

Some notes concerning " The Weeping Tree" by Vicki Baum

LENGTH.

No doubt the thing is too long, but how you're going to cut it down to a bearable length I don't know. There are some repetitious spots which you will find better than I can, because it seemed to me sometimes that I had to rub it in so as to make a certain point stick to the reader's mind. However: there will be a strong temptation to cut out the long drab passages which contain nothing but facts, figures and information about rubber. This just can't be done— or I might as well never have written the book. On the other hand, if we cut out too much of the human side of the stories, the informative part will get topheavy. Well, let you worry for a change. They just published " Marion" in England and somehow managed to squeeze it into normal book length without cutting a word. They did it by scant margins, close print and similar war measures. See what can be done about it in this way.

Legal questions.

It will be very necessary to have your company lawyer scan the thing carefully so as to avoid libel suits and similar difficulties. I will point out the questionable points in detail as I go along from chapter to chapter.

Political questions.

Far be it from me to gum up the works of our good neighborhood politicians; on the other hand, rubber history is neither pretty nor fragrant. Anyway, it might be necessary to tune down one or the other sentence to make it sound less rude. Please, watch out for such controversial points.

Facts and figures . they are all correct, checked and counterchecked. All we have to do is being careful to avoid misprints or other such errors. Avis for the proofreader: Please, don't dive into the Encyclopedia Britannica to decide any doubtful points. The venerable encyclopedia stopped rubber history around 1911 and everything said there is more or less obsolete.

Introduction.

Please have your lawyer find out if the remarks there are clear enough and cover us against possible libel suits or if anything needs emphasizing. Also, have someone check up the names of the people from the N.Y. Botanical Garden who helped me. Wolfgang should check up on the names of the Brazilian gentlemen.

Now let's go chapter by chapter:

Akron Obituary.

Here, as in some other chapters, I need someone to watch for the idiom. I dislike dialect writing in any language, but I do want to barely indicate the idiom and tried my best to do it. However, I may easily have slipped up here and there. The Akron workers are not Middle Westerns, but to a great degree Hillbillies from the South. They ones I met didn't speak a very pronounced idiom. Kindly note that the man who tells this chapter was brought up to become a teacher and handles the language pretty well; Jim Morton, about whom he talks, on the other hand, is a Kentucky boy and talks ungrammatically. Ken is on the way of becoming a white collar boy and talks very correctly, except when he uses the idiom to be friendly.

Akron Chapter cont

The chapter is too long, but contains the roots for some of the later chapters, so go easy on the cutting. Details about Akron labor history and tire building technic are correct.

Akron Biography.

This is the chapter which gave me my biggest headache and still does. The finagling of big industries are something I simply can't understand. I took the ups and downs of Summit Rubber from the ledgers of Goodyears which were generously shown to me; usually I used two thirds of the figure, Goodyears had in their books, assuming that Summit Rubber was two thirds as large a company as is Goodyears. The ups and downs are characteristic for the entire ~~XXXXXXXX~~ tire industry. The maneuvers going on between Tyler and Warrens might seem a bit childish and I would appreciate if someone who understands high finance would look into it and improve it if necessary. I have an idea Malcolm could help me a lot. However, I read all the biographies and autobiographies of the financial wizzards and that is what I got from them. I know that this chapter is awfully long, but then, it is the backbone of the second part, and the only one dealing with the development of the tire industry. I had to put some flesh on the bone, therefore all the personal history of G. T. If the old bastard turned out to be a bit too nice, I can't help it. I really think that this type in the American industry is rather nice, in spite of their one-street-minds. I put in the part about the ~~XXXXX~~ Stevenson plan because it was a very important thing in rubber history, and also, because Hoovers campaign has some bearing on the present.

Black River

Somehow I like this chapter best and think it can stand as it is. However, could you please hand it over to Wolfgang who will have it checked up by our Brazilian experts for language and spelling. The linguistic problem in this one is rather complicated, because La Bala, of German birth but speaking a mongrel Spanish, mixes Portuguese into it only occasionally. Maxwell Tyler also speaks more Spanish than Portuguese, and the caboclos of that border region speak some sort of a mixture.

The Test.

This is where Synthetic rubber enters into the picture and I had quite a problem, because synthetic rubber is without any doubt a German invention and you can't get around the I. G. Farben in this connection. As I didn't feel like writing a glorification of the I. G. Farben just now; but as I also don't want to lie, and the I. G. Farben actually is a magnificent center of science, I hit on the idea of presenting the case as I did. With a purely fictitious story of sabotage. Fortunately I got a war department permit to watch the making of synthetic rubber in one of the first Akron plants; I also got all the dope I wanted from former I G Farben chemists who made synthetic rubber there; moreover I lived in Mannheim for five years and know the Ludwigshafen I G Farben plant very well. I also had the reports of some fugitives about the airraids there which they witnessed. Finally I had some long talks with underground people and tried to bring out the utter loneliness in which they are compelled to live. So, I think, this chapter will serve its purpose. Please, have some technician check up on the way a shortwave radio could be concealed in a diathermy set. I was told that's the way it could be done.

