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Contemporary American dramatists.

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CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN DRAMATISTS

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OUTLINE

CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN DRAMATISTS

INTRODUCTION

In any discussion of American dramatists it is important to consider what is meant by the term, American drama, and also to discuss briefly the early writers who helped to bring the American theatre to its present-day status.

Bronson Howard, the dean of dramatists in America, defines American drama as follows:

> "By the term I should mean any play that is written by an American, or in America by a foreign resident, that is produced here, and that deals with any subject--using America in the sense of the United States."[1]

Howard chose for his "subject" the social relations of men and women. He was responsible for the development of play writing in America during the period of the Civil War. Whether he used a background of war or a struggle for financial power, he always brought out the personal relations of his characters and showed the part that social laws and conventions play in developing the life of a human being. He was primarily concerned with the finer types of humanity. One can imagine his horror at witnessing a performance of almost any of the recent New York successes, the Pulitzer prize play, You Can't Take It With You, for instance, and many others of the last decade's comedies which show a frankness on certain subjects no longer "taboo" in polite society.

Nationalism was present to a larger extent in the early plays nearest to the Revolution, such as Royall Tyler's The

[1] Montrose J. Moses, The American Dramatist, Page 8.

Contrast, William Dunlap's André, and James Kirke Paulding's The Bucktails; or, Americans in England; Anna Cora Mowatt's Fashion also showed the futility of the New World's effort to ape Old World customs. Early types of Western or frontier plays included Augustin Daly's Horizon and Joaquin Miller's The Danites in the Sierras; these too sounded the note of nationalism, as did William Vaughn Moody later in The Great Divide.

The first drama representations were given in Virginia, where the Puritan influence was least pronounced; Virginia and Maryland are the only American colonies which have never had any laws prohibiting play acting. The New England Puritans banned all secular amusements. In 1843 President Dwight of Yale in his Essay on the Stage declared that the cultivation of a fondness for playgoing involved the loss of "that most valuable treasure, the immortal soul." However, stage performances were given occasionally, and the laws forbidding play acting were not always strictly enforced.

With the coming of the Twentieth Century a change appeared. Romantic plays and "type" plays made their entrance. The latter form of dramatic expression is aptly illustrated by Abie's Irish Rose. The story of the number of times this play was refused by directors before it finally achieved a showing and almost instantaneous success is too well known to merit repetition here. Suffice it to say that the play struck the universal note and aroused the sympathy of the audience.

This same universal characteristic was captured by Langdon

Mitchell in his satire on the evils of divorce, The New York Idea. This, his best play, occupies an important place in the development of American drama because its literary style is brilliant and it compares favorably with the best of the European dramas. Langdon's birth and education gave him the necessary background to portray intelligently the type of society in which he has laid his comedy. It was first produced in New York in 1906, was immediately successful with its fine character drawing, brilliant dialogue, and witty lines done in a natural and sincere manner, and has retained its popularity.

Of all the modern dramatists, Philip Barry most closely approaches Mitchell's style and manner of writing in his types of social comedy with their subtle portrayal of human nature.

This same year, 1906, saw the production of Jesse Lynch Williams' first play, The Stolen Story. This play was based on his newspaper observations. His next effort, Why Marry?, a study of the institution of marriage, was successful, particularly when the leading part was played by the much-married Nat Goodwin. This play won the first Pulitzer prize in 1917-18.

If Bronson Howard is to be considered the dean of American dramatists, David Belasco is the dean of producers. He prepared for the stage countless comedies, tragedies, and sketches; he wrote his first melodrama with James A. Herne in 1878 and continued to collaborate and work for the theatre until his death in 1931. He lived to see the productions of the "legitimate" stage slowed up by the advent of moving pictures; the "movies" became a potent factor in so-called dramatic art and

gradually succeeded in removing the road companies. Possibly these companies might have held their own against the invaders if the actors had been of first quality. This, however, was not the case. Then, too, the charm and intimacy of the small setting of the newer drama was lost in the immense barn-like structures found in many small towns. These auditoriums were so big that they could not be filled, for even a sizable audience made no showing. The effect upon the actors and upon the audience itself was bad because the elements of a successful performance were lacking. These road companies were soon replaced by stock companies, which still continue, although they have made little contribution to dramatic art because they seldom produce any but Broadway successes. New York has now become the Mecca for producers, and the number of theatres there has increased five-fold in the last twenty-five or thirty years.

The greater part of these more recent Broadway favorites cater to the amusement-loving public. Modern comedy has been best represented by Kaufman and Connelly, George Cohan, in a type peculiarly his own, Zona Gale, George Kelly and Sidney Howard with their Aubrey Piper and Dodsworth. For sheer beauty of language the prolific Anderson stands near the head; for departure from the old forms for the new and untried dramatic situations O'Neill is preeminent. Each one of the dramatists to be considered now in detail has made a definite contribution to American drama.

ZOE AKINS

Zoe Akins was born in Humansville, Missouri, in 1886. Little time was spent here, however; most of her life has been centered in St. Louis.

She had written many poems and some fiction before she turned to playwrighting. She had acted relatively minor parts in the Odeon Stock Company in St. Louis. This poet-actress was one of the leaders in the establishment of the Juvenile Theatre in St. Louis about 1908; here her Magical City was first presented; later in 1916, the Washington Square Players produced this play. It is a one-act play with some excellent lines but an artificiality which makes no contact with life. Miss Akins does not concern herself with real life but rather treats social relations in a satirical manner. She has made some adaptations from the French which are not particularly noteworthy, although she succeeds in capturing in English the atmosphere of the Latin Quarter.

Déclassée was her first play to bring her prominence in that line of literary endeavor. With this play, in which Ethel Barrymore starred, Miss Akins came to the first volume of Mantle's Best Plays, which included those plays produced during the season of 1919-1920.

Déclassée is the story of an Englishwoman, Lady Helen Hayden, the daughter of an Earl. She is unhappily married to a successful butcher--in fact, as one of the characters says:

[1] "The most successful butcher in the empire."

Lady Hayden has had many love affairs. Her latest and most serious is with a young man by the name of Edward Thayer. He and his partner, a Mrs. Leslie, had been detected cheating at cards. Lady Helen insists that Thayer apologize publicly. He threatens her with the exposure of the love letters which she had written to him. She does not hesitate but insists upon the apology.

In the second act, three years later, Lady Helen has gone to live in New York. She has been traveling around with third-class people, pawning her jewels one by one until she is almost penniless. She has made the acquaintance of a rich Jew, Rudolph Solomon, who admires and pities her. Her husband has divorced her and married again.

At the beginning of the third act Lady Helen is being entertained at Solomon's beautiful new home; he asks her to marry him, knowing she loves someone else. She finally accepts him. A little later Thayer appears as Solomon's dinner guest. Solomon releases Lady Helen with the thought that she is to be happy with Thayer. Lady Helen leaves before Thayer appears. A moment later she is brought in fatally injured by a taxi. The inference is that this was intentional on her part though this point is not made plain. Her death follows in a few moments, made less tragic by the presence of the man whom she loved. Déclassée is a sophis-

[1] Zoe Akins, Déclassée, Page 7.

ticated, theatrically effective play with little attention paid to actuality.

Her best comedy success is The Greeks Had A Word For It, which had a long run in New York.

Her best-known play is The Old Maid which she dramatized from Edith Wharton's story. This is a drama in five scenes--a touching portrayal of the life of two women. Ironically enough, Charlotte, the Old Maid, is the woman who has known motherhood and who cherishes her child and other women's children. Delia is made hard by the loss of the man she loved and her childless "mariage de convenance."

The characters of the two women are revealed in the following words:

[1]

Delia: "I couldn't bear to be an old maid, Chatty--"

Charlotte: "I shall be an old maid because the man I love doesn't love me. Not for any other reason. I would have waited for him all my life."

Delia: "You think so, but life doesn't stop; one gets lonely; one wants children and a home of one's own."

Delia has spoiled Charlotte's illegitimate child with the result that "Tina" is devoted to Delia and thinks of Charlotte as an Old Maid. Charlotte protects her child from an occurrence of the same nature as that which took place in her youth. The two women are devoted to "Tina," the daughter of one, and the child which the other woman might have had

[1] Zoe Akins, The Old Maid, Page 12.

if she had married the man she loved.

At the end of the play, on the eve of "Tina's" marriage, made possible because Delia has adopted her, Delia tells "Tina" of Charlotte's sacrifice for her, thus changing "Tina's" attitude toward Charlotte.

This play had a long run in New York; it won the Pulitzer prize for 1934-35 and was given place in the 1934-35 volume of Mantle's Best Plays. Since its production Miss Akins has written nothing of importance, though stage reviewers have hinted at a new play in the making.

Miss Akins is a person of strong likes and dislikes, not unduly influenced by others, and rather easily bored. For that reason she has taken good care not to bore others. Her character delineation is not always consistent; in Déclassée, for instance, she has made the leading character, Lady Helen, too fond of the sound of her own voice and of her own ideas. Miss Akins evidently still likes her theatre to be somewhat artificial with no real approach to life. She may yet write a play which shall be truly sincere without being tiresome.

The reason for her sparse output may be that she writes only when she wishes to and what she wishes to. Therefore, she enjoys her work tremendously.

MAXWELL ANDERSON

Maxwell Anderson was born in 1888 in Atlantic, Pennsylvania; attended public schools in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Iowa, and North Dakota; graduated from the University of North Dakota in 1911; taught English at both Leland Stanford and Whittier colleges in California and did editorial writing in San Francisco and later in New York. He was a good editorial writer but most of his chiefs considered him a wee bit too outspoken.

His first play, written when he was an editorial writer on the New York "Morning World," was a tragedy of the North Dakota prairies called White Desert. His first experience as a playwright was to sit at the back of a theatre in Stamford, Connecticut, at the first showing of this play which the audience interpreted as something to laugh at because he had begun it with scenes of comedy. When the mood of the play became suddenly tragic, the audience kept right on laughing. It was quite a shock to Mr. Anderson. Although partly rewritten, White Desert lived but a short two weeks in New York.

His second play was What Price Glory? a collaboration with Laurence Stallings, at that time book reviewer of the World and a former captain of artillery in the Great War. It was Mr. Stallings' experiences that furnished the inspiration for what is generally conceded to be America's finest war play.

Following the success of What Price Glory? Mr. Anderson abandoned journalism to follow a career as dramatist. Two other plays written with Mr. Stallings, First Flight (with President Andrew Jackson as its hero) and Buccaneer (a romantic story of Pirate Morgan), were accepted as distinguished failures.

Maxwell Anderson, writing for the stage since 1923, has won the Pulitzer Prize, America's chief award for the so-classified year's best play of American authorship, with a political satire called Both Your Houses. He was a close contender a second time with a poetic drama, Mary of Scotland, and stood high in the list of possible winners with a domestic drama of social significance and serious purpose entitled, Saturday's Children.

These plays, together with Elizabeth the Queen, are fairly representative of his range and what might be described as his intellectual versatility. He is both poet and rugged realist, idealist and stalwart citizen. He might spend election day deep in an ivory tower (that would be his Connecticut farm) reading Shakespeare and Keats, his favorite poets, but he would not forget to vote.

His third historical play, Valley Forge, transferred the "mise en scene" from England to this country. This play did not succeed in drawing the audiences of the other plays, perhaps because the conditions with which George Washington had to struggle did not lend themselves to so glamorous a

setting as those of Elizabeth and Mary of Scotland.

About twenty years before the opening of Valley Forge Washington had met a beautiful young girl, Mary Philipse. This same girl, now a woman, is dancing at a ball held at General Howe's headquarters in Philadelphia. She talks with General Howe about Washington and declares that she is anxious to go to him. Howe refuses to give her a pass, but she succeeds in reaching Washington, tells him of General Howe's message and his terms for ending the war, and tries unsuccessfully to recapture the feeling which they had for each other in earlier years. Washington tells her that they are now both married.

[1]

> "We're fixed in our two worlds. The time is run out for pleasantries. It's winter in my bones as well as in the year."

The General declares he will not yield to General Howe. Later, at the end of the play, Washington refuses Howe's offer in these memorable words:

[2]

> "If this war were for trade advantage, it would end tonight. It was made over subsidies, or some such matter, but it's been taken over. Let the merchants submit if that's any good to you, then come out and find my hunters and backwoodsmen, and beat us down into the land we fight for. When you've done that--the king may call us subject. For myself, I'd have died within if I'd surrendered. The spirit of earth moves over earth like flame and finds fresh home when the old's burned out. It stands over this my country in this dark year, and stands like a pillar of fire to show us an uncouth clan, unread, harsh-spoken, but followers of dream, a dream that men shall bear no burdens save of their own choosing, shall walk upright, master-

[1] Burns Mantle, The Best Plays of 1934-35, Valley Forge, Page 90.
[2] " " " " " " " " " " " 112.

> less, doff a hat to none, and choose their gods! It's destined to win, this dream, weak though we are. Even if we should fail, it's destined to win!"

Anderson has been criticized for introducing the character of Mary Philipse, not only because it was incorrect historically but it also slowed up the action of the play.

The next year Anderson also won the Pulitzer prize with his Winterset which was regarded as a vindication of Sacco-Vanzetti. The setting for this play by Jo Mielziner is most effective. The scene is the river bank beneath Brooklyn Bridge, and the lighting is remarkable. Trock has just been released from prison, and he declares that the authorities are after him again, but before he is apprehended he will send some of the men[1] "where there is no air to breath." He has been given six months to live. Garth, who exists in the cellar of an apartment building, is worried about a murder, and he and his sister, Miramne, and their father are keeping out of sight. Trock enters to talk with Garth and tells him that the police are looking up the case. The judge who at the trial declared the man guilty has gone crazy and is wandering the streets, trying to prove that the man was guilty--thereby easing his conscience. Garth tells his sister and father that he was with the gang that robbed a paymaster and saw the murder done. He declares he does not want to die, but he cannot help thinking of the man he could have saved if he had told the truth. Judge Gaunt wanders in there and out again, and two young boys appear, Mio and Carr.

[1] Burns Mantle, The Best Plays of 1935-36, Winterset, Act I.

