

FILM REVIEWS


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fact that he has a fiancée (apparently an American) at King Charles's Court for whom he pines while he is way out north among the beavers and the Blackfeet. One way and another, the daring adventurers manage to cover a lot of territory, but since one can guess what is going to happen before it does, the necessary element of suspense is rather lacking. So is the sense of historical accuracy, though for all I actually know to the contrary, events may have happened exactly as Mr. Zanuck's script-writers describe them.

As for Muni, he seems to enjoy himself; he frolics rather than acts. But I feel much the same about Muni in *Hudson's Bay* as I felt about Edward G. Robinson in *A Dispatch from Reuters*: that the film is unworthy of the star.

WATERLOO BRIDGE

(M.G.M.)

 **THOUGH** the censor has graded *Waterloo Bridge* as "A" entertainment, I do not feel that I can go one better.

It is not A1 cinema, but, on the other hand, it is not C3. In spite of being a prettified re-make, with a theme of almost Edwardian conventionality—it is actually a tragedy of convention—the film is something better than the average. For this, M.G.M. and Mervyn Le Roy are in debt to Vivien Leigh. As the woman who crucifies herself on a point of honour, the ballet dancer *devenue cocotte*, she handles an exacting part unusually well.

It is a sordid tragedy of the hectic days of 1914-18. The young ballet dancer meets and falls in love with a youthful captain in a County regiment. Within a day of their meeting he is recalled to France. She is discharged from the ballet for missing a performance to see him off, and when her money has almost gone his death in action is reported. Convention prevents her appealing to his people, she cannot find work (an unconvincing point, surely?) and, practically starving, she takes to the streets. The dramatic conflict arises when the young officer comes home again—a lost identity disc had led to the false report—and the girl has to decide whether to marry or renounce him. Her renunciation and subsequent suicide are the dramatic highlights of the film and Vivien Leigh acquits herself well. The suicide, which occurs when she throws herself beneath a truck on *Waterloo Bridge*, is well handled by the star, the director and the photographer—and sound is here used most effectively—but many film-goers will note a strong resemblance to the similar scene in *Anna Karenina*. On Robert Taylor's performance, I would hazard the opinion that tragedy is not his *metier*; possibly he was included because of his following. C. Aubrey Smith worthily upholds his inimitable *Four Feathers* tradition, and Maria Ouspenskaya looks just like Maria Ouspenskaya. *Waterloo Bridge* is, as I have said, a conventional story and it is told conventionally. The direction is competent but rarely more than that. Still, if you plan to take your wife to see it, it might be as well to take an extra handkerchief.

"THIS TWENTIETH CENTURY"

ONE of the finest collections of rare recordings in the Southern Hemisphere provides the foundation for the new ZB feature, *This Twentieth Century*, produced by Kenneth Melvin.

As most record collectors know, the recording companies of England, America and the Continent issue regular limited editions of special interest to collectors. Some of these were issued as long as 30 and 40 years ago, well before the era of electric recording, and are now as valuable as first editions and original etchings.

This Twentieth Century presents many discs from Mr. Melvin's library. It is, in effect, a diary of our times, presented in a 15-minute mixture of speech, music and drama.

Listeners will hear the actual piano playing of the composer Saint-Saens, who was born in 1838; the voices of Adelina Patti, Ellen Terry, Count Leo Tolstoy, Conan Doyle, Edgar Wallace, Christabel Pankhurst, Mr. Asquith, Lloyd George, J. R. Clynes, Grenfell of Labrador, and Presidents Woodrow Wilson, Warren Harding, Theodore Roosevelt and William Taft; Commander Peary describing his discovery of the North Pole in 1909; Sir Ernest Shackleton, Lord Roberts; M. Venizelos, former premier of Greece; Sir Charles Wakefield, the "father of British aviation"; actual recordings of gas-shell bombardments in France in 1918, and so on.

The first episode presents an exciting cavalcade of the year 1900, described as "the year of bicycles, bloomers and the first horseless carriages." That was the year of the abdication of the Chinese Emperor and the beginning of the Boxer rebellion, the year when the first New Zealand contingent sailed for South Africa to take part in the Boer War, when Mafeking was relieved, when Paderewski, whose death occurred in America last week, first went to London, when Lord Ranfurly, then Governor of New Zealand, formally annexed the Cook Islands, when a youngster by the name of Jack Hobbs was beginning to make a name for himself in English cricket, when William Taft, later to become President of the United States, went to the Philippines as America's first Governor there, when *The Belle of New York* was the most popular musical comedy, and the "Mirabelle" waltz the most popular tune.

Reminders of all of these are presented together with snatches of tunes, and, in the case of Taft and Hobbs, recordings of actual voices.

"*This Twentieth Century*" runs to 52 episodes. It will be heard at 7.15 p.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays, and started at 4.2B on July 7, and will start at 3.2B on July 14, at 2.2B on July 21, at 1.2B on July 28, and at 2.2A Palmerston North, on August 4.

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