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ELMIRA AND MARK TWAIN

Up to you in Rochester after that round of Commencements in High Schools, Colleges and University you have perhaps come to the conclusion that the Flower City is the only place in the Empire State that deserves to be called a literary center. But this little Elmira in the Chemung valley more beautiful than the Genesee Valley, which ceases to be a valley before the river enters Rochester has a tradition of literature and humor which puts Rochester in the shade.

Our little Catholic High has just published its annual *The Echo* and I will bet that for literary merit and humor it is second to nothing of its class put forth in Rochester. From its dozen wise-cracks, in its humor column, I got more hearty laughs than I did from all my reading for the past year and I average ten hours a day. How is this one as an example? It is not the best, but it is the shortest, and the Editor tells me that space is precious.

"Sister J.: What is a polygon?"

D S: A defunct parrot."

But, wise-cracks aside, Elmira was, at one time in my memory, the center for literature and humor not only of the Empire State but of the whole nation. Here Mark Twain lived for years, here he did some of his best work, here he died and is buried, here his "workshop" is still preserved as a national museum, and the finest hotel in the Southern Tier is named after him. These latter would not make Elmira a center of literature or humor. But John Chamberlain, literary critic for Harper's and book-reviewer for the New York Times has written recently that "Huckleberry Finn marks the real beginning of literature in the American language." In the American language, note.

BOOKS ON MARK TWAIN

These thoughts have been suggested by the publication of another book on Mark Twain I have not yet seen the book, but it has been extensively reviewed. Its author is Bernard De Voto, author of several other books, who has a department all to himself in *The Essay Chair* in Harper's. The book recalls a heated controversy it was, in fact, a sequel to that controversy between De Voto and Van Wyck Brooks some years ago on the merits of Mark Twain in literature.

What will probably interest the Catholic reader more than Mark's merits as a literary artist will be an answer to the question: Was Mark Twain anti-Catholic? The answer must be a negative. He was born in 1834, and on the occasion of the centenary of his birth seven years ago this question was revived in the Catholic press. A priest of the diocese of Hartford, who had known Mark personally and seems to have been an intimate friend, wrote an article for the Catholic paper of that city in which he gave some revealing facts. Mark had sent one of his daughters to a convent school and while she was there he wrote a letter to his wife in which he said: "I hope they will make a good Roman Catholic of her. If I had that faith I would not exchange it for anything in this world."

IDEAL GENTLEMAN

It must be forty years since Harper's sent to a number of literary notables the query: "What is your ideal of any ideal gentleman?" Mark answered with a description of his coachman who had recently died, an Irish Catholic who had served the family for 30 years. (I am quoting from memory): "He came to our family thirty years ago. He was our coachman on the morning I drove my young bride to our new home. As the children grew up he was their guide. He was with us last Summer, when we went to New Hampshire, and his form was just as erect, his hair just as black, his eyes just as blue, and his heart just as good as the day we first met." In the long years Patrick never was given an order, never received a command. He knew. You ask me for my ideal of an ideal gentleman and I give it to you: Patrick McAleer."

SON OF 1942's 'AMERICAN MOTHER' ORDAINED PRIEST

NEW YORK--Among the 31 seminarians ordained to the priesthood by the Most Rev. Thomas J. Walsh, Archbishop of Newark, in St. Patrick's Cathedral here, was the Rev. William N. Berry, Jr., son of Mrs. William N. Berry, of Greensboro, N. C., who was chosen a few weeks ago as the "American Mother of 1942."

There was no anti-Catholic bias in the man who wrote that. His "young bride," by the way, was an Elmira, a Miss Langdon. And another by the way: In the current (June) issue of *The Reader's Digest* there is an article which I would advise you all to read. The Most Remarkable Character I Have Known. It shows, like Mark's definition of a gentleman, the great influence their Catholic servants had on the minds of those old American families. "Winnie" Stapleton, from Cork, had been hired by the writer's grandfather, and remained with the family to rock his own first-born in her arms. "Winnie" had two little tables in her room. On one she kept her prayer book and her rosary. On the other her work-box for her "mindin'." In trouble she was his mother's comforter. While she was doing her "mindin'," for she was never idle, the children and the neighbors' children sat all her feet to hear her stories. The writer attended the Requiem for her funeral and felt honored to be one of the pall-bearers. I believe those Catholic servants in the last century did more to break down anti-Catholic prejudice than all the oratory of the politicians. They lived their religion which many Catholic politicians did not.