Mio declares that he is interested in the Romanio case, and in his determination to do some investigating himself, he comes to the Garth apartment. Mio's father was the man who was electrocuted. His mother had died of grief, and he had been driven out of town, but he is determined to show his father's innocence. Garth urges his father to get Judge Gaunt into the house and Miramne talks with Mio and tells him that she has fallen in love with him. While they are talking Mio reappears and says that he is the son of the man who was put to death for the paymaster robbery. Mio asks Garth to testify about the case and declares that Garth can clear his father's memory. Mio also recognized Judge Gaunt and accuses him of lying when he gave the charge. Judge Gaunt admits that possibly he made a mistake. Trock appears with the intention of taking Judge Gaunt home with chauffeurs that are, of course, going to kill him. Before this can take place a sergeant and a policeman come and take Judge Gaunt away to physical safety, at least. Mio and Miramne come out and sit talking together, fearing that they will be killed if they try to leave. Mio can think of no way to escape. Finally Mio decides to try to escape by a path between the rocks. The machine guns of Trock's men kill him. Miramne shrieks that they are murderers, and she will bring them to justice. The machine gun kills her too.

In this play Maxwell Anderson uses blank verse for the emotional love passages. The rest of the play is prose. The

criticism is made that no one speaks in blank verse during this era, but it cannot be disputed that people do talk like Mio and Miramne in their own minds and in their dreams and inspirations. The chief trouble, apparently, is that we cannot express ourselves.

Maxwell Anderson's The Masque of Kings has not succeeded as well as his plays usually do; the reason for this may be that there are too many of Maxwell Anderson's words and not enough of his drama; the little mystery of the affair is lost by the discourse; in other words, you cannot see the forest for the trees. The emperor, Franz-Joseph, becomes the most important character, and his son, Rudolph, a weakling, who is saved from being assassinated by his father. Rudolph discovers that Vetsera, the girl he loves, has been a spy employed by his father, and despite her protests that she loves him, he refuses to believe her; finally she commits suicide. Overcome with remorse, Rudolph follows her example. The play is well worth reading for its lines, but on the stage the effect is not so moving as in some of his dramas.

The New York Drama Critics' Circle have bestowed upon Maxwell Anderson their award for the best play of the season, High Tor.

> "The Drama Critics' Circle awards its annual prize for 1936-37 to Maxwell Anderson's High Tor. In its decision the circle celebrates the advent of the first distinguished fantasy by an American in many years. Imaginative and comic as it is poetic in both spirit and expression, High Tor is a singular accomplishment, giving rare grace to this

> theatrical season in New York. For a second successive year, the circle felicitates both Mr. Anderson and his perceptive producer, Guthrie McClintic."

Anderson seems doomed to be misinterpreted by his audiences. High Tor depicts scenes of comedy, which delight the beholder. When, with one of his lightning changes, Anderson "goes tragic," the audience go on laughing, a playwright's stragedy which he had previously endured in White Desert.

All of the scenes of the three acts take place on the mountain, High Tor. Van Van Dorn, which was played by Burgess Merideth, of "Mio" fame, owns a mountain which he will not sell to promoters, even though urged by a girl who loves him but wishes a more normal married life than the one which he proposes on the slope of the mountain. Two promoters come to urge him to sell and find themselves unable to get down sea level again. While they are trying to find the path, three men come in with a payroll which they have stolen. Thinking themselves detected, they leave the bag containing the money, hoping to find it later. In the meantime a ghostly band composed of early Dutch settlers come and find the money, take it out and throw it away because they consider paper money of no value. Shortly after when the promoters return, they are delighted with the sight of all the wealth and take possession of it. The "ghosts" do not care for the two men and get them into a derrick and hoist them up into the air.

They are kept there until almost the end of the play. Van Dorn in the meantime meets Lise, the wife of one of the early Dutch settlers. He falls in love with her and begs her to stay with him, but when the ghostly ship, long-expected, appears on the river she goes with the other settlers. Van Dorn talks with an Indian philosopher who tells him that if he does not sell the mountain to the men, they will take it away from him anyway as earlier promoters did from the Indian.

Van Dorn finally decides that he will sell and will try to live a normal life with Judith.

As previously stated, the audience did not know when to stop laughing, or when to consider the situations seriously. Nevertheless the lines have the real Anderson flavor and the play makes an unforgettable impression on the beholder.

The Wingless Victory, a poetic tragedy in three acts and four scenes, was presented by Katharine Cornell at the National Theatre in Washington, November 24, 1936. This play has brought Maxwell Anderson great praise, though it has also received much criticism. It is a gloomy drama and reminds one a little of O'Neill's tragedy, Mourning Becomes Electra, though the subject is entirely different. Anderson tells us that the theme of the Wingless Victory was suggested by the "Medea" of Euripides. Here he places his Malay princess, Oparre, who would be a Christian, gentle, good, and kind, in a New England atmosphere as the wife of Captain Nathaniel McQueston. Salem, in the Puritan New England of 1800,

treated her only with distrust and derision. Finally under their treatment she reverted to her old gods.

While seeing the play one is moved to sympathy with the lovely character of Oparre, which was so beautifully played by Katharine Cornell. After one leaves the theatre, one is not sure whether the harsh treatment which she received was due wholly to the bigotry and petty cruelty of the Puritans of that time or to the fact that a mixed marriage is often an unhappy one.

This play is unevenly written; the second act is much more touching than the third, which is almost an epilogue, but it is eloquent and moving drama. Oparre's frenzy when she curses her husband and takes her farewell of life carries the audience with her to the heights of renunciation.

Maxwell Anderson, as is shown by all his plays, is a seeker after liberal thought, lofty aspiration, and courageous justice, such as he has shown to a marked degree in Winterset.

Consequently, he is a playwright who wishes to live his personal life entirely apart and away from his public. He has, so far as the records show, never granted an interview, and on one important occasion, when Burns Mantle sought by questionnaire to learn something of his home life and daily activities, he replied in three finely written lines, as though he would "whisper in ink:"

> "When a man starts peddling personal stuff about himself they should send a squad of strong-arm worms after him, because he's dead."

Maxwell Anderson may be considered as Eugene O'Neill's closest competitor. Since O'Neill's silence of the last few years, Anderson has come more and more into prominence. It remains to be seen what place the next O'Neill opus will take, and what effect it will have on Anderson's status in the dramatic field. That he is one of America's foremost playwrights cannot be denied.

In The Wingless Victory as well as in his historical plays, Elizabeth the Queen, Mary of Scotland, and Valley Forge, Anderson shows a certain implacability in his character delineation. It would be interesting to know why Anderson, himself the son of a Baptist minister, should make the Reverend Phineas McQueston in The Wingless Victory so intolerant and pitiless; even for Salem in 1800 he appears too harsh. The deacons or elders of the church are no less unyielding and more dishonest.

Anderson's dialogue does not have the witty flavor and biting cleverness of Kaufman's or Kelly's, but his satire is none the less keen and bitter because it is less open. It is to be hoped he will not allow his fondness for reform to dull the edge of his unmistakable talent for creating unusual situations and handling them in an interesting manner. He is honest with his characters and consistent as well. They are not mouthpieces for his own beliefs--a failing common to lesser writers. Anderson's dramas end with a sense of conviction rather than of endeavor to please the public with a happy ending when this is artistically or realistically impossible. For this he is devoutly to be praised.

PHILIP BARRY

Philip Barry was born in Rochester, New York, in 1896. His early education was obtained from nuns and priests. In 1919 he was graduated from Yale University with the degree of B.A. After his graduation he studied at Harvard from 1919-1922, including in his courses Professor Baker's famous "47 Workshop." While there he wrote a farce, A Punch for Judy, which was produced by the Workshop Company on a road tour. He continued to write while working in the Department of State at Washington and, later, in the United States Embassy in London.

Barry's first play, You and I, won him a five-hundred-dollar prize and a production in New York in 1923. This Harvard prize play was most successful and started him toward fame. The title shows Barry's thesis for this play--that the greatest work comes from unmarried people. In the play "Matey" says:

> "For a while you need absolute independence--freedom to think only I-I-I and my work--after marriage that is no longer possible. From then on it's 'You and I' with the You first, every time."[1]

Maitland White, "Matey," has done very well in business, but from early youth he has longed to paint. At the age of twenty-one he and Nancy were married. Now their son, "Ricky," and "Ronny," a neighbor's daughter, have fallen in love and are engaged. If they are to marry, it will necessitate the

[1] Allan Gates Halline, American Plays, You and I, Page 79

giving up of "Ricky's" hope of becoming an architect. Nancy urges "Matey" to give up his business and spend a year painting to see if he cannot make a success of it. "Matey" paints a portrait with the maid as a model. His former employer wishes to buy this picture to use as a soap advertisement. "Matey" realizes that he has waited too long and, after all, cannot paint as he would wish. "Ronny" realizes that she is standing in the way of "Ricky's" future success in his chosen field of architecture, so she tells him she will not marry him. "Matey's" former employer offers him his old position back again. It is suggested that if he should devote three or four years to study in Europe, it might "be his salvation." He decides to sell the picture and with the money send "Ricky" abroad to study in his place.

In this play with its intricate plot, the author probably intended to strike a tragic note, but the audience chose to regard it as a comedy. The reason for this may be that "so many people refuse to believe that Maitland White, facing the comfort of a $30,000 a year job, is really facing defeat."[1]

In 1924, The Youngest was produced and was moderately successful.

In his next play, In A Garden, his characterization is excellent. He gives a study of Lissa's inmost thoughts. It shows her life with her husband, Adrian Terry, a playwright. Barry has started his play with Adrian's decision

[1] The Bookman, LVII, Page 318, May 1923.

to give up writing plays. Compton, a novelist friend of his, does not approve of his doing this because he thinks Adrian will not be happy unless he continues to write. Learning of the arrival of a former acquaintance, "Norrie" Bliss, Compton believes that he can develop a situation which will cause Terry to go on writing. He tells Terry that when he met Bliss years ago, Bliss had told him that:

> [1] "Every wife is at heart another man's mistress, the man who just happened to be on hand when first romance came to flower in her."

He insinuates that there was an affair of this nature between Bliss and Lissa in a garden.

Terry decides that if he could contrive to put his wife back into their former setting, he would remove forever that thwarted romance. This he does while Bliss is visiting them, by reproducing the garden with "trick" lighting to produce the moonlight. The time which they had spent in the garden years before comes back to them both. The revival of the garden setting shows her the artificiality of her life with Adrian. Bliss tells Lissa that since that time in the garden he has been in love with her and had come back to find out if she were happily married to Adrian. Lissa then tells her husband that she feels she has been living all the time in an unreal atmosphere, that Adrian does everything according to a plan, with the idea that nothing happens spontaneously.

[1] S. Marion Tucker, Modern American and British Plays, Page 308.

Lissa decides that she must leave Adrian and try to live her own life without being the puppet he had made her. Adrian protests his love but is unable to act in any way contrary to good taste.

The style of the play is delightful and the character study of Lissa most pleasing; but even with a beautiful setting and a popular star the public did not make it a success from the standpoint of the box office.

Barry then wrote White Wings which was unsuccessful from a monetary point of view though the intelligentsia were pleased with it. His next effort was a Biblical drama with John the Baptist for the hero. It was entitled John, played for two weeks only and, for the most part, to a "paper" house.

The scenery for this play had scarcely been removed before a new play of Barry's, Paris Bound, appeared with Madge Kennedy as the leading lady. It was immediately popular. It has to do with a marital problem well illustrated by Ernest Dowson's poem, Cynara:

> "I have been faithful to thee, Cynara, after my fashion."

The play opens just after the wedding of Mary and Jim Hutton. Jim's father and mother meet at the ceremony, not having seen each other since their divorce fifteen years before. They agree that the young people have every chance to be happy, but James, Sr., declares their own marriage was

equally propitious, and blames his wife for wrecking it.[1]

Helen: "Which of us was in the wrong, you or me!"

James: "You were. I may have committed adultery, Helen, but I never committed divorce."

The young couple are ideally happy for five years, but as Ned is to start alone for a trip abroad, Mary learns through a friend that he has been seen the year before in St. Paul-du-Var living with another woman, Noel, who had been in love with him at the time of their marriage. Mary's ideas on marriage undergo a considerable change at this discovery. She is, as a friend puts it, "Paris Bound" for a divorce. During Jim's absence she mulls over the situation while working on a ballet with a young composer, Richard Parrish; finally, when Jim returns, he and the thought of her children make her decide against the Paris divorce trip.

After Paris Bound Barry wrote Holiday which was included in the 1928-29 volume of Mantle's Best Plays. Then in Mantle's 1930-31 volume, his Tomorrow and Tomorrow achieved honorable place. This play deals chiefly with a woman's problem as do In A Garden and Paris Bound.

At the opening of Tomorrow and Tomorrow Eve and Gail Redman have been married several years without the child that they hoped for. Dr. Nicholas Hay is coming to the college town in which the Redmans live to give a summer course at the college and is going to stay with them. When Dr. Hay comes, he and Eve are immediately drawn to each other. He

[1] Burns Mantle, The Best Plays of 1927-28, Page 256.

senses during his stay there at their house that Eve is not happy with her husband. On the last night before he leaves they confess their love for each other and it comes to fruition. The result is that at the opening of the next act several years later, Eve and Gail are happy with a boy which they named Christian, who believes Gail to be his father. Gail, a great horseman, is determined that his son shall be one also. He is disappointed because Christian shows great fear of horses. This dread brings forth serious illness in Christian. Eve succeeds in reaching Dr. Hay and asks him to come to help with the child. He comes, saves Christian's life and, though he leaves unwillingly alone, realizes that it is not possible for Eve to leave Gail.

The next year Barry's The Animal Kingdom was included in the 1931-32 volume of Mantle's Best Plays. Mantle says:[1]

> "The percentage of Philip Barry successes is sufficiently large to inspire an annual season's promise. His first play of any season is awaited, if not impatiently, at least with considerable curiosity and a good deal of confidence."

This social comedy, like Tomorrow and Tomorrow, has a slight resemblance to the Old Testament Samson and Delilah incident. The play opens in Tom Collier's house in the country; his father, a friend, and Cecelia Henry are waiting for Tom in answer to his summons. Collier, Sr., says that Tom has wasted his life; there is mention of a girl, Daisy,

[1] Burns Mantle, Best Plays of 1931-32, Animal Kingdom, Page 179.

with whom Tom has been living for three years. Cecelia then discloses the fact that she is the woman Tom is to marry. Tom's father is delighted at this bit of news. At Tom's arrival he and Cecelia are interrupted by a radio message which contains the news that Daisy is coming back from Europe. Tom leaves Cecelia and goes to meet her. Daisy tells him that she loves him and wants to marry him so that they may have a child. Tom breaks the news of his engagement. She declares that the break between them must be a decisive one. He refuses to say good-by.

At the beginning of the second act Tom and Cecelia have been married. She has already begun her Delilah act in making Tom over by sapping his independence. In the next act, six months later, Cecelia has changed Tom so much for the worse that his former friends pity him. Cecelia is angry at Tom because he will not accept a check from his father. He finally sees through her greed, realizes that his feeling for her was only a physical one and leaves to go back to Daisy, his true mate.

