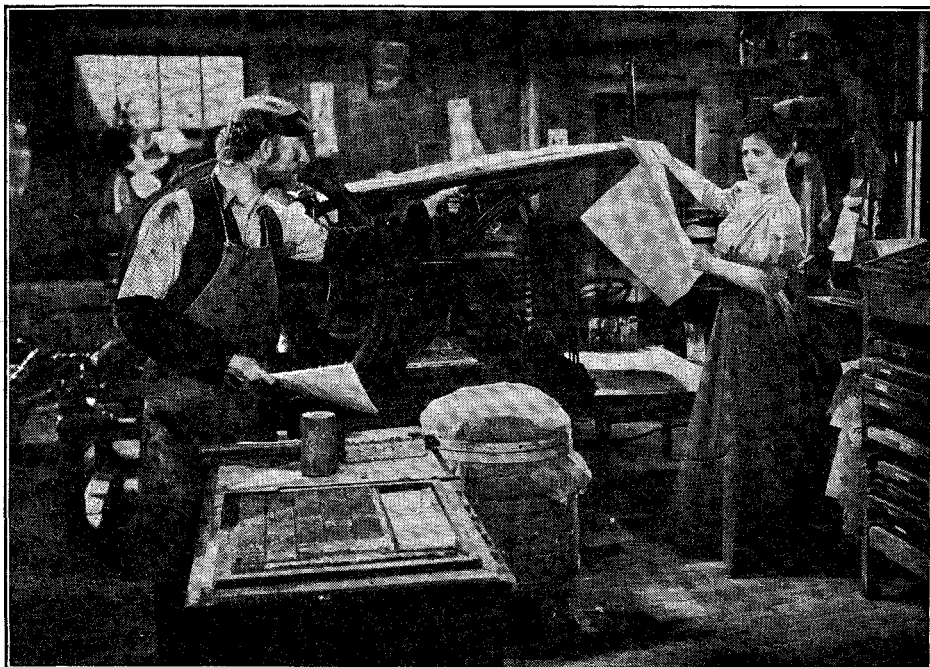
➤ "Resurrection"

Some day our patriotic societies are going to awaken with a start to discover that the best-known story in America is not how Washington crossed the Delaware or how Paul Revere made his famous ride—but Tolstoy's *Resurrec-*

tion. The present version, with John Bloch and Lupe Velez, is the fourth, and, as far as this reviewer is concerned, it is the last. In 1918 it was made with Pauline Frederick, and in 1927 with Dolores Del Rio. There is no record of the first edition. Director Edwin Carewe, who made the Dolores Del Rio film, has again chosen a little Mexican girl to portray Tolstoy's servant girl who is seduced by the swaggering son of the house, and then kicked out to suffer by his heartless aunts. There are moments when Miss Velez does nicely, but all too often she is her old cute self, twitching and winking and giggling. As for John Boles, I am afraid he will never be an adequate actor.

➤ "Finn and Hattie"

If Little Mildred—Mr. Donald Ogden Stewart's own Little Mildred who accompanied her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Haddock, on a trip to Paris, France—means anything to you, you will of course see *Finn and Hattie*. Little Mildred is played by Mitzi Green, who is about as convulsing an *enfant terrible* as you could ask for. Her victim on this occasion is Jackie Searl, and her parents are Leon Errol and Zasu Pitts. Mr. Stewart's book has been cut pretty freely, but I suppose you can ask for too much. The fact remains that *Finn and Hattie* is uproarious comedy whenever Mitzi Green is around.



Radio Pictures

GOING TO PRESS IN THE 90's

Irene Dunne as Sabra and Roscoe Ates as the printer in the film version of Edna Ferber's "Cimarron"