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FROM WIT TO WISDOM

BENCHLEY—OR ELSE, Robert Benchley, 10/9 posted. A new collection from the master of the higher art of nonsense. There may be no moral teaching, no reflection on life, no tears, but there is much laughter.

SOVIET CINEMA, Torold Dickinson and Catherine de la Roche, 15/6 posted. A survey of Soviet Cinema from the silent film to the present day by two authors who are thoroughly familiar with their subject. Over 170 stills.

HUMAN KNOWLEDGE: ITS SCOPE AND LIMITS, Bertrand Russell, 23/6 posted. A new and important work by the distinguished philosopher, this time intended for the general reader, giving both an objective and subjective picture of the universe, what it comprises, and man's place in it.

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The Films

GORONOFF IS RUDE

I'VE ALWAYS LOVED YOU

(Republic)

THE theme of this long, emotional, and rather tedious film is expressed pretty early on by its pianist hero Leopold Goronoff (Philip Dorn), when he says: "Devil take the woman who would marry a musician." A kind of subsidiary theme is introduced when one of the minor characters says "Goronoff is rude," for the maestro (or Master as he is generally called) goes on being as rude as possible to everyone, including the audience, for nearly the whole 11,000 feet of *I've Always Loved You*. In fact, as a bad-tempered exemplar of the caddishness of genius, Philip Dorn gives a thoroughly convincing performance.

However, the film's main attraction is the abundance of fine piano-playing by Artur Rubinstein, especially of the Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No. 2. Although Rubinstein does not appear in the film he received 85,000 dollars for his work on the soundtrack—a large sum even for Hollywood. Even this expenditure, of course, is still no reason for him being loudly acclaimed in the credit titles as "the world's greatest pianist."

During the first part of the film Goronoff's Pennsylvania protégée Myra (Catherine MacLeod) accompanies him on a technicoloured concert tour of Europe for two years before she finally appears herself, in Carnegie Hall, playing the Rachmaninoff concerto with Goronoff conducting. Although she is *madly* in love with him, she succeeds in proving during the concert that musically she is the master of the two of them. Goronoff's vanity is so hurt because she "took control" of the performance that he orders her out, and she returns to Pennsylvania to marry George (William Carter), the farmer boy-friend of her youth.

Her marriage is, of course, unhappy, for she is haunted by her past love for the Master. But when, 20 years later, her daughter also becomes a great pianiste and Myra meets Goronoff again, she discovers that her imagined love for him was just an illusion and falls into her husband's arms (half-way through the Concerto) sobbing "I've Always Loved You." This may surprise some of the audience, but it helps to prove the moral stated at the beginning of the film ("Devil take the woman, etc.") and also shows that a happy life with a nice farmer is better (for women) than the artistic life as led by such boorish Colossi of the Keyboard as Leopold Goronoff.

In commercial radio this sort of thing is called soap opera, and it's a pity that the combined talents of Artur Rubinstein and Philip Dorn were wasted on such juvenilia. Incidentally, the film is over two years old. Perhaps the local renters, too, realised that Frank Borzage, who usually turns out a box-office success, had this time produced a comparative failure.

BAROMETER

Overcast with Bright Intervals:
"I've Always Loved You."
Dull: "The Miracle of the Bells."

THE MIRACLE OF THE BELLS

(RKO—Radio)

DESPITE Alida Valli (as the actress who plays Joan of Arc), Fred MacMurray (as her press-agent), and Frank Sinatra (as the poor parish priest), *The Miracle of the Bells* should come near to winning an Academy Award as one of the worst films of 1948. Not that the picture is wholly boring, or that the actors all act badly, but it seems as if the producer, director, script-writers, cameraman, and others concerned with making it got together and said, "This film's bound to make a lot of money, so let's sit back and relax and have a bit of a holiday while we're working on it."

The Miracle of the Bells seeks to cash in on the success of two earlier religious pictures, *The Song of Bernadette* and *Going My Way* and is rather like a cheap combination of both. It is based on an American best-selling novel by Russell Janney. Briefly, Valli (an unknown actress) dies after making a film of Joan of Arc in which she gives a brilliant performance. Fred MacMurray, who had been secretly in love with her, takes her back to her home town to bury her, and there has the idea of ringing all the church bells for three days and three nights as a publicity stunt, to ensure that the dead girl won't be forgotten. Frank Sinatra, as the priest who assists at this event and the later "miracle" (two holy statues in the church apparently turn to look at the body) only proves that he can't act as well as he can croon. MacMurray never seems to come alive in his role, and Valli is the best of the three. The camera work is crude and harsh, the settings are stagey, and the dialogue (by Ben Hecht and Quentin Reynolds) contains such gems of sentimental nonsense as the Hollywood producer's remark to the foreign-born actress who walks out on him: "I'm sorry you don't like me, but that's all right. And I'm sorry you don't like America—that's not all right. I can't work with anyone who won't work for America." —P.J.W.

NATIONAL FILM UNIT

THE National Film Unit's Weekly Review No. 383, which will be released on January 7, shows the recent opening of a new tyre factory at Christchurch, "Rodeo at Meanees," in which some Hawke's Bay boys—and girls—try their hand at buck-jumping, and "Hemlock Danger," a short feature pointing out the characteristics of this weed which has already caused the death of one child. The concluding sequence, "Gift to Nation," shows the official handing over of a lovely property at Stewart Island—the gift of a private citizen to the nation.

MYSTERY OF THE SIERRA MADRE To the Editor—

Sir,—I notice that the writer of the review of *Treasure of Sierra Madre* refers to "the mysterious Ben Traven," and it occurred to me that he may not have read an article in *Time* for August 16, 1948 (p. 22). In this article it is stated that Traven has been positively identified as Berick Torsvan, a Swedish-American restaurant proprietor who has lived in Mexico since 1913.

J. G. LUCKOCK (Lower Hutt).