Philip Barry's plays all have a sense of unreality in them, and always deal with human relations. Barry has written a great many plays, most of them concerning a woman's problem or a character study of two women, as in the last play mentioned. It is difficult to predict what Barry's place as a playwright will be--whether he will go on with more social comedies or whether he will make a stronger contact with realism.

S. N. BEHRMAN

The witty Samuel Nathaniel Behrman, or S. N. Behrman as he prefers to be called, was born in 1893, in Worcester, Massachusetts, has degrees from three universities, and was a member of Professor Baker's famous "47 Workshop." For a time he worked on "The New York Times" and was press agent for the production of Broadway.

Some of his earlier plays were written in collaboration with Nicholson; perhaps the best of these is Love Is Like This. He also wrote in collaboration with Owen Davis The Man Who Forgot.

At the time the Theatre Guild produced the Second Man in the autumn of 1928 Behrman was almost unknown. Since that time only two other plays have been remarkably successful, but he has a very clear, defined position as the interpreter of comedy. No other playwright in the list included here has his clearness of thought and his power of the clever, witty, and appropriate word. It is difficult to find anything in his life that should have given him his splendid art. After his initial appearance among the ranks of well-known playwrights with the Second Man he continued his fame by appearing in 1931-32 with Brief Moment; in 1932-33 volume with Biography; in 1935-36 with End Of Summer. It is strange that none of these have ever won the Pulitzer prize. It is possible that the inclusion in the will of Joseph Pulitzer

of the phrase "raising the standard of good morals" has kept him out, though this is problematic.

In Brief Moment Behrman's delightful wit and trenchant characterization are at their best. Roderick Deane has decided to marry a night club singer, Abby Fane. She admits to Roderick that she has had a devasting love affair and does not wish another one. After their marriage she meets her former lover, Cass Worthing, and tells him that she cares nothing for him. "Rod," her husband, is jealous of Cass. There is criticism of the guests which Abby insists on entertaining. "Rod" continues to analyze himself with his friend, "Sig," making fun of him for it. "Sig" says:

[1] "A wonderful discovery--psycho-analysis. Makes quite simple people feel they're complex."

"Rod's" jealousy drives him to telling Abby to go to her former lover. She does, but at the end of three acts comes back and she and "Rod" are united. The conversation in this play is Behrman at his best. Abby's character is shown by the following words:

[2] "What have you done to me, Mr. Deane? Perhaps our mistake lay in marrying. If I'd been your mistress--instead of your wife--if my position had been--unofficial--I'd have been kept in my own routine--the things I was used to and knew and could manage. Perhaps that's the solution for me, Rod, to divorce you and become your mistress."

Biography had a long run and was an outstanding comedy. It was fortunate in having the charming Ina Claire in the

[1] Burns Mantle, The Best Plays of 1931-32, Brief Moment, Page 254.
[2] " " " " " " " " " "

leading part--Marion Froude. She is an artist who has had several affairs, the latest with Richard Kurt, a young Socialist magazine editor. He urges her to write her biography; as she needs the money she consents to do so. Nolan, an early sweetheart, appears. He is afraid that Marion will betray their early affair. Marion paints Nolan's picture; his early fondness for her returns. He would make love to Marion, but she is now in love with Kurt. She finally gives Kurt up, destroys the biography, and goes away alone on a trip.

End of Summer is also delightful; many consider it his best play. The first scene takes place in the Frothingham Cottage in Maine. Behrman has made Leonie Frothingham a charming creature. She is not divorced, but just is not living with Sam, her husband. Sam tells her he wishes to divorce her in order to marry again; Leonie does not wish this. A psychologist friend of hers, Doctor Rice, appears on the scene. Leonie hopes he will help her daughter, Paula, who is writing a book. Later Leonie falls in love with Doctor Rice, but in the meanwhile Doctor Rice has fallen in love with Paula, who is not sure about her feelings for him, though he fascinates her. She is somewhat in love with a radical youth, Will Dexter. When Doctor Rice tells Paula of his love for her, she tells him she does not believe him, but if he really wants to marry her, he must tell her mother and then she will have confidence in him. The Doctor does this and

almost breaks Leonie's heart. As the play ends, Leonie is trying to find a new friend to whom she can devote herself.

Leonie was charmingly played by Ina Claire. Miss Claire tells how difficult it was for her to understand the part. She finally built up her conception of Leonie's character as a spoiled "only child" who had to be loved.

It is plain that one cannot have much sympathy with this Leonie Frothingham and her light-mindedness and lack of any real character, but the onlooker cannot help wishing her happiness when she says:

"Isn't it a pity I have no mind?"

Behrman's plays, while delightful and interesting to see, are to a certain extent artificial. No conversation could ever be found, at least on this earth, half as brilliant, or as witty, or as interesting, as permeates all of these plays. Each character speaks at once the clever repartee that less fortunate people produce an hour too late. In spite of this minor defect, if such it may be called, Behrman has a tolerance, a sense of humor, and an intelligent skill in turning a phrase equalled by few writers. The lack of action does not matter.

> [1] "His drama is in his talk, and it would be well for people who think they do not like 'talky' plays to consider carefully what Behrman can do with talk, before they decide too definitely that many words never made a play."

[1] Theatre Arts Monthly, April, 1936, Page 258.

It remains to be seen whether Behrman will continue as a playwright or whether Hollywood and scenario writing will claim most of his attention. His latest effort is Parnell produced with John Van Druten.

RACHEL CROTHERS

Rachel Crothers was born in Bloomington, Illinois, in 1878. Her mother was Marie Louise DePew, who was the first woman physician in that part of Illinois. Her father was a doctor and a great friend of Lincoln, as was her grandfather also. She was interested in the theatre from an early age. When she was twelve she wrote and directed a play.

After attending the State Normal School and being graduated in 1892, she began her training for the stage. She joined the Wheat Croft School of acting in New York and did such good work that after she had completed the course, she was asked to remain as instructor. While here she wrote several one-act plays in which the students took part. Her writing and acting from the very first was different and had its own distinctive touch. She has an intuitive feeling for situations that will "get over the footlights."

Her first long play, The Three Of Us, had for its setting a mining camp in Nevada. In this play she gave a sympathetic and striking presentation of a girl's character. Later in A Man's World she produced a splendid piece of work on the double standard. The play was not able to offer any solution for the situation except a career for a young woman instead of too much dependence on marriage. With the passing of time this play has become somewhat out of date.

Next she wrote He and She, which was first tried out on

the road during the fall of 1911. Later under the title, The Herfords, it was produced at the Plymouth Theatre in Boston. After revision it was again produced in New York in 1920 under the title of He and She. The most remarkable of Miss Crothers' plays are those in which she portrays women's problems and the effort made to solve them.

One of Miss Crothers' plays which achieved a great deal of popularity was 39 East. The setting for this was hackneyed enough, a boarding house, but Miss Crothers' skill made it unusual and interesting. The characterization almost overpowered the action. It is several years since the writer saw this play, but still remembered perfectly is the portrayal of the Old Maid who had to take a pill after each meal, and the frivolous little widow who was so charmed at any masculine attention.

Miss Crothers gave an exposition of the present-day youth in Mary The Third. In this play she gives three different character studies. Mary the First "gets her man" by physical attraction. Mary the Second takes the man who seems to want her most. Mary the Third thinks that she will choose her mate honestly, but there really is little difference in the manner of her selection.

Later Miss Crothers wrote Expressing Willie, a gay, clever comedy, done with such skill that critics gave it the highest praise.

One of Miss Crothers' later plays which met with great

success is When Ladies Meet.

This play is a study of the old triangle with a different viewpoint. Here the two women meet. Mary Howard, an authoress, is in love with Rogers Woodruff, her publisher. Jimmy Lee is in love with Mary, but she does not return it. Jimmy guesses Mary's fondness for Woodruff and tries to protect her.

Mary is to spend a week-end with her friend, Bridget Drake, and asks her to invite Rogers Woodruff also. There Mary declares her love for Rogers and says that she should go and tell Rogers' wife as she has made the heroine of her latest book do. Woodruff is called back to town. A little later that night Jimmy Lee appears with Claire Woodruff whom he has persuaded to accompany him under the pretense of making Mary jealous. The two women immediately like each other. Mary tells Claire about her book and about her affection for Rogers. At the height of the discussion, just as Claire has discovered that Mary is in love with her husband, Rogers comes back and into Claire's room. When the showdown comes Rogers does not give up his wife, and Mary goes back to Jimmy.

Miss Crothers is one of the finest craftsman of the stage. She apparently does her work so easily that it sometimes fails to receive the appreciation it deserves. Her characters are not easily forgotten and she gives as much attention to her minor ones as to her leading characters. She has kept up to date. She has progressed. She thinks

that everything is done too quickly in the production of plays in America, because the expense of production is so stupendous that a return on the investment must be realized as soon as possible. This desire for speed and greed for money is to her mind the greatest handicap the American theatre has to consider at the present time.

A quotation from her play, Nice People, best defines her success.

> "The vital things of character don't belong to anybody's day--they're eternal and fundamental."[1]

[1] Montrose J. Moses, Representative American Dramas, Page 459.

OWEN DAVIS

One of the most interesting character portrayals should be that of Owen Davis. He was born in 1874 in Maine. He was graduated from Harvard in 1893 and endeavored to write tragedy first, which met with no response from the public whatsoever; therefore, he turned his attention to melodrama. He wrote with unbelievable speed. Burns Mantle says wittily that Davis wrote slowly at that time--it took him a week to write a five-act play! This terrific speed lasted for a long time and he turned out over a hundred melodramas.

This type of play he had at first depreciated but when he realized that it was successful he took it up deliberately. He studied the reactions of his audiences rather than the contents of his plays, and succeeded in making a pattern, which enabled him to turn out an enormous amount of work. His melodramas fall into three types: one, Western thrillers; two, New York comedy bordering on drama; three, sex plays as illustrated by Nellie, The Beautiful Cloak Model.

After the war Davis recognized the change in the spirit of the theatre and felt that a serious and thoughtful drama would be more appropriate for the spirit of the times. With O'Neill as a model, Davis endeavored to write a native drama with realism. The product was Detour, a moving story of a Long Island farmer's wife, Helen Hardy, who gave up a career to marry. In her desire to secure an opportunity for her

daughter, Kate, to continue painting, an art upon which her husband frowns, she is determined to send Kate to an art school in New York. Her husband, Steve, demands that she give him the art-school money so that he may buy more land. Helen refuses and decides to go to New York with Kate; but their plans are changed when she overhears Lamont, a painter, say that Kate's work has no real genius in it. This play was not at all successful in the public sense but critics thought it[1] "a sign of the deepening of native dramaturgic art" and "thus far one of our highest attainments in American realism for the stage."

His Icebound is a true portrayal of country life in any small place. It shows the pettiness of many of the characters and their fondness of gossip. Turned in upon themselves as they are from lack of contact with the outside world, small happenings are magnified and assume undue importance.

The play opens in the parlor of the Jordan Homestead where the Jordan family has assembled and is waiting for the mother to die. The whole Jordan family is intensely jealous of Jane, the young cousin who has taken care of their mother and has lived with her; they fear that she may have been willed some of their mother's money. They plan to send her away as quickly as possible after their mother's death. When they find that their mother has left all her property to Jane, they change their attitude quickly and endeavor to borrow

[1] Montrose J. Moses, Representative American Dramas, Page 491.

money of her. Jane has long been in love with the youngest son, Ben, who had come into contact with the law. Jane brings him back to the farm with the hope of reforming him, hoping that he may return her love. The play ends with the coming marriage of Ben and Jane; perhaps she runs no more chances of being unhappy than anyone else, though Owen Davis does not portray Ben as a character of any fineness or any real comprehension of what Jane has done for him. Ben, acting as a mouthpiece for Davis, gives an excellent description of what life in the country in the winter is like with the people shut in. He says:[1]

> "Just a few folks together, day after day, and every little thing you don't like about the other raspin' on your nerves 'til it almost drives you crazy! Most folks quiet, because they've said all the things they've got to say a hundred times; other folks talkin', talkin', talkin' about nothing. Sometimes somebody sort of laughs, and it scares you; seems like laughter needs the sun, same as flowers do. Icebound, that's what we are, all of us, inside and out."

Davis' subsequent plays have not helped him to realize his feeling about the realistic drama though he has not written any more plays like the Detour and Icebound because he tells us that they are not consistent with his own theory of the drama. He tells us,[2] "The Detour and Icebound were true plays from my point of view, honest attempts to do the best I knew how to do. But I had a feeling that the American drama should express a more optimistic note in it."

[1] Falline, American Plays, Icebound, Act II, Page 637.
[2] Owen Davis, I'd Like To Do It Again, Page 184.

His last play, Ethan Frome, has been written in collaboration with his son, Donald. It is a dramatization of Edith Wharton's story. Their version met with an enthusiastic reception. They made no effort to change the atmosphere of the book when putting it on the stage. The play is much more realistic than Icebound. The love element here comes to an unhappy conclusion. The prologue shows Ethan Frome as a terribly scarred and bitter man, a little over fifty. A stranger has been brought to Ethan's home to get him to drive him to Corbury, a neighboring town. The stranger admits that he has endeavored to find out what is the matter with Ethan but nobody would tell him. The next three acts show what had happened to cause his lameness and physical defects.

Ethan Frome was married to Zeena, a sickly, complaining woman of thirty-two. She wants Ethan to sell the cow and buy her an Energet Vibrator. This Ethan refuses to do. Zeena tells him that the doctor says she must have someone help her with the housework and she has sent for her cousin, Mattie Silver. Mattie comes, greatly pleased with the farm in spite of its poverty. Ethan does not see how he is to feed her, but he gives her the highest praise when he says:

"She ain't a fretter, anyhow."[1]

Of course it does not take long for Mattie and Ethan to fall in love with each other. Zeena sees this and plans to send

[1] Burns Mantle, Best Plays of 1935-36, Ethan Frome, Page 328.

Mattie away. Mattie and Ethan decide that they cannot bear to be separated and that they will go coasting down the hill and run into the big elm tree so that they may die together. The scene ends with the sled plunging over the drop. In the epilogue we find that neither one was killed. Mattie has suffered a paralysis of the spine; Ethan is a physical wreck. She and Ethan have come to hate each other.

In stark cruel realism this play is more bitter than Icebound or the Detour. Both of those plays give something to look forward to. Ethan's last words in the play show that there is nothing of this kind in Ethan Frome.[1]

> "The Fromes're tough, I guess. The doctor was saying to me only the other day--Frome, he says, 'you'll likely touch a hundred."