Six wheels on a truck.

Besides having roamed all over North Africa myself, I had this checked by Quentin Reynolds and Frank Gervasi, and also by a former German general staff man. I think it is correct in every detail, except for one phrase. That is when the German officer recognizes that the oncoming planes are British. It is effective as it stands, and some people will tell you that they can recognize plans, but the real experts will tell you it is not so. The planes mentioned were the models used in Lybia at that time. However, I wish you would have a reliable flyer check up on the height at which they are flying and attacking. My two war correspondents gave me the heights but it seems a bit fishy to me. Otherwise this chapter seems okay.

Washington Minutes.

This is the most ticklish chapter of them all, and for various reasons. The ~~paper~~ material for the Usa Oil- Randolph Warrens investigation is all culled from the congressional records of the Standard Oil hearings; ~~XXX~~ occasionally I even used one or the other line as it stood there. Will you find out if this is permissible? For instance, I gave my senior Christians a few lines spoken by Arnold Thurman during the investigation- is this plagiarism? If so, I'd have to change it just a bit. But my main problem which gave me many sleepless nights is this: You can't tell the story of rubber and skip Buna and Butyl and the whole complex of the relation between oil and rubber industries at this moment. But Buna and Butyl are protected trade marks, eligible to libel suits; also, they are doubtlessly the property of Standard Oil of New Jersey and not of some imaginary Usa Oil. (By the way: We'll have to check up on all such fictitious names as Union Chem. Usa Oil, Summit Rubber etc, to make sure the don't coincide with any real companies!) Obviously I could not use the real Standard Oil in a book of fiction, because Standard's late Mr Fahrish didn't interest me and anyway. I tried to get around the difficulty by many sly maneuvers. But I think it might be not a bad idea to thresh it out with Standard Oil beforehand. That is, make sure they are satisfied to have them mentioned in the introduction as the owners of those two patents and, passingly, again in the Washington Chapter. On the whole, Standard should be very pleased with this chapter, because after all the sensational trash in the papers at that time, this chapter is trying to do them justice and to tell the truth and nothing but the truth.

This again is a very long chapter, but it can't be helped. Little Mr Hoyt is the apple of my eye and I need him for comedy relief and a general impression of Washington; incidentally, it is true that baby nipples were missing on the form mentioned and I'm mighty proud to have dug up that gem in Washington. As for G. T.'s lectures in this chapter: This was my only opportunity for condensing the most important facts in some simple and popular form.

American Mural.

This chapter goes today to Dr. Sparks, the inventor of Butyl, whose life story this is more or less; there might be some minor revisions after he checked it up, but on the whole it seems correct. Carothers did commit suicide, but it was more or less hushed up, and some chemists seem to think he did it because of the way Du Ponts handled his inventions. However, let your lawyer find out if we are permitted to use it. The fact of his suicide was, at the time, mentioned in one or the other paper.

The native returns.

This is a weak chapter, but I had to telescope so much into it. It is the only chapter where you get a glimpse of a modern American rubber plantation; also, it tells exactly where we stand at the moment. I got the facts about the Japanese invasion from the Goodyear manager who escaped from there; the stuff about our plans in South America from the head of the survey commission who is doing the work down there. So that is correct. However, I need again the advice of either some flyer, or the Netherland Information buro, about several things. The one is the status of Piet now. I understand the Dutch fliers belong to some fighting Flier units scattered about Australia and the Pacific. I'd like this a bit more detailed; also, I'd like to find out how they call the place where such a crew lives. It's not barracks, it's not hangars, it's not exactly a station. Please, help me with this. Also, what sort of a plane was it Piet flew in the battle of Macassar? They had B P Ys down there, and flying fortresses, but I couldn't find out if they were flown by Americans only, or if the Dutch flew them, too. Or did they Dutch fly Douglasses, as they did before the war? Anyway, all the stuff about Piet's military career is a bit wobbly because I haven't found a person who was there and who dood it. Maybe I can repair that when I get to New York.

Once more LEGAL QUESTIONS.

The books is interspersed with the names of real people and real companies. Please watch out for those. There is Goodyears, U.S. Rubber, Goodrich, and, especially, Firestone, whom G. T. takes as his personal enemy. Whatever is said about these is taken either from their own publications or from other books and pamphlets. Of course, a number of rubber chemists are mentioned, but all in a laudable way; anything personal is only said about Carothers. Please watch out for anything I might have overlooked in that respect. I don't want to hurt nobodies feelings more than I've got to.

RAAF.

unknown

ok
ok
yes

Mrs. Baum

THE WEEPING WOOD
A Novel

by

Vicki Baum

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Author of: TALE OF BALI, SHANGHAI '37, THE SHIP AND THE SHORE, etc.

Last Book: MARION ALIVE (1941)

Keynote

Vicki Baum's greatest novel--the story of rubber, the "weeping wood" of the Brazilian jungle that changed the world's history, told through the lives of the people whose destinies it shaped;--a magnificent novel which has the whole world for its background, and characters from many nations and epochs.