Mark got his reputation of anti-Catholic from his books on the Middle Ages, and Europe, such as *Innocent Abroad*. His background and upbringing made it impossible for Mark to appreciate the Catholic culture of Europe, especially of Medieval Europe. As Bernard Shaw—a much more irreligious and anti-Christian writer than Mark, but who does know something, indeed quite a lot, about the Middle Ages—remarks very pertinently (in his Preface to *Saint Joan*): "Mark Twain saw the lovely churches of the Middle Ages without a throb of emotion," and in his *Yankee at the Court of King Arthur* he saw "the heroes and heroines of medieval chivalry as guys seen through the eyes of a street Arab." But notwithstanding this incapacity, for which he cannot be held responsible, Mark Twain came generously and chivalrously to the defense of Saint Joan against the libel written by Anatole France.

COURIER'S CURRENT CINEMA COMMENTS

By JOHN SPRINGER

(Editor's Note: Listed as Class B, objectionable in part, by the National Legion of Decency, this week are: "Gay Sisters, The"; objection, "Light Treatment of Marriage"; a Suggestive Line. "Once Upon a Thursday"; objection, "Light Treatment of Marriage.")

"This Gun for Hire"—A-2

A few weeks ago, in our review of "Joan of Paris," we stated: "introduces three players of whom much will be heard. The three are Paul Henreid, Michael Morgan and Alan Ladd, whom we do not remember having seen before at all—and we think we would remember. Ladd, in the minor role of a dying English aviator, has a personality and an acting skill that stays with you."

Now Alan Ladd is appearing in another picture and more than lives up to every expectation. In "This Gun for Hire," he plays a cold-blooded killer and gives the most compelling performance of the type that the screen has seen since Alan Baxter made life miserable for Sylvia Sydney in "Mary Burns, Fugitive."

Without him, "This Gun for Hire" might have been pretty ordinary melodrama, even though Director Frank Tuttle deserves credit for developing it with the

(Continued on Page 15)

PALACE

KAY KYSER
ELLEN DREW
JANE WYMAN

MY FAVORITE SPY
Plus
GEORGE RAFT
PAT O'BRIEN
BROADWAY

CENTURY

Ray Milland, John Wayne
and Paulette Goddard

REAP THE WILD WIND
Plus
JANE FRAZEE and
ROBERT PAIGE in
ALMOST MARRIED

REGENT

Rita Hayworth and
Victor Mature in
MY GAL SAL
Plus
VERONICA LAKE and
ROBERT PRESTON in
This Gun For Hire

TEMPLE

Fay Wray, R. Armstrong
and Bruce Cabot in
KING KONG
Plus
Cary Grant, Victor McLaglen
Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. in
GUNGA DIN

CAPITOL

BETTE DAVIS
OLIVIA DEHAVILLAND
and GEORGE BRENT in
In This Our Life
Plus
HENRY FONDA
GENE TIERNEY in
Rings on Her Fingers

THESE VESPERINE THEATRES

RIVIERA
John Payne
Maureen O'Hara
To the Shores of Tripoli
Albert Dekker Joan Davis
YOKEL BOY

LIBERTY
Robert Cummings
Ann Sheridan
KING'S ROW
Andrew Sisters G. Jean
WHAT'S COOKIN'

STATE
Robert Cummings
Ann Sheridan
KING'S ROW
Andrew Sisters G. Jean
WHAT'S COOKIN'

MADISON
Robert Cummings
Ann Sheridan
KING'S ROW
Andrew Sisters G. Jean
WHAT'S COOKIN'

MONROE
Robert Cummings
Ann Sheridan
KING'S ROW
Andrew Sisters G. Jean
WHAT'S COOKIN'

CANEO
Mickey Rooney
Donna Reed
Courtship of Andy Hardy
G. Ford C. Trevor
Adventures of Martin Eden

WEST END
Mickey Rooney
Donna Reed
Courtship of Andy Hardy
G. Ford C. Trevor
Adventures of Martin Eden

DIXIE
Leslie Howard
Mary Morris
THE INVADERS
V. MacLaglen E. Lowe
Call Out the Marines

LAKE
Carole Lombard
Jack Benny
TO BE OR NOT TO BE
M. Dietrich F. MacMurray
The Lady is Willing

GRAND
Glenn Ford
Clara Trevor
Adventures of Martin Eden
B. Cabot C. Bennett
Wm Bill Hitchcock Kidn

WEBSTER
Carole Lombard
Jack Benny
TO BE OR NOT TO BE
V. MacLaglen E. Lowe
Call Out the Marines