Davis has made an interesting "come-back." He represents not only the old-fashioned type of melodrama but also the newer drama of realism. With Ethan Frome he linked himself on with the future and added to his renown. Though this last play may not have been successful from the box-office standpoint, it has brought him to the 1935-36 volume of Mantle's Best Plays, no mean achievement for a man whose first plays were written in the last years of the nineteenth century. It is to be hoped that he will continue his rejuvenation.

[1] Burns Mantle, The Best Plays of 1935-36, Ethan Frome, Page 355.

SUSAN GLASPELL

Susan Glaspell was born in 1882. With the aid of her husband, George Cram Cook, she was responsible perhaps for the beginning of the Provincetown Players. Her play, Suppressed Desires, has probably been as popular among amateur groups as any play of a light nature. It is an extremely clever satire on sub-conscious minds and the ridiculous and alarming things it may do to people. While the Provincetown Players were getting established here, one-act plays were a source of material from which the actors could draw. One of the best of these, entirely different from Suppressed Desires, is Trifles. The scene is laid in a farmhouse in which the man of the house has been found dead and the wife accused of his murder and arrested. He has always been a difficult man, almost cruel in his treatment of his wife. The two women neighbors come to the house and find the little canary she had loved so dearly concealed in her work basket with his neck broken. They realize with a woman's intuition that she killed her husband because he had destroyed the only thing she loved--the little bird.

In 1919 Miss Glaspell wrote the three-act play, Bernice. While this play contains a little too much dialogue and practically no action the conception of the character of Bernice is excellent. The Inheritors shows Miss Glaspell's love for freedom of speech.

In 1924 she also wrote The Verge. The play is somewhat wrong in its thesis that only through suffering and destroying other people's lives can growth be achieved. This is a study of a woman who is going insane. It was well done and well played, but really there was very little in the play.

Then with Alison's House she won the 1930-31 Pulitzer prize. This play has a vague and charming quality of unreality. The scene is laid in the old Stanhope homestead where Miss Agatha Stanhope still lives alone. The time is in the morning of the last day of the nineteenth century, December 31, 1899. The house is to be sold and Miss Agatha Stanhope is to go to live with her brother. In this house Alison Stanhope lived and wrote the poems which have made her famous. She has been dead eighteen years. At the time the play opens a reporter, Knowles, has come for information about the circumstances under which Alison wrote. Miss Agatha Stanhope enters just in time to hear Knowles reply to Stanhope's query about the lurid story the reporter may write:

> "Not lurid. That wouldn't be the way to handle this story. But that room belongs to the world, don't you think so? Alison Stanhope's room--holds something."[1]

Miss Stanhope shows anxiety, then declares with the cry of a person who is insane on a subject:

> "I won't have people looking through Alison's room. I've guarded it for eighteen years. (Changing, cunning) All right, look. Look again. See what you find."[2]

[1] Susan Glaspell, Alison's House, Page 19.

[2] Susan Glaspell, Alison's House, Page 20.

Knowles is interested in finding out if all of Alison's poems have been published. He is told that no new ones have been discovered.

While the family continues packing, Agatha goes stealthily out of the room. A little later there is a cry of fire; it is discovered and put out. As they gather again, it is revealed that Agatha has set the fire herself, evidently to destroy some papers.

Elsa, Agatha's niece, who had left home to live with a married man, returns to see her former home once more before it is sold to be used as a boarding house. Agatha, with Elsa's promise that she will do anything for her aunt, holds out a portfolio to Elsa in order that she may guard it. As Agatha does this she is overcome and dies. In Act III the scene is laid in Alison's room, which has been left much the same since her death. Elsa opens the portfolio. She finds that the package contains Alison's hitherto unpublished poems. In them she has written her story of her love that she had given up to stay with her brother. Elsa persuades Stanhope not to destroy them, but to give them to the world.

Throughout her writing Miss Glaspell has been experimental in her work for the theatre in that it has not been her life goal but merely a hobby. However, it must not be forgotten that she, with the help of her husband, George Cram Cook, was instrumental in establishing the Provincetown Playhouse, which rendered valuable aid to O'Neill and, in return, was helped by the production of his earlier plays.

PAUL GREEN

Paul Green gives an account of his own career which describes him exceedingly well.[1]

> "Born on a farm near Lillington, N. C., March 17, 1894. Farmed in the spring and summer and went to country school a few months in the winter. Later went to Buie's Creek Academy, from which he was graduated in 1914. Taught country school two years. Entered the University of North Carolina in 1916. Enlisted in the army in 1917. Served as private, corporal, sergeant and sergeant-major with the 105th Engineers, 30th Division. Later as second lieutenant with the Chief of Engineers at Paris. Served four months on the Western Front. Returned to the University of North Carolina in 1919. Was graduated from there in 1921. Did graduate work at his alma mater and at Cornell University. At present is a member of the faculty at the University of North Carolina."

His folk drama, In Abraham's Bosom, awarded the Pulitzer prize for 1926-27, shows the life failure of a negro through a weakness in his own character--he is unable to control his temper. Three different crises arise in the play, each one definitely due to his own lack of self-control.

The Field God shows a community in North Carolina and life among the poor whites. Hardy Gilchrist, who is the hero of the play, is a fine man; his invalid wife is extremely religious. Gilchrist is good to her and tries to make her life as easy as possible. Her niece, Rhoda, a fine girl, comes to live with them. Gilchrist falls in love with her; Neill, Gilchrist's young farm hand also falls in love with

[1] Barrett H. Clark, Paul Green. Page 5-6.

her and is jealous because Rhoda is devoted to Hardy. Mrs. Gilchrist discovers the feeling shared by Rhoda and Gilchrist; the shock kills her. Gilchrist says:

> "She went with a curse on her lips, a curse for you and me, Rhody."[1]

This curse is shown later. Gilchrist marries Rhoda and they have an ailing child. The crops fail, and their farm animals sicken and die. The superstitious country people declare this is because Gilchrist, whom they consider responsible for his wife's death, has denied God. They come to his house to exhort him to acknowledge God and confess if he has done wrong. Overcome, he rushes out into the rain; when he returns, his child is dead. The play ends with Rhoda and Gilchrist telling of their love for each other and hoping, through that love, to find their salvation.

This original version of The Field God was changed later, shortened, and given a different ending. Gilchrist and Rhoda are made happy when Rhoda is to become a mother. The second version gains strength through this condensation; many of the speeches as first written were too long and verbose, particularly those which presented the two opposing religious points of view.

There is a similarity between the two groups of characters represented in this play and those in Ethan Frome. In both plays we have an active, virile man with a sickly, complaining

[1] Allan Gates Halline, American Plays, The Field God, Page 725.

wife; the arrival of a young relative of the wife; the husband falls in love with the younger woman. In Green's plays we have less stark tragedy and realism than in Ethan Frome because the end of The Field God suggests the hope that Rhoda and Gilchrist may have a happy and honest life together. Ethan Frome has nothing of the kind because the two leading characters have grown to hate each other.

Next after The Field God came The House Of Connelly which was produced in 1931. It shows the gradual disintegration of the old Southern plantation life with the influx of changing conditions. It is a living human study of Paul Green's neighbors; a proud but decaying family of the old South is brought into conflict with the new South. Will Connelly is a gentleman farmer with all that the term implies. He is interested in Patsy Tate, the daughter of a tenant farmer, who has recently moved into the place. Patsy admires Will and asks him to go with the young folks "serenading." He, of course, cannot do that. She succeeds in making herself mistress of Connelly Hall, for she and Will really love each other. They come home from their wedding to find that Geraldine and Evelyn, the two surviving spinsters, have left their home. Will is aghast over this for a moment, but Patsy says:

> "To grow and live and be something in this world you've got to be cruel--you've got to push other things aside. The dead and the proud have to give way to us--to us the living. We have our

[1] Burns Mantle, The Best Plays of 1931-32, Page 177.

life to live and we'll fight for it to the end.
Nothing shall take that away from us."

Paul Green and Eugene O'Neill have something in common in their treatment of simple characters strong in their own nature, but weak when struggling against the eternal frustration of life. O'Neill is more bitter than Green and not so much of a philosopher.

Whether Paul Green's life for twenty-three years on a farm in North Carolina made him a philosopher or not, we do not know. Whatever the reason, his folk drama is human and full of understanding for the people of whom he writes. Sometimes he pays too much attention to realistic portrayals, as in the hog-killing scene in The Field God, but his plays attract attention by the sheer weight of their honesty. His insight into human character is equally clear.

Like Sidney Howard and Laurence Stallings, Green was drawn into the vortex of the World War, where he acquitted himself "sans peur et sans reproche." Entering as a private he came out a second lieutenant. He has not written of his experiences there, however, but has continued to depict elemental men and women. Of this type of folk drama, "genre," as it is sometimes called, he should rank with Owen Davis and with Percy MacKaye as the three leading representatives.

Much interest is being shown in Green's new play, Star in the West, which has just been completed. It is scheduled for presentation in New York sometime in the fall.

SIDNEY HOWARD

Sidney Howard is a product of the West. He was born in Oakland, California in 1891. As Burns Mantle cleverly puts it:

> "He took with the usual reluctance to being educated."[1]

However this may be he was finally graduated from the University of California in 1915. After his graduation it was thought that he showed the incipient stages of tuberculosis, so he was sent to Switzerland for a year. On his return from Europe he decided, as did his illustrious predecessor, Eugene O'Neill, to study drama with Professor Baker at Harvard.

He had barely begun this "English 47" when he departed to join the American air forces in France. On his return from the War he was interested in writing, but not particularly in the drama. This lack of interest was probably due to the fact that he had been living drama in the World War.

He did a series of stories for the International Magazine. Finally he produced a drama with an Italian background called Swords. Miss Claire Eames played the leading part in this play with such success from the romantic point of view that she became the bride of Mr. Howard.

A little later his play, They Knew What They Wanted,

[1] Burns Mantle, American Playwrights of Today, Page 31.

was produced and became justly popular. It was an overnight hit, and in 1924-25 received the Pulitzer prize.

Next his play, The Silver Cord, was produced in 1926 a month after Ned McCobb's Daughter. The latter was a clever enough play but not of the same quality as The Silver Cord, which was a psychological study of motherhood. One cannot read or see the latter play without feeling an active dislike for this type of mother and a sympathy for the unfortunate sons and daughters who are ruled with an iron hand by a despot.

Mrs. Phelps has succeeded in making her two sons entirely dependent upon her. The only reason that David succeeded in marrying was because he was away from his mother and she could not destroy his affection for Christina, his wife. The play opens with their return. Mrs. Phelps does not succeed in keeping her son away from his wife, but, though she manages to break up the engagement of her younger son, she is unable to cope with Christina who is finally triumphant and emancipates David from his mother. Christina's speech toward the end of the last act to Mrs. Phelps gives her modern conception of motherhood clearly and beautifully, in a common sense manner.

[1]

> "I'm practically certain I'm going to love my baby....with as much and as deep respect as I hope my baby will feel for me if I deserve its respect. To love my baby unpossessively; above all, unromantically."

[1] Thomas H. Dickinson, Chief Contemporary Dramatists, Page 113.

Sidney Howard's Alien Corn, included in the 1932-33 volume of Best Plays, was beautifully presented by Katharine Cornell. She played the part of Elsa Brandt, an instructor at a western college. She is a fine musician, but has been obliged to teach because she needs the money. Julian Vardaman, instructor of English at the college, is in love with Elsa and tries to persuade her to continue her affair with him. Conway, a wealthy, fairly young trustee, is interested in Elsa and she in him. He is willing to send her abroad for study on a scholarship. While she is rejoicing over this Conway announces that it cannot be because of a restriction.

He suggests a concert for Elsa. His wife, Muriel, is to sing. She is not a musician, and Elsa antagonizes her. The recital is not a success, and Conway's wife succeeds in getting Elsa discharged from the college. Julian kills himself when he discovers that Elsa and Conway are in love with each other. Elsa then declares she is not going to marry Conway and leaves for Vienna.

With The Late Christopher Bean, an adaptation from the French of René Fauchois, Howard won the unusual distinction of having two plays in the 1932-33 Mantle volume of Best Plays.

As this play opens, Abby, who has been in service with the Haggetts for years, is leaving. A telegram comes announcing that an admirer of the late Christopher Bean, a painter who had boarded with the Haggetts, is calling.

His pictures are now famous. Different people arrive eager to purchase them. When the doctor finds how famous the pictures have become, he tries to find them without success except for one of Abby's. Finally Abby, at the point of leaving, admits that she has several pictures of Christopher Bean's which he gave her. While the doctor and his family are arguing with the art critics about the amount of money due, Abby finally says that she was his wife, is now his widow, and of course owns the paintings.

Dodsworth, from the novel of Sinclair Lewis, was justly popular with Walter Huston in the title role. This story of a tyrannical wife is well known. With it Howard gained admission to the 1933-34 volume of Best Plays.

Sidney Howard's latest play, which is announced by the Theatre Guild, is The Ghost of Yankee Doodle. He tells us that he wrote the Ghost of Yankee Doodle for Miss Barrymore and that she would have made an appearance in it this last Spring had it not been for her radio contracts. Howard tells us that it is a "serious comedy," dealing with a family in St. Paul eighteen months after the beginning of the next world war.

It will be interesting to see this play not only because it is one of Sidney Howard's, but because it will be the first time that Miss Barrymore has been connected with the Theatre Guild.

In striking contrast to O'Neill, Howard shows a willing-

ness to cater to the theatre and its forms. Nevertheless, a study of his plays shows that in characterization he can and does hold the interest. Mrs. Craig, in Craig's Wife, is a loathsome character hated from her first appearance. Mrs. Phelps is equally detestable, all the more so that she acts under the guise of mother love. While O'Neill is experimenting with masks, with characters who speak their innermost thoughts, Howard portrays a character without any of these outside aids.

GEORGE S. KAUFMAN
Marc Connelly
Katherine Dayton

Marc Connelly was born in 1890, and George S. Kaufman in 1889. Both have Western Pennsylvania as their birthplace. Both are newspaper men and have formed a partnership which has given the play-going public some interesting work. They have progressed from the type play to the character study. Naturally, they have drawn upon their experiences as reporters for their dramatic material.

Their first type play was Dulcy, a study of an unbelievably simple and foolish woman with a positive genius for saying the wrong thing. For a contrast to her inanities they portrayed her young brother as a clever and interesting chap. This play, which contains probably the best collection of Bromides in the world, was included in Mantle's Best Plays, 1921-22.