The Author

Vicki Baum, one of the most famous and popular of European writers, gained an international reputation with GRAND HOTEL. Her stories have been translated into every language in which books are published. Since her early success, Miss Baum has performed a remarkable literary feat; having written all her books in German, after only a few years' residence in the United States, she began to write in English and now is master of a prose style more flexible and colorful than her German was. From the popular novelist of GRAND HOTEL she has developed into a writer of great power, scope and depth; reviewers hailed MARION ALIVE as a first rate literary achievement. THE WEEPING WOOD is her greatest book; the story of rubber is of tremendous range, and she tells it with a power which far exceeds her previous work.

The Story

The story of rubber began two hundred years ago in the Brazilian jungle; and it covers the entire globe and involves millions of people. Vicki Baum has chosen as the characters of her book some of the people whose destinies were linked with the history of the rubber industry. In some cases they are real historical figures; others are fictitious characters representative of the people whose fortunes were made or whose lives were lost in the exploitation of rubber. Rubber is the hero and the villain of the book; through the changing scenes, from generation to generation, through the lives of scores of characters, rubber is the thread of the narrative. In Para in the eighteenth century, in Boston in the nineteenth century, in England, Vienna, India, Sumatra, in Akron, Ohio, in New York and Washington, wherever the story goes, rubber is the protagonist, although the story is told in the terms of individual lives linked in time and space to one another to make a continuous narrative.

Some of the people are Pater Anselmus, a Jesuit missionary, and the young Indian boy Manuel whom he lovingly trained for the priesthood, only to lose him when Manuel found he could have a freer life by gathering the gum of the weeping wood of the Amazon jungles and selling it in Para; Hezekiel Bancroft, a Bostonian who lost his money by lending it to one Charles Goodyear who was engaged in a fantastic ex-

periment to vulcanize "gum elastic"; Ambrosio, a young Brazilian, and Leoncadia, the beautiful prostitute who went with him into the Amazon jungle to share his hard life as a rubber-gatherer---they would have died there in misery but for a lucky meeting with a young Englishman named Henry Wickham who was smuggling out precious rubber seedlings to take to London.

Wickham--afterward Sir Henry--got the seedlings to London and changed the course of the world's history. A young gardener at Kew Gardens, Daniel Chalmers, took them to Ceylon and helped transplant rubber to the Far Eastern plantations and to ruin the industry in Brazil. Chalmers died in the East. The woman who had been his lover, and the child she bore him, went to a Dutch plantation.

On that plantation in Sumatra, a coolie ran amok one night and killed the planter, and the planter's son became head of the plantation and produced the finest rubber in Sumatra. His name was Piet Gruytgens, and he appears again at the end of the story, in New York, as a Dutch aviator.

The scene shifts back to the Amazon jungle, where early in the century one of the greatest crimes of all history, the enslavement, exploitation and extermination of tribes of Indians by the rubber merchants, was being perpetrated, and the descendants of Manuel, the young Indian boy, and of Ambrosio, the seringueiro, were dying in the grim interior.

Book Two opens in Akron with the story of a rubber worker's life, the beginnings of labor struggles and the founding of the union. Akron is also the background for the story of George Tyler who became the greatest of American rubber magnates; of his son, Maxwell, who died on the Amazon, where the story of rubber began; of Ken Morton, a rubber worker's son, who left Akron to go to the Sumatra plantation where he met Piet Gruytgens, who came to the United States after the fall of the Netherlands Indies.

Meanwhile the synthetic rubber industry was developing in Nazi Germany; from this grim background emerges Dr. Hernreid, member of the underground, who sabotaged the manufacture of rubber, and when he was discovered, escaped to America.

In America the synthetic rubber industry had begun too; we see it through the story of Bill Clark a young chemist whose experiments resulted in a usable product; and in his conflict with the great oil company he worked for. There are scores of other characters whose lives are all intricately interwoven into a single narrative, which is absorbing not only for its drama and color and for its presentation of the lives of individuals but for the complete and comprehensive history of the rubber industry which it gives.

Vicki Baum has achieved an almost incredible tour de force in making one story out of a history that covers two centuries and has the whole world for background. The thread is unbroken, and THE WEEPING WOOD is a novel composed of many stories and many characters woven into one coherent and magnificently conceived structure.

THE WEEPING WOOD is moreover based on fact, the result of painstaking and exhaustive research, and it gives a complete and accurate history of an entire industry. As fiction it is as readable as all of Vicki Baum's books; as a history it is equally fascinating.

The Market

THE WEEPING WOOD is a certain best-seller, one of the biggest and best novels we have published in many years. Its great scope, the variety and color of

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its many backgrounds, its many dramatic scenes and narrative threads make it an outstandingly rich and satisfying novel. In addition, its subject is red hot news. The contemporary parts of the novel have a war background--including such varied scenes as Nazi Germany, the Libyan desert, Sumatra, wartime New York and Washington. Most important of all, it is the best book by a fine story-teller with a large public who has fused her great talent with a tremendous subject!

It will have a major advertising and promotion campaign.

D.B.E.

May 3, 1943

(Date, title and price subject to change without notice)