

Document Citation

Title	The plough and the stars
Author(s)	Flin.
Source	<i>Variety</i>
Date	1937
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	The plough and the stars, Ford, John, 1937

The Plough and The Stars

RKO-Radio release of Cliff Reid and Bob Sisk production. Stars Barbara Stanwyck and Preston Foster; features Una O'Connor. Adapted by Dudley Nichols from play of same name by Sean O'Casey. Directed by John Ford, assisted by Arthur Shields. Musical score, Roy Webb; camera, Joseph August. At Radio City Music Hall, N. Y., week Jan. 28, '37. Running time, 67 mins. Nora Clitheroe..... Barbara Stanwyck Jack Clitheroe..... Preston Foster Fluther..... Barry Fitzgerald The Covey..... Denis O'Dea Rosale Burgess..... Eileen Crowe Brennan..... F. J. McCormick Pearce..... Arthur Shields Mrs. Cogan..... Una O'Connor Gen. Connolly..... Moroni Olsen Peter..... J. M. Kerrigan Mollan..... Bonita Granville Rosie..... Erin O'Brien-Moore Langan..... Neil Fitzgerald Barman..... Robert Homans Boy..... Wealey Barry

Some of the Abbey Theatre players, from Dublin, in Sean O'Casey's play which has been made into a film via John Ford, the director of "The Informer." Skillfully made but not impressive as a money entry.

Story is an account of the Irish rebellion in 1915, a sanguinary outburst which failed of its purpose because the people were divided in allegiance, many Irish at the time fighting in France. It depicts the Irish character in various shadings of comedy, tragedy, sacrifice, selfishness and stupidity. The critical select

will attend and applaud. And that's about where it belongs, in a sure-seater for a run.

So many changes have been made in adapting this O'Casey play to the screen that the tragic original has been modified into a romantic melodrama. Primarily the screen version is a woman's starring picture calling for an actress of considerable more gifts than Barbara Stanwyck here indicates she possesses. The altered story is the familiar theme that the men do the fighting and the women the weeping.

The opening shows the struggle and grief in a young bride's heart when her husband is selected by the citizen army to be the commandant of the fighting forces in Dublin. She has no interest in the uprising to free Ireland. Her world is her home. She has no pride in the groom's military honors—only a terrorizing fear that he will be killed. She does everything to dissuade him from battle, but he goes to his troops, fights gallantly and escapes a sniper's death at the finish by returning over housetops to his own flat and masquerading as a non-combatant.

All of which puts it up to the spectator whether to sympathize with the wife or line up on the side of the youths who sacrifice their lives. Audiences have been trained to go along with martial music. And these Irish boys are good looking, earnest and sincere. They take a tough licking but they're not quitters. Sympathy therefore is with the lads, which is one of the reasons Miss Stanwyck has such a hard time holding up her end of the story.

In between there is humor and amusing characterization. Barry Fitzgerald has a joyful time in the role of Fluther, an Irish braggart, ready to back up any argument with his fists. He is teamed with J. M. Kerrigan who is up to his usual high standard.

Ford has a particular flair for this type of story, and he gets over all comedy points. The scenes of the siege and recapture of the postoffice are exciting, realistic and tense. The escape of the remnant of the army over house tops is well photographed and daringly played, although much like similar scenes in "Beloved Enemy."

One of the best directed scenes is the execution of the Irish general, played by Moroni Olsen. The camera swings from the doomed man in a slow panorama along a garden wall towards the firing squad, whose job is finished just before they come into focus.

Preston Foster, opposite Miss Stanwyck, fits nicely and his brogue comes easily. Only Miss Stanwyck, of the entire cast, does not go Irish. She holds to her natural speech.

Bonita Granville (the brat of "These Three") excellently plays a small part of a sickly tenement child who dies during the battle. A part of more importance is well played by Una O'Connor, mother of the child. Two splendid pieces of work are furnished by Erin O'Brien-Moore, as a street walker, and Eileen Crowe, who has no sympathy for the insurgent cause and says so in no uncertain terms. All smaller bits are well cast. Running time is only 67 minutes, but the story substance impresses chiefly as an episodic recounting.

Because "The Plough and the Stars" is the product of the same group, Cliff Reid and Bob Sisk (associate producers), Dudley Nichols (screen writer), and Ford, which made "The Informer," it is natural to expect an unusual film. But the concession to the demand for a happy ending and the consequent switching around of the original play material have tended to diffuse interest. There also remains the open question of to what extent the American public is interested in Ireland's troubles.

Flin.