To The Ladies was written in 1922 by these collaborators. The types here are less strongly marked and the two leading characters are natural and plausible. Elsie, the young wife, unlike Dulcy, is a true helpmate, and works hard to make her husband successful and to keep her faith in him. The climax is exceedingly well done. Leonard has not been able to write a speech for the annual banquet himself but assures Elsie that the one he has copied from a book on "Speech Making As It Should Be Done" is most satisfactory. The speaker who

precedes him gives his speech. Elsie sees that her husband is overcome with stage fright, gets up, and, after telling the dinner guests that her husband has been stricken with laryngitis, makes a clever and human little speech that wins the audience and the coveted promotion from Kincaid, the "big boss." Later a jealous co-worker tells Kincaid of this. He is furious and demotes Leonard; Elsie succeeds in getting him reinstated with the cooperation of Mrs. Kincaid.

Helen Hayes was charming in this play and added no little to its success.

Merton of the Movies, based on the novel of the same name by Harry Leon Wilson, was delightful on the stage. It was admitted to the 1922-23 volume of Mantle's Best Plays.

The next collaboration was Beggar On Horseback, a dream play with much satire. It was produced by Winthrop Ames and was a success both from a financial and artistic standpoint. It was included in the 1923-24 volume of Mantle's Best Plays. After its production the Kaufman and Connelly team temporarily disbanded. Mr. Kaufman then collaborated with Edna Ferber in the writing of Minick. It was included in the 1924-25 volume of Mantle's Best Plays. Then Mr. Kaufman wrote his first play alone, The Butter and Egg Man, which was in the 1925-26 volume of Mantle's Best Plays. This was a very popular play which served to show that the innocent Western man who is "taken for a ride" by some sharpers

is sufficiently shrewd to extricate himself from that difficulty. At the same time that the Butter and Egg Man was included in the 1925-26 volume of Mantle's Best Plays, Marc Connelly also had his entry of The Wisdom Tooth, which was also a whimsical comedy. Connelly's work is somewhat more serious than that of Kaufman.

There has been an unfailing demand for Kaufman's work; he had written several popular successes in collaboration when, with Edna Ferber's assistance, The Royal Family appeared in Mantle's 1927-28 volume. This was the story of a family of actors; everyone recognized the Barrymores as the source, though the authors denied the charge. This play was immediately a success.

Marc Connelly won the Pulitzer prize award and inclusion in the 1929-30 volume of Mantle's Best Plays with The Green Pastures. This was a play dealing with the negro's conception of Heaven and the life there. Though at first the theological mind was somewhat overwhelmed by the portrayal of the Sunday School child's understanding of God, reason soon told any dissenters that nothing sacrilegious was intended in the play.

In the same volume June Moon by Ring Lardner and Kaufman was included. In the 1930-31 collection of best plays the comical Once In A Lifetime by Kaufman, and a new helpmate, Moss Hart, won place and great popularity. In the 1931-32 volume Of Thee I Sing by Kaufman and Ryskind with music and lyrics by the Gershwins appeared; this was tremendously popular.

In the 1932-33 volume the Kaufman and Ferber combination was again present with Dinner At Eight.

This was a most successful play, both on the legitimate stage and on the screen. The turn-table stage is employed in it. The scenes are different, showing changes in location. The continuity of the story is not broken, and the interest is sustained.

Oliver Jordan is a sick man, though his wife, Millicent, does not realize this. At the opening of the play she is planning a dinner for Lord and Lady Ferncliffe, who have just come from England. The play centers around this dinner. Jordan hopes to build up his waning fortunes. He urges his wife to invite the Packards, who are common people but useful to him in a business way. The Talbots also are invited. Dr. Talbot has been having an affair with Mrs. Packard. Carlotta Vance, a retired actress, is coming. She tries to get Oliver to buy back the stock which she holds in his company, but he is unable to do so; she needs the money, so she sells to Packard, giving him a controlling interest. Packard's daughter, Paula, is in love with Larry Renault, a down-and-out actor.

These different threads are all broken at the end. Oliver, whose company has failed, is dying of a bad heart. The Packards are on the point of divorce. Larry Renault has committed suicide because of lack of money. Even the affair of the Jordan kitchen has ended in disaster.

Since Marc Connelly's great success with Green Pastures

in 1929-30, he has been relieved of the necessity of writing; he does not appear until 1934-35 with The Farmer Takes A Wife, a story of life on the Erie Canal before the railroad came. This was in collaboration with Frank B. Elser; it was also filmed in the movies.

Merrily We Roll Along was the 1934-35 contribution by Kaufman and Moss Hart.

Kaufman in collaboration with Katherine Dayton wrote First Lady which made the 1935-36 volume of Mantle's Best Plays. Katharine Dayton was born in Philadelphia. She says wittily that she realized after two years this would never do and moved to Glen Ridge, New Jersey. She wrote several short stories which were accepted and then began a series of short skits. Among the best of these was Mrs. Democrat and Mrs. Republican which were played a great deal by patriotic organizations. This collaboration with Mr. Kaufman represents her first experience in playwrighting.

First Lady had for its star, Jane Cowl, who played it delightfully. First Lady, as may be easily guessed is a Washington play dealing with Washington society.

Jane Cowl plays the part of Lucy Wayne. She as her young niece says, "knows what those old senators are saying when they don't even know themselves." Her grandfather was president of the United States. For this reason she feels that her prominent place in Washington society is her due. Lucy's great enemy is Irene Hibbard, whose husband is in the

Supreme Court. Lucy is anxious to have her husband nominated for president. The chief reason for the enmity between the two women is, as one woman declares:

[1]

"Take a woman's husband, that is fair enough.
Everybody expects that, but Irene did worse,
she took Lucy's cook."

In the first act Lucy is having tea. Mrs. Creevey is there from one of the Western States, anxious to hear who is to be nominated for president. Irene rather gets the better of Lucy in conversation and this causes one of Lucy's friends to tell her that Irene holds the Western crowd in her power and may put a certain senator in as president. Lucy conceives the idea of having Mrs. Creevey back Irene's husband, Carter, in order to defeat Irene's candidate, Senator Keane, thus saving the nomination for Stephen. Irene is "fed up" with Carter and tells him that she can endure life with him no longer. Just as the fight is going on, Mrs. Creevey and a newspaper representative come in. She says that they are going to suggest Carter's name as President of the United States. Irene, of course, gives up the idea of leaving him in her hope of being First Lady. Later, Lucy finds out that Stephen might have been nominated if it had not been for her. She determines to retrieve herself and discovers that, due to a technicality, Irene is not really divorced from her first husband; therefore, as Lucy so cheerfully expresses it, she has "been living with Carter Hibbard all these years without being married to him. Of course, why, you would want to do that I

[1] Burns Mantle, Best Plays of 1935-36, Page 165.

haven't any idea." Irene tells her husband and he gives up the nomination. The play ends with every prospect of Stephen being the next president and Lucy the "First Lady."

Kaufman's last collaboration with Moss Hart has produced You Can't Take It With You which has been awarded the Pulitzer prize for the best play of 1936-37. This is a rollicking sort of affair with the author's thesis apparently the propriety of doing the thing you enjoy doing most no matter what results from this Laissez-Faire method. It is practically impossible to give a lucid description of this play because it is so unusual and so confused.

"Grandpa" is a sort of fairy godfather to his relatives. He supports his daughter, who is writing plays because eight years before the play opens a typewriter was delivered by mistake. Her husband, assisted by a postal clerk who "just happened" to settle down with them for several years, is interested in fireworks, and a dull boom is heard at intervals from the cellar.

"Grandpa" has a fondness for snakes and a tank of them are on display. They are perfectly harmless but unexpected and the effect they produce on strangers is startling. His daughter, who is interested in toe dancing, has married a chap whose total earnings for the past year were $27.50. He plays a musical instrument and runs a curious printing press. One daughter who seems more standardized than the others becomes engaged to a wealthy young man. The parents come to the house

for dinner the night before they are expected. Everything is at its worst, including the snakes, and Alice declares that she will not marry "Tony." Eventually everything works out satisfactorily, and "Grandpa" does not even have to pay his income tax, which certainly lends a nice fillip to the ending of the play even if it is improbable!

The newest venture of these two prolific gentlemen, Messrs. Kaufman and Hart, is Hold Your Hats, Boys, the present name for a new musical comedy to be produced this coming autumn. George M. Cohan will star in it. This musical comedy is already being heralded as one of the brightest spots in the new season. It is pleasant to know that Boston will see it first.

GEORGE KELLY

The achievements of the playwrights, George Kelly and Sidney Howard, have been somewhat alike. Each one has fathered five important productions since the first successful play came "on the boards." Each has won the Pulitzer prize award, and each one has been considered for the award a second time.

George Kelly was born in 1890 in a suburb of Philadelphia. He was one of ten children so he had plenty of chance to apply the principles of modern psychology in getting along with one's fellow man. He first wrote sketches, then one-act plays and was featured in vaudeville. Burns Mantle says of him:[1]

> "Always a student of the theatre in its relation to audience psychology it is related of Mr. Kelly that he builded his sketches with ruthless deliberation, allowing so many minutes to stab the auditors' interest, so many minutes to develop the first laugh, so many to approach the first dramatic climax. He had as little use for his own stuff, his early associates tell me, as he would have had for that of a stranger if it failed of the purpose for which it was written."

Kelly's first long play was The Torch Bearers, which was written for the Little Theatre. Many small theatres put on this play, a satire on little theatre groups, exceedingly well done, and as clever and witty as all his plays are.

Kelly had written a sketch on "Poor Aubrey." Taking him

[1] Montrose J. Moses, Representative American Dramas, Page 624.

as the basis of the plot, he produced the Show-Off, which had its first performance in New York in 1924. It was unanimously praised as a comedy of fine character delineation and wonderful dialogue. The play, as its title implies, is really a character sketch of Aubrey Piper. He is a common enough type, a big bluff who talks "blah" all the time. The "leitmotif" is his laugh which he employs when he is doubtful just what to say. This seldom happens to him consciously for he loves his own jokes. His great expression, "sign on the dotted line," occurs again and again. A good description of him is contained in Mr. Fisher's words:

[1]
"Who's in there--Windy?"

"What's he doin', laughin' at some more of them Philadelphia jokes of his?"

The Fisher's are bored to death with Aubrey, who is in love with Amy, their daughter. She returns his love but has great difficulty in persuading her family as to Aubrey's true worth.

At the beginning of the second act, we find they have married against the wishes of Amy's family. She and Aubrey find it difficult to pay their rent and their living expenses. Aubrey has borrowed an automobile to take Amy out to the Automobile Show. He has an accident and has the car taken away from him, unjustly as he would have them believe. While Amy talks to Aubrey about the accident and asks him what they might try to do to him, he replies:

[1] Montrose J. Moses, Representative American Dramas, Page 646.

[1] "Oh, they might try to take away my license."

Amy: "You haven't got a license, have you?"

Aubrey: "No, I neglected to attend to it this year."

Amy's father dies. Clara lets Aubrey and Amy come to live in there house. Aubrey is fined $1000 for his part in the automobile accident, but Mrs. Fisher hands over her insurance money so that Aubrey does not have to go to jail.

Joe, the son, gets $100,000 for his invention. Aubrey claims that he has succeeded in doubling the original offer because he told the prospective purchasers that he was acting in the capacity of business adviser and that he would not allow them to have the invention unless they paid $100,000. A perfect idea of the play may be obtained from the last few closing lines:

[2] Amy: "Aubrey, you're wonderful!"

Aubrey: "A little bit of bluff goes a long way sometimes, Amy."

Mrs. Fisher: "God help me, from now on."

This play shows how well Kelly understands the theatre. He comes to it with the preparation of an actor who knows how to put his lines across, how "to get a laugh," and how to get the effect he wants and still emphasize points in his characterization that he wishes to bring out. His technique is excellent. The following words, written by Montrose J. Moses, best describe him:

1. Montrose J. Moses, Representative American Dramas, Page 646.
2. " " " " " 666.

> "His sense of humor is abundant; his satire is profound; his observation acute; his stage control astounding. With these at his command, Mr. Kelly should do much for American comedy in the near future."[1]

The Show-Off did not receive the Pulitzer prize. It was given instead to Hatcher Hughes' Hell-Bent For Heaven. This created a terrific furor among New York critics. Mr. Kelly was calm in the midst of the general furor and began work on his first serious play.

Kelly's first serious play, Craig's Wife, was produced in 1925; it won the Pulitzer prize for 1925-26. It did not meet with as much popular success as did The Show-Off, but it was equally as good a characterization. This time a woman was presented for the basis of the character study, Mrs. Craig, an appalling creature, who has married simply for a home and regards her husband as of slightly more importance in the make-up of her home than the different articles of furniture of which she is so fond. Kelly succeeds in making her a most unlovable character. In the end she is left alone with her "things" which she loved so much more than any human being.

In 1926 Mr. Kelly wrote the comedy, Daisy Mayme, which showed another delineation of character. His success in this was moderate.

In 1927 he produced Behold The Bridegroom. This play divided his audience into two parts: those who saw the inner significance of it, and those who thought it a merely light

[1] Montrose J. Moses, Representative American Dramas . Page 613.

and trivial affair.

Kelly declares that he has no real method. He just starts with a bit of truth and allows the play to grow around it. However that may be, he has certainly made a contribution to American drama of some splendid character studies. From these so-called type plays he has progressed to more serious representations of human actions.

SIDNEY KINGSLEY

Sidney Kingsley was born in New York in 1906. He is a graduate of Cornell; while there he was prominent in all the dramatic club activities, thus carrying over the start he had from high school. He has done some professional acting, too.

His Men In White won the Pulitzer prize for 1933-34. It was a striking play portraying the struggles of a young doctor to find time enough from the exigencies of his work in the hospital to devote to his fiancee, a wealthy girl with no real idea of the demands of his profession upon him. The young doctor is unable to leave the hospital one night when he was to take his fiancee out to a dance. An affair develops out of his longing for his own girl, which is satisfied by a young nurse who comes to his room for some notes. Later the nurse dies of peritonitis after an operation to destroy her unborn child. Laura by a dramatic coincidence is present in the hospital when an emergency operation is performed on the girl to try to save her life. Laura discovers the circumstances and, of course, breaks the engagement--at least, for the time being.

Sidney Kingsley worked two years on Dead End which won the Pulitzer prize for 1935-36. It is a realistic drama in three acts which portrays the effect of environment on the manners and morals of human beings. The setting of this play was a slum at the back of one of the modern and very expen-

sive apartment houses, in a dead-end New York street.

As the play opens a crowd of young tenement urchins are on the waterfront, and throughout the play keep diving into the water. This is portrayed so realistically that many people at the end of the first act went down to see if by chance there could be water provided for them to jump into. A search disclosed only pails of water which were evidently thrown over the boys as they jumped down. (Stage secrets should not be given away in this manner!) The first of the boys, and the one who plays the lead, if that term may be applied where all are such good actors, is Tommy. He it is who makes fun of Phillip Griswald, a well-dressed little boy who appears from the apartment house with his French governess. Shortly, two men appear. One of them answers to the modern idea of a gangster, well dressed, smooth, thin, nervous, and with a peculiar face as if the skin did not belong to him. This is Baby Face Martin. He has come there to get in touch with his former sweetheart and his mother. "Gimpty," a penniless cripple who used to be in the same gang as Baby Face Martin, but has reformed, recognizes him, but promises not to betray him; this promise "Gimpty" breaks to get the reward offered for Martin, but not until Martin gets in touch with his mother, who comes to see him and repulses him. Martin's girl is also brought to him by one of his gang; he discovers that she is a prostitute, so he dismisses her with a present of money. Tommy tries to use his knife on "Spit," who has

given him away, but his sister insists on his letting the boy go.

The boys get hold of Phillip and take him into a hallway; Tommy relieves Phillip of his watch and all the boys do their share in damaging his clothing. Later Phillip comes back with his father, who succeeds in catching Tommy. To get free Tommy strikes at Mr. Griswald and cuts his wrist.

Tommy decides to give himself up, and his sister, Drena, pleads with Mr. Griswald to free Tommy, but Mr. Griswald declares that Tommy belongs in a reformatory. As the play ends "Gimpty" declares he will use some of his reward money to get the best possible lawyer for Tommy and to see that he has the chance he and Baby Face missed.

Kingsley, still a young man, writes slowly and with great care. It is not too presumptious to hope that he will, with Maxwell Anderson, continue to write problem plays dealing with the present unsettled conditions. There is surely plenty of material for both playwrights!

PERCY MACKAYE

One of Moody's best friends, associated with him in friendship and in their belief in drama dealing with poetry, Percy MacKaye has a quality of his own, probably inherited from Steele MacKaye, his father. Percy MacKaye wished to express dramatic ideas in groups of actors, thus presenting a mass of color and grouping. Through this means he gained achievements but also limited his work to some extent.

Percy MacKaye was born in New York, March 16, 1875. On his father's side he was related to the Scotch, and his love of the unreal and of fantasy may be due to an Irish strain in his blood. He was graduated from Harvard College in 1897. Before he entered that institution he had written plays and songs for his father's dramas. He continued his dramatic work, dealing at times with sociological themes. He had written for ten years before E. H. Sothern accepted The Canterbury Pilgrims.

He has an indirectness of approach which probably keeps his work from greatness. The Canterbury Pilgrims, which was written in 1902, was performed by the Colburn players and has become popular. None of his plays show great characterization; rather they are a mass show with a long list of dramatis personae. When one thinks of them, they appear something like The Great Waltz.

One of MacKaye's most important contribution to the stage is The Scarecrow. This shows the power of the fantastic,

making it an active force. It was suggested by Hawthorne's Feathertop.

Goody Rickby is creating a scarecrow to outwit the crows. Rachael Murton comes to the blacksmith's shop asking about a famous mirror which portrays people as they really are. Rachael buys the glass, cautioning Goody Rickby not to say anything about it. Richard, her lover, comes and accuses Goody of being a swindler and selling stolen goods. Goody is angered by this and says that she will provide a rival who shall win Rachael's heart.

Justice Murton declares that Goody shall hang, but Dickon saves her. Dickon is the illegitimate son of Goody and Justice Murton. He, in league with the devil, succeeds in bringing the scarecrow to life, and calls it or him, Lord Ravensbane. Ravensbane comes with Dickon to call on Rachael. Ravensbane falls in love with her. He discovers that he is a creation of Dickon's, kept alive only by smoking a pipe. He dies, happy in the realization that he has become a man as he sees his reflection in "the glass of truth," a normal image of himself--a man at last!

This Fine, Pretty World also gives us a picture of the life among the poor whites. It does not contain quite the realism or the honesty and attention to small details that we find in Paul Green's work, but it is worthy of consideration.

It is probable that Percy MacKaye will be remembered for his civic pageants. It is his belief that art is necessary

to the well-being of the different sections of humanity. Both he and his father have endeavored to enlarge the art of the theatre. They would endeavor to expand the limited form of drama, such as the comedy of manners, into a massive production which shall portray in pageant form the changes which have taken place during the years.

Montrose J. Moses says in "The American Dramatist:"[1]

> "The MacKayes, both of them, have been the two figures in the American Theatre who have reached out for new vistas, new roads, new expansions of theatre art."

[1] Montrose J. Moses, The American Dramatist, Page 330.

EUGENE O'NEILL

Eugene Gladstone O'Neill was born October 16, 1888, on Broadway, New York. Some of the unrest and blatancy of that famous thoroughfare communicated itself to O'Neill. From early youth he was a strange lad. His father was James O'Neill, an actor of the old type, who was exceptionally good in The Count of Monte Cristo. His was the old type of acting, but it sufficed to give the requisite stage atmosphere which was finally to produce the O'Neill who has without doubt written the most discussed and bitterly disputed plays of any living playwright.

As O'Neill grew up he was particularly interested in the Irish players, and they gave the keynote, simplicity, to some of his plays. O'Neill continually read his favorite three authors, Karl Marx, Kropotkin, and Nietzsche. He was especially fond of Conrad's sea stories, especially the Nigger of the Narcissus.

O'Neill had really very little education, for almost at once he consistently and thoroughly rebelled against authority of any kind. He was always an individualist. He was sent to convent schools for a time, then to Betts Academy, Stamford, Connecticut. Finally he landed at Princeton where he lasted for one year only. He was suspended for throwing a bottle of beer through President Wilson's window.

O'Neill never went back to Princeton but embarked on a

sailing vessel bound for South America. In 1910 and 1911 he worked in Buenos Aires with three different companies, The Westinghouse Electrical Company, The Swift Packing Company, and The Singer Sewing Machine Company. He could not confine himself to detail work and was thoroughly incompetent in all these positions. Wearied of office work, he tried mule tending on a cattle boat. Neither he nor the mules cared for it. After more sea experiences, he tried reporting on the New London, Connecticut, Telegraph. All of these different trips and the lack of proper living conditions brought about a mild attack of tuberculosis. While recovering from this he wrote most of his sea plays; of these The Fairy Ape and Bound East for Cardiff are probably the best known. Many of his early one-act plays were "apprentice work" while he was trying to "get into his stride."

In 1914 he was recommended for Professor Baker's class at Harvard by Clayton Hamilton; during the entire time he attended, he found fault with every rule for dramatic technique that Professor Baker introduced. From Harvard he went to live in Greenwich Village for a time, gathering material from the different races there represented. He was interested in the Wharf Theatre; in the summer of 1916 he went to Provincetown. The Provincetown players produced his Bound East for Cardiff.

In Bound East for Cardiff, he drew largely on his sea experiences. Here he created the American sailor "Yank" who has been fatally injured and is comforted by his friend,

Driscoll, an Irishman who stays with him until the end comes. O'Neill's mastery of the drama is shown in the touching poignancy of the last act.

Another of his fine one-act plays is Ile. This play shows the decisive character of the captain of a whaling vessel and the iron determination which makes him stand firm against his wife's wishes and the mutiny among the sailors. The end of the play shows the effect of continuous below-zero weather on human nature. Owen Davis in Icebound does something similar although the outcome is not so serious. O'Neill has shown us here a very common life tragedy. So many times the goal pursued is reached too late.

O'Neill emerged from his apprenticeship with the Provincetown Players in 1920, when Beyond The Horizon was produced on Broadway. It brought him the Pulitzer Prize for 1920-21 and admission to Mantle's Best Plays for the year.

This play is a study of the character of two brothers, one a rather frail boy, Robert, always interested in beauty outside his narrow sphere, and in the hope of knowing and seeing lovely things. Both brothers are in love with Ruth Atkins; Ruth finally chooses Robert and Andy goes away. Robert is a failure and life goes on most unhappily for him and Ruth, who realizes she really loved Andy. Andy finally comes back to learn that Ruth had told "Rob" of her love for Andy. "Rob's" consequent suffering has brought about his serious illness; he now learns of his approaching death. He is not downcast but

full of hope when he says:
[1]

"You mustn't feel sorry for me. Don't you see
I'm happy at last--free--free--freed from
the farm--free to wander on and on--eternally!
Look! Isn't it beautiful beyond the hills?
I can hear the old voices calling me to come--
and this time I'm going! It isn't the end.
It's a free beginning--the start of my voyage!
I've won to my trip--the right of release--
beyond the horizon!"

The next year O'Neill produced The Emperor Jones, a departure from the old dramatic form; here he made use of eight scenes instead of acts and used monologue almost entirely.

Brutus Jones, a crafty but simple colored man, had run away from America, where he had committed murder, to the West Indies. There he had gained a fortune from an "Empire" which he had established. He is finally suspected by his subjects; guessing this, he plans to escape through the forest. The theme song of the play, the beating of tom-toms by the natives, arouses his own superstition, and as he goes through the forest, he sees in his imagination the distorted figures of his past life. He does not come out on the other side as he had expected, but, traveling in a circle, makes his exit where he had entered. There the natives are waiting to shoot him with a silver bullet, because they believe it possesses a fatal charm.

The Emperor Jones was included in the 1920-21 volume of Mantle's Best Plays.

[1] Arthur Hobson Quinn, Representative American Plays, Page 1012.

So many of O'Neill's plays have been produced in other countries that it is not strange there should arise in some cases a lack of understanding of what the playwright was trying to do. In Quinn's, A History of The American Drama, the author says that in the French production of The Emperor Jones the producer sent a number of negroes across the stage between the scenes under the impression that he was portraying the chase after the Emperor. O'Neill's most tragic element in the play is the fact that the negroes do not move from their accustomed places but by means of the tom-tom lure the Emperor back to the place where he entered the forest--a "leitmotif" perhaps never used more effectively. At no time in the play was the Emperor pursued by anything more solid than the phantoms of his imagination.

The material for Anna Christie, produced in 1921, was gathered from the contacts he made in "Jimmy the Priest's" bar room on the waterfront. What an interesting, though rather improbable tale this is of the regeneration of a prostitute through love! Theatrical as it was, it won the 1921-22 Pulitzer Prize; Mantle, too, entered it in the corresponding volume of Best Plays.

Desire Under The Elms, 1924, aroused much controversy, but was included in the 1924-25 volume of Best Plays. The story, not a pretty one, is as follows:

Ephraim Cabot, aged seventy-six, brings a third wife, Abbie Putman, to his farm, where he has made his three sons

work like slaves. The two oldest leave for California after selling out their inheritance to their younger half-brother, Eben. Eben has discovered and stolen his father's hoard of gold. Abbie sees that her only way of making the inheritance hers is to have an heir, so she persuades Eben to be the father of her child. At the party in honor of this child, Eben learns that she has had the baby in order to cheat him of his inheritance. Abby, however, really loves Eben, and to persuade him of this she kills the child.

With O'Neill's next play, The Great God Brown, produced in 1926, symbolism came into its own. The play is a tragedy of emotion. There are four central characters, Dion Anthony, the artist, Billy Brown, a successful architect and business man, Margaret, Dion's wife, whom Billy has always loved, and Cybel:

> [1] "Cyble is an incarnation of Cybele, the Earth Mother doomed to segregation as a pariah in a world of unnatural laws but patronized by her segregators who are thus themselves the first victims of their laws."

Throughout the play masks are used so that the real self is concealed. Here O'Neill symbolizes man's dissatisfaction with himself and his desire for another life and identity. Pirandello's Six Characters In Search Of An Author is perhaps the nearest approach to this study of confused identity. The ending of The Great God Brown is noteworthy. This play was included in the 1925-26 volume of Mantle's Best Plays.

[1] Allan Gates Halline, American Plays, Page 655.

O'Neill has certainly endeavored not to leave any doubt about his plays. He is willing to explain the origin at all times, and likewise tell his thesis and his mode of procedure. He has given notes on his interpretation of this drama in American Plays, Allan Gates Halline, Page 655. They are too long to include here.

Marco Millions, 1927, was more popular than The Great God Brown, but less remarkable. Like The Great God Brown, Lazarus Laughed is full of symbolism. Then Strange Interlude won the Pulitzer Prize in 1927-28. This play met with widespread discussion and criticism--so much in fact that several cities, Boston included, refused to allow it to be produced. It concerns the life of an erotic woman whose love instinct has been frustrated by the death of her lover in war before their love had reached fulfilment. Here O'Neill had his characters speak their inmost thoughts and feelings simultaneously with the utterances of their "dressed-up" selves. This again was a new departure.

In 1931 Mourning Becomes Electra appeared and was in that year included in Burns Mantle's volume of Best Plays. This drama is based on Greek tragedy, but it is certainly filled to the brim with good old-fashioned melodrama.

Robert C. Benchley says in a criticism of this play that the inspiration for it came from O'Neill's father. I cannot resist quoting a few lines from his article in The New Yorker,

November 7, 1931.

> "In the midst of the acclaim with which Eugene O'Neill is being so justly hailed for his latest and most gigantic tour de force, Mourning Becomes Electra, and in the confusion of cross-references to the Greek Dramatists from whom he derived his grim and overpowering story, are we not forgetting one very important source of his inspiration, without which he might perhaps have been just a builder of word-mountains? Was there not standing in the wings of the Guild Theatre, on that momentous night, the ghost of an old actor in a white wig, with drawn sword, who looked on proudly as the drama unfolded itself, scene by scene, and who murmered with perhaps just the suggestion of a chuckle, "That's good, son! Give 'em the old Theatre!" The actor I refer to needs no introduction to the older boys and girls here tonight--Mr. James O'Neill, "The Count of Monte Cristo" and the father of the present hero."

For cool sheer thrills there is nothing like this play. We have here a mother reproached by her daughter for adultery, the mother plotting the murder of her husband, the poisoning of her husband, the spying on the mother by her children, the murder of their mother's lover by these same children, and the suicide of the mother and brother. No one who has seen it can soon forget the feeling of cold shivers up and down the spine, when Alice Brady, the modern Electra, places herself at the entrance to the house and declares she will punish herself. She says, "gloating over the years of self-torture":

> [1] "Living alone here with the dead is a worse act of justice than death or prison! I'll never go out or see anyone! I'll have the shutters nailed closed so no sunlight can ever get in. I'll live alone with the dead, and keep their secrets, and let them hound me, until the curse is paid out and the last Mannon is let die!"

[1] Eugene O'Neill, Mourning Becomes Electra, Page 256.

This was her manner of committing suicide. None of the characters in Mourning Becomes Electra are truly great when compared with Hamlet. The circumstances are there, the tragic happenings occur, but the words in which these are clothed "let one down" because no one can produce the poetry that the theme demands.

Ah, Wilderness! was produced in 1933 and was included in the 1933-34 edition of Mantle's Best Plays. Ah, Wilderness! is a fairly good play something of the type of Abie's Irish Rose. Possibly this is an exaggeration, but to anyone who has followed, read, and studied almost all of O'Neill's plays, Ah, Wilderness! is but a conventional, old-fashioned comedy. It lacks the vital fire that is O'Neill--his determination to take his characters and mould them as he wishes.

In Ah, Wilderness! it may be understood that he has willingly given up the opportunity to write a great play and has decided to let the characters do what they like and pursue their own way. They could not go far were it not for the magnificent playing of George M. Cohan as "Nat Miller." In this play O'Neill has given up some of the bitterness that made him produce his Hairy Ape.

One of his later plays, Days Without End, has been severely criticized. Critics of the Roman Catholic faith quickly declared it a confession of O'Neill's faith and his conversion. O'Neill declares himself a moralist and a mystic. He has a strong feeling toward sin and its effects upon

human nature. (One critic, New York, of course, has said the play should be called "Nights Without End.") The "Deus ex Machina" ending is entirely unworthy of O'Neill; it drags the play far below Mourning Becomes Electra, Strange Interlude, The Hairy Ape, and Desire Under The Elms.

O'Neill's use of material with spiritual significance to end the play should not blind the audience to the fact that the play is dull. There is no uplift from the miracle at the end. It is more like the bargain a sick man makes with God that if he is allowed to live, he will reform. The two men who play the leading character, John Loving, really confuse the issue. It would be better if one man could play both parts, enacting the double personality by the acting.

O'Neill has probably never considered a drama in the light of the producer or has thought of the money he might make from a production. His plays are often too long and cumbersome, to say nothing of the difficulty of comprehending their meaning. When O'Neill writes his sea plays he knows what he is talking about. When he writes such plays as The Great God Brown or even Strange Interlude he is dealing with a philosophy that he does not truly comprehend. In The Strange Interlude he has the characters speak their inmost thoughts. Particularly in The Great God Brown, he does not make the underlying thought clear. After a discussion of the play and what he intended to show by the different masks and their representations, it is still vague and somewhat in-

comprehensible.

O'Neill is a fine playwright, but he is not sufficiently endowed with the qualities of great intelligence and great understanding to be a truly great dramatist. Nor can his language equal Maxwell Anderson's blank verse. He is neither a prophet nor one too sure of himself. Many of his plays show his groping to understand, and his shortcomings in reasoning. Through all his plays runs the undercurrent of frustration, either through life itself or through reactions with his fellowmen.

O'Neill thinks of life as a whole. He believes that nothing matters if you view life steadily and fearlessly. The incidents, which at the time seem cruel, harsh, and disintegrating in their influence upon life, at the end of O'Neill's philosophy fit into a pattern like the tiny squares in a mosaic floor.

Montrose J. Moses, in The American Dramatist, says of O'Neill:

> [1] "O'Neill is the sole example, in American Drama of the present, of the man who has been utterly divorced from the influences that have governed the theatre of Broadway for three decades. He has never looked toward the old manager for his existence as a dramatist, but has pursued his own way, has given vent to his own persoanl feeling, has drawn from his own narrow and sharp experience, not caring whether or not the theatre accepted him. He has therefore wrung from a rather surprised following a loyalty that has no counterpart in the history of the American Drama."

[1] Montrose J. Moses, The American Dramatist, Page 426.

In an interview in the Philadelphia Public Ledger O'Neill says:

> "I intend to use whatever I can make my own, to write about anything under the sun in any manner that fits or can be invented to fit the subject... It is just life that interests me as a thing in itself."

At the present time he is the leading representative of the creative spirit. He has expressed at different times the hatred of a misanthrope, ill treated by life, toward his fellow men; at another the poet, and at still another, if not too presumptious a statement, the man who has written a "Best Seller." He is the one playwright who writes in any form he likes, regardless of that great Public of which so many writers stand in awe. He has been accused of being a socialist, almost of being a devil. Of course, neither of these characterizations is correct. A friend of the writer who met him in Bermuda--actually did meet him, for it is understood he is almost as difficult to "contact" as the dodo--described him as interesting, kindly, erratic, and absolutely untrammelled by any dramatic form or failing.

Much is heard of O'Neill's poverty and, in whispers, of his predilection for liquor. Booth Tarkington has told us there are two things that will be believed of any man--one of these is that he drinks. O'Neill suffers from this sweeping appraisal. Yet his friends, while feeling a real admiration for his talent, encouraged his alleged wildness, his revolt against all social barriers. They declared him a

dramatist of the socialistic type who had dared to throw off all the understood forms of dramatic expression.

O'Neill concerns himself with the problem of the individual. None of his characters are, as in Ibsen's "Ghosts," victims of inheritance, but are chosen from those in revolt against their fellowmen. In the Hairy Ape he chose a workman who is embittered by the narrow confines of his work and the inability to meet his fellowmen on equal terms.

O'Neill is now working on a project--no other word can be used--which in its tremendous scope would stun the lesser mind. He is writing seven full-length plays, each more or less related to the others. These new plays, according to what we are told about them will merge one with another and will follow his own technique. A propos of this same technique Dickinson says:

> [1] "O'Neill was the first playwright to be a free agent in the theatre. He is the playwright unbound. And O'Neill is the first playwright of the new science."

[1] Thomas H. Dickinson, Playwrights Of The New American Theatre.

ELMER RICE

Elmer Rice was born in New York in 1892 and has continued to live near that city, which is unusual, for people born in New York rarely stay there. He studied for business but found he had no qualities in his make-up for that particular branch of human endeavor; so he switched over into law and succeeded in passing the bar examinations, though we are given to understand that he loathed every bit of time he spent in it.

It is interesting to note that his first play, On Trial, which was included in the first volume of Burns Mantle's Best Plays, 1909-1919, was produced under the name of Elmer Reizenstein. Evidently, he changed his name simultaneously with the changes he brought about in dramatic form of expression.

On Trial, as its title implies, was a presentation of a murder trial. As the different witnesses are called to testify, the scene is blacked out and their testimony is acted upon the stage. The staging for this play was new at the time, though it has since been improved to some extent. The court scenes were placed on revolving platforms so that they could be moved quickly out of sight after they had been presented. The success of this play was instantaneous and quite surprising to the author.

Later this same method of representation was employed by Kaufman and Ferber in their Dinner at Eight, and it also

gave numerous authors and their producers courage to try unusual and new forms of dramatic art.

Later Rice wrote two or three other plays which met with little success and were not sufficiently outstanding from a literary point of view to demand attention.

In 1922 his Adding Machine appeared. This did not win the Pulitzer prize nor did it make the volume of Mantle's Best Plays, but it is of importance because it was the first expressionist drama with a native background and native authorship.

Rice is as much an exponent of this new art of expressionism as is O'Neill. The new expressionist drama pays little attention to details and still less to the development of character. It takes the most intense moment in any life rather than developing a character. In the expressionistic plays there is a succession of scenes rather than the usual dramatic form of division into acts.

There are seven scenes in the Adding Machine; these take place in a bedroom, an office, a living room, a place of justice, a graveyard, a pleasant place, and another office. The characters are of so little importance that they are not given names but are numbered one, two, three, four, five, and six. The leading character is named Mr. Zero. The whole of the first scene is a monologue which take place between a married couple. Of course, it is the woman who speaks!

In the second scene Mr. Zero and Daisy Diana Dorothea

Devore are working together in a department store office. As in O'Neill's Strange Interlude, each speaks his own thoughts unheard by the other. Zero has been working over these figures for twenty-five years without any advance. The boss comes in as Zero is about to leave. He does not even know Zero's name. A good illustration of the ancient hypocheme occurs here because Zero thinks that the boss has come to give him the long-expected raise. His joy is of short duration, because the boss tells Zero that he has decided to install adding machines and that he will have no further use for Zero. Here the expressionistic use of noises of various kinds begins. There is the sound of music, soft at first and becoming louder and louder with the addition of other sounds until finally it all ends in a terrific peal of thunder. Zero has killed his boss!

Zero is arrested, tried, and put to death. The most gruesome scene is in the graveyard, when Zero comes up from his grave and talks about his crime with Shrdlu, a man who had killed his mother. This scene is expressionism carried to the nth degree.

In scene six Zero appears and recognizes Shrdlu, who tells him they are in the Elysian Fields. Soon Daisy appears, happy that she has at last overtaken Zero. She had killed herself soon after he was put to death. At her request, they sit down to "talk things over," and she tells him of her love for him and her happiness at their being reunited. She wishes to remain, but Zero declares it is not respectable when Shrdlu

tells him of the people there:[1]

> "All these people here are so strange, so unlike the good people I've known. They seem to think of nothing but enjoyment or of wasting their time in profitless occupations. Some paint pictures from morning until night, or carve blocks of stone. Others write songs or put words together, day in and day out. Still others do nothing but lie under the trees and look at the sky...And forever they are telling stories and laughing and singing and drinking and dancing."

Zero leaves Daisy in search of respectability. He is put to work on an adding machine and remains there twenty-five years; he is perfectly happy doing the mechanical work to which he is accustomed, but overwhelmed when told he has to go back on earth again, and will finally run a gigantic machine in a mine. He is a machine product, a slave with a mind too small to grasp the finer things of life.

The two marked tendencies of this type of play are the discussion of sex in its abnormal phases and satire and irony. In The Adding Machine the first tendency is marked in the first part of the play; in the second part, particularly in the ending, the satire and the irony of this machine age is well brought out.

After this play the next one of importance was Street Scene, which won the Pulitzer prize for 1928-29. This was also a study of conditions among the poor; it employs the new technique.

A good idea of the modesty of this author can be gathered from his reply when Burns Mantle insists on the personal touch.[1]

> "I am married," says he: "I have red hair, two children, a Corona typewriter and some worthless oil stock."

[1] Burns Mantle, American Playwrights Of Today.

ROBERT E. SHERWOOD

Robert E. Sherwood is a native of New Rochelle, New York. He was born in 1896. He attended Harvard University, but left to go to war in 1918 and on his return became a magazine editor and a reviewer of motion pictures.

His first play which won him considerable fame and a place in the 1926-27 volume of Mantle's Best Plays was The Road To Rome which was delightfully played with Jane Cowl and Philip Merrivale in the leading parts. This clever piece of work endeavored to show why Hannibal turned back from the gates of Rome after he had marched three thousand miles to destroy the city.

Sherwood's Reunion In Vienna brough him into the 1931-32 book of Mantle's Best Plays. This is a witty, slightly satirical play. It was superbly played by the Lunt and Fontanne combination.

The play opens in the drawing room in the house of Dr. Anton Krug in Vienna. Elena, his wife, is busily checking the laundry when the Doctor interrupts her. He is a specialist in psychoanalysis and has brought two of his students, Emil Loibner and Ilse Hinrich, to meet Elena, who is delighted to hear that they are enjoying their work with Anton. Dr. King feels that the visitors would be most interested in hearing from Elena something about the Hapsburgs. Ilse has had an experience with one who was driving a taxi that she

had hired. When the taxi driver discovered that she was looking at him, he stopped the taxi, got in with her, introducing himself as the Archduke Rudolf Maximilian Von Hapsburg, and started to kiss her passionately.

Recital of this tale is interrupted by the arrival of several of Elena's old friends, who declare that they are going to have a party at the Hotel Lucher that night and wish her to come. They are expecting Rudolf to make an attempt to get back into Austria. Anton urges Elena to go in order that she may meet Rudolf and thus destroy her memory of him, which has stood between her and Anton since their marriage.

The second act opens in the sitting room of the former Imperial Suite of the Lucher Hotel where the guests have assembled. Rudolf not only appears but makes passionate love to Elena. She resists for a time; finally she makes Rudolf believe that she has yielded and they go into the bedroom together. Frau Lucher, who is giving the party, rushes in with the information that the police have come and are about to search the hotel. In the midst of the excitement Rudolf enters and declares that Elena has escaped him and gone home. He makes for the door, declaring he will go to her house to find her.

The third act is again in the Krug home. At Elena's entrance Anton endeavors to question her, but she answers him briefly and goes into her room. His father discovers that Elena has forgotten her dress! A moment later Rudolf enters.

Anton and Rudolf discuss the situation. Anton tells Rudolf that he has been "something of a presence" since his marriage with Elena. He hopes that Rudolph's visit will kill that memory.

The police are closing in on Rudolf and it is suggested that Anton go to the prefect of police to obtain a permit so that Rudolf may leave Austria. Anton says that he will leave Elena and Rudolf together for the night while he goes to get the permit. Rudolf has given up the idea of wooing Elena, when she discovers a rent in his coat and starts to mend it. After a moment she follows him into the bedroom.

The next morning Rudolf and Elena are radiant. When Anton returns he sees what has happened; the play ends quietly with a bit of discussion--a trait of psychoanalysts.

Sherwood's Petrified Forest was included in the 1934-35 volume of Mantle's Best Plays. The Petrified Forest has for its setting the Black Mesa Filling Station and Bar-B-Q lunch-room on the Arizona desert. At the rise of the curtain "Gramp" Maple is listening to the conversation of two patrons; "Gabby" Maple, his young and pretty granddaughter, enters. She, too, is interested in the arguments on communism.

There is a report that the bandit, Duke Mantee, is coming that way. He does appear, but before his arrival Alan Squier enters. He announces that he has been "thumbing" his way West and has stopped in for a sandwich. He and "Gabby" talk together and he is interested in her desire to go to

France, to which country her mother has returned because she was unable to endure the lonely desert life with her American soldier-husband. "Gabby" falls in love with Alan and suggest that they go to France. Mantee arrives and Alan and he become great friends. Alan makes over his insurance policy to "Gabby" and begs Duke to kill him so that the girl may have it and leave the desert. The play ends with the escape of Duke after shooting Alan.

Robert Sherwood made the Burns Mantle 1935-36 volume of Best Plays with Idiot's Delight, which made a splendid vehicle for those two loved stars, Lunt and Fontanne. Idiot's Delight is a play showing the horrors and the uselessness of war. It is not a particularly strong play but it is interesting. The playwright's thesis is that war is a ghastly, cruel affair, a crime against reason and solely the product of greed on the part of the few whom it benefits. The propaganda part of the play is extremely good, but even such fine actors as Lunt and Fontanne cannot redeem the coarseness of the conversation and the life of the characters.

The play ends with the "hoofer," Harry Van, and Irene playing and singing Onward, Christian Soldiers in the midst of an air raid with the inference that they will be killed.

Irene:

[1] "Do you realize that the whole world has gone to war?"

Harry:

"I realize it but don't ask me why, because I haven't stopped trying to figure it out."

[1] Burns Mantle, The Best Plays of 1935-36, Page 99.

Irene:

> "I know why it is. It is just for the purpose of killing us, because we are the little people--and for us the dullest weapons are the most merciful."

The author has written a postscript in the printed version of his play in which he says:[1]

> "Those who shrug and say 'War is inevitable,' are false prophets. I believe that the world is populated largely by decent people, and decent people don't want war. They fight and die, to be sure--but that is because they have been deluded by their exploiters, who are members of the indecent minority."
>
> "I believe that a sufficient number of people are aware of the persistent validity of the Sermon on the Mount, and they remember that, between 1914 and 1918, 12,000,000 men died in violence to make safe for democracy the world which we see about us today. That awareness and remembrance can be strong enough to resist the forces which would drive us back into the confusion and the darkness and the filth of no man's land..."

This quotation shows that Sherwood in The Road to Rome and Idiot's Delight and Stallings in What Price Glory? were alike embittered by the cruelty and uselessness of war and were both actuated by the same impulse, namely, to give a portrayal of it stripped of its trappings of glory and honor.

Sherwood's one and only adaptation, of Jacques Deval's Tovarich, continues in farce to depict the effects of the Russian revolution on two representatives of White Russia. Sherwood himself says he cannot understand the tremendous popularity of Tovarich. Can it be due, he inquires, to the public's curiosity over the meaning of the title? Whatever the reason, the clever dialogue, the unusual ending for a somewhat well-worn theme. and the freedom from old theatre conventions are Sherwood at his best.

1 Robert E. Sherwood, Idiot's Delight.

LAURENCE STALLINGS

Laurence Stallings was born in 1894 at Macon, Georgia. His education culminated in a B.A. degree from Wake Forest, North Carolina, College in 1915. He was a reporter for a time; then he saw action in the World War from 1917-18. Here he underwent the experiences which were later to bear fruit in the play, What Price Glory?, which he wrote in collaboration with Maxwell Anderson.

Alexander Woollcott says that Mr. Stallings supplied the color for this play because he was in the war and knew its tragedies, its terrible weaknesses, its folly, and its cruelty. Woollcott goes on to remark in his inimitable way:

[1] "What Price Glory? was as heavily pitted as a small pox victim with oaths and was to many who saw the play as obnoxious."

The story is told of two sweet old ladies who came out from a matinee weeping; one said to the other:

"Where in Hell is the car?"

The other replied:

"I don't know, but we'll look for it as soon as I put my damn handkerchief away."

While doubtless untrue, this incident serves well to show what an impression the play made on its beholders. It was stark realism at its highest point and struck a new note in drama.

Since this play the two collaborators have written The Buccaneer and First Flight, both in 1925. These were unsuccess-

[1] New York Evening Sun

ful. In 1928 he wrote Rainbow with Hammerstein. He has also done some film work, one of the most famous of his moving pictures being The Big Parade.

Time will show whether he will produce another play which shall have the tragic interest of What Price Glory?.

LULA VOLLMER

Lula Vollmer belongs to the group of folk dramatists of which Davis, Green, and MacKaye are the leading representatives. She was born in a lumber camp called Keyser, in North Carolina. Her father was a lumber man; because of this she led almost as itinerant a life as the daughter of a Methodist minister. She was christened Louisa Smith Vollmer, but evidently the name did not please her, for she soon changed it to Lula.

While in boarding school and in the Normal and Collegiate Institute at Asheville, North Carolina, she devoted the time she should have put on her regular classes to writing stories. She also wrote several short plays which were produced at school. It is said that for her first comedy she drew on members of the faculty for characters. This was tremendously successful from the students' point of view.

In 1918 she came to New York and there, inspired by the stories from the South about the reactions of the mountain folk to the draft for the war, she wrote the play, Sun-Up, which was produced in 1923. This native drama has not been exploited very much. She has a sincere understanding and a sympathetic treatment for the mountaineers of the South. Sun-Up takes its place with Icebound, This Fine Pretty World, and The Field God as a type of folk drama. She shows in it the sentiment of the mountaineers about the War--their feeling that it had nothing to do with them and there was no reason

for their fighting someone else's battle.

The "Widow Cagle's" husband was killed by "the law" while protecting his still. This has made her bitter against the Government. She does not know anything about the war until the sheriff tells her and says that a law has been passed obliging every man between twenty-one and thirty-one to register. Mrs. Cagle does not wish her son, Rufe, to go. She does not see the law's point of view:

[1]

> "What right has the Guv'ment to tell us mountain folks w ut to do or whut not to do? Air we beholdin' to them? Air they doin' anything fer us but runnin' up the prices of bread and meat till hit's all we kin do to keep body and soul together!"

Rufe declares that his father was "a doin' whut the Government told them not to do. They wuz a breakin' the law." He does register and is called to the war.

A deserter comes to the Widow's cabin and asks her to hide him. She is willing to do this and protects him until the sheriff tells her that she is hiding the son of the man who has murdered her husband. She calls the stranger out and is going to kill him but hears the voice of her dead son, telling her to put away hatred and establish love in its place. There is a great deal of mountain superstition; for that reason the ending is not so illogical and improbable as it might be, though it is certainly melodramatic. Mrs. Cagle's final words are effective:

[2]

> "I heard ye, Rufe. I never knowed nothin' about lovin' anything but ye--tell ye showed me hit's

[1] S. M. Tucker, Modern American and British Plays, Page 682.
[2] " " " " " " " 712.

> lovin' them all that counts. Hit wuz sundown when ye left me, son...But it's sun-up now, and I'm a knowin' God Almighty is a takin' keer of ye, Rufe."

Miss Vollmer has written after Sun-Up, the Shame Woman, which is another tragedy of the North Carolina mountains. Liez Burns is a woman who has endured all her life the stigma of an early affair which she had with Craig Anson, a neighbor. She fears that Lily, her adopted daughter, is seeing Anson too often. In order to save Lily she tells her the story of her own life. The warning is too late for Lily dies. Liez kills Anson. At the trial she will not reveal the reason for her crime and goes silently to the gallows.

The next plays were The Dunce Boy and Trigger.

It is probable that Miss Vollmer will have another play on Broadway this next season. It is rumored that Rowland Stebbins has decided to buy her as yet unnamed farce which he has held for some time. The story is laid in a country hotel willed to one of the characters. From what one can hear of the play it is probably in a lighter vein than some of her other work.

It is to be hoped that Miss Vollmer goes on with this "Sun-Up" type of play; she is better fitted for it because of her knowledge of conditions in the South and may yet produce more successful dramas of this nature.

COMPREHENSIVE DIGEST

The modern student of the drama, endeavoring to cover the work of as many dramatists as possible within a somewhat limited circle, finds himself faced with the difficult task of separating the wheat from the chaff. It is as difficult for one person to endeavor to decide which playwrights merit particular attention and which may be eliminated as it is for a jury to weigh right and wrong, though of course not nearly so dangerous. On the one hand is an outstanding writer, like O'Neill; on the other, several scattered writers who have perhaps only one play to their credit. Of two such extremes one must speak separately in order to clear the way for the others.

It must not be forgotten, when O'Neill is mentioned, that he is almost the only American dramatist who has any standing abroad, though his plays are sometimes interpreted in a different manner than he had planned. Not the least of O'Neill's accomplishments is this fact--that Europe through his productions has become aware that there is a "genus homo," the American dramatist. O'Neill's bitterness and revolt give him a different viewpoint of life from any other American playwright. He chooses to give consideration to the tragedy of humanity and the life of "quiet desperation" which every person leads--though the adjective "quiet" does not apply to the life of most of his characters.

Montrose J. Moses says in his The American Dramatist:[1]

> "It is this highly individualistic attitude on the part of O'Neill which has won for him a recognition abroad. In that respect he is doing now what Whitman and Poe did before him. He is adding a new note to American letters and carrying it beyond national boundaries. Of all our playwrights, O'Neill is to-day best known in England, France, Germany, and Russia."

Barrett H. Clark sums up O'Neill's character when he says:[2]

> "He has become a passion incarnate struggling to discover the best medium for the expression of his torments and exaltations. His achievements have never measured up to his aims, but then whose have?"

At the other extreme is a group of some of the newer dramatists, with one or two successes to their credit, who have not previously been mentioned.

Lillian Hellman is a young New Yorker who made her first appearance in the 1934-35 book of Mantle's Best Plays. She was not included in the foregoing list because she has only one play to her credit, though she has appeared in many magazines and was co-author of one play before The Children's Hour, a farce called Dear Queen. The Children's Hour had for its source "The Great Drumsheugh Case," a famous trial in the courts of Scotland. It has to do with a spoiled "enfant terrible" who ruins the lives of two school teachers because they venture to discipline her. The truth is discovered too late to help one of the girls who, unable to endure the onus of adverse public opinion, commits suicide. Miss Hellman's

[1] Montrose J. Moses, The American Dramatist, Page 429.

[2] Barrett H. Clark, Eugene O'Neill, Page 197.

second offering is a confused, dismal drama of a strike in the middle-west town called Days To Come; this was soon withdrawn.

Clifford Odets, a Philadelphian by birth, a New Yorker by adoption, left the Theatre Guild to form the Group Theatre, aided by the help and advice of the Guild. His first full-length play is Awake and Sing; this was preceded by Waiting for Lefty and Till the Day I Die, both one-act plays. These three were produced within a few weeks of each other. Awake and Sing is a propaganda play dealing with the problems of a Jewish family. Mr. Odets is regarded as a promising dramatist who may do big things in the future if not overcome by the desire to reform capitalism.

John Wexley, born and educated in New York, now but a bit over thirty, appeared in the 1933-34 volume of Mantle's Best Plays with They Shall Not Die, a powerful drama of the trial of nine colored boys in Alabama. His The Last Mile is a brief for prison reform similar to Dead End.

The plays thus far considered are not written merely to amuse. Were that the case, they might center about the denouement or climax of fun for fun's sake. Of course few are without a vein of humor, but the real criterion is how do they grip the beholder? Whether their themes touch a problem of the inner life or the relation of the individual to society or whether they do no more than to photograph our immediate world, with ourselves a part, the play must give us an emotion

of some kind--not without a twinge, perhaps--that is self-revealing and that motivates to higher action.

What "grip" then, has Zoe Akins, for instance, that will give her footing in American drama? None, if we base our decision on the plea for motherhood under whatever guise, as in the play falsely entitled The Old Maid. It has not, for all its display of self-sacrifice, a true knowledge of motherhood, for maternity under false colors is untrue to life and cannot be portrayed as such. But if the play sounds out a note of warning, it touches everyone who has ever felt temptation. Take for example the affair of young Dr. Ferguson and the nurse in Kingsley's Men In White, or "the shame woman" in Lula Vollmer's play by that name, or the mother with a secret in the Tomorrow and Tomorrow of Philip Barry.

If intended crime instead of human passion is the pivot on which the play turns, as in Lula Vollmer's Sun-Up, the victory over intent to kill is a reaction of relief on the part of the audience. If on the other hand, the blow is struck, as in O'Neill's Desire Under The Elms, when the child is killed, the reaction is one of accusation. Greed has crushed love, as each one has seen for himself. This clash of two forces appears on a larger scale when transferred to a great historical crisis, as in the scene between the queen and Essex in Anderson's Elizabeth The Queen. Power and love are face to face. Elizabeth must guard her power and love must die. Essex makes the decision for her and for himself:

[1]
"It's better for me as it is
Than that I should live and batten my fame and fortune
On the woman I love. I've thought of it all. It's better
To die young and unblemished than to live long and rule
And rule not well."

Or take the final scene between Elizabeth and her cousin in Mary Of Scotland, where power allows no opponent. The stately craftiness of Elizabeth and her false justice deceive no one in this struggle between two queens--although Mary clinches Elizabeth's determination to ruin her:

[2]
"I have been
A woman, and I have loved as a woman loves,
Lost as a woman loses, I have borne a son,
And he will rule Scotland--and England. You have no heir!
A devil has no children."

To descend from queenly courts to the underworld, what shall be done with the boy-gangster? Send him to a reform school, where he may be better educated in crime? No! is the retort of Kingsley's Dead End, for the juvenile problem concerns our own homes.

Also the need of political reform may prick the conscience wide awake through such a play as Anderson's Both Your Houses: the ghost of injustice may sound its warning in the Sacco-Vanzetti affair of Winterset.

In the last few years drama has been unconsciously approaching a theme that has belonged to the church--the uplift of mankind. Professor Joseph Richard Taylor has well said in the closing paragraph of his Story of the Drama:

[1] Burns Mantle, The Best Plays of 1930-31, Page 72.

[2] Burns Mantle, The Best Plays of 1933-34, Page 74.

[1] "True to its origin the drama is now returning to its early religious home."

The next decade must be awaited with interest for what it may add to the American drama of the present--now at perhaps its most interesting point. In the list included here there is the drama of revolt with its representation of expressionism and realism with O'Neill as commander-in-chief; the writers of propaganda plays, chiefly represented by Anderson, Kingsley, and Sherwood; Percy MacKaye as pageant master; Behrman, Philip Barry, Sidney Howard and Kelly as writers of subtle character studies, in some ways equaling O'Neill's, though dealing with a very different type of person; the clever collaborators, Kaufman, Connelly, Katharine Dayton, Moss Hart, and Edna Ferber with their numerous brilliant side-splitting as well as serious productions; Rachel Crothers, still writing plays of merit with many successes to her credit, even if some are out-moded; Owen Davis, the reformed melodramatist who has become a realist with Ethan Frome, thereby introducing his son to the boards; Paul Green, with Lula Vollmer, writing the native folk drama; Stallings with a war play made unbearably moving with its first-hand knowledge of his subject; Elmer Rice assisting O'Neill in representing expressionism and realism; Akins with a study of woman's eternal problem; Glaspell with a drama study of Emily Dickinson--all these, the lesser as well as the greater, are working to improve and secure a "place in the sun" for American Drama.

[1] Joseph Richard Taylor, The Story Of The Drama, Page 529.

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