The Drama As I See It

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Illustrated by

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THE DRAMA AS I SEE IT

Studies in the Plays and Films of Yesterday and To-day

By STEPHEN LEACOCK

ILLUSTRATED BY C. W. JEFFERYS

I. "Cast Up by the Sea"

A Sea Coast Melodrama

As Thrown Up for 30 Cents—Period, 1880

"A ship! A ship! There's a vessel out on the reef!"

Everybody who has reached or passed middle age looks back with affection to that splendid old melodrama *Cast up by the Sea*. Perhaps it wasn't called exactly that. It may have been named *Called back from the Dead*, or *Broken up by the Wind*, or *Buried Alive in the Snow*, or anything of the sort. In fact I believe it was played under about forty different names in fifty different forms. But it was always the same good old melodrama of the New England Coast, with the farm house and the yellow fields running

down to the sea, and the lighthouse right at the end of the farm with the rocks and the sea beyond, looking for trouble.

Before the cinematograph had addled the human brain and the radio broadcast had disintegrated the human mind, you could go and see *Cast up by the Sea* any Saturday afternoon in any great American City for thirty cents; you got a thrill from it that lasted twenty years. For thirty cents you had an orchestra chair on the ground floor where you could sit and eat peanuts and study the program till the play began. After it had begun you couldn't eat any more; you were too excited.

The first thing everybody used to do in studying the program was to see how many years elapsed between the acts; because in those days everybody used to find it wiser to go out between the acts—for air.

And the more years that elapsed and the more acts there were, the more air they could get. Some of the plays used to have ten acts and the people got out nine times. Nowadays this is all changed. People talk now of the unity of the drama, and in some of the plays to-day there is a deliberate announcement on the program that reads "Between Acts II and III the curtain will be merely lowered and raised again." We wouldn't have stood for that in 1880. We needed our two years between the acts. We had a use for it.

As I say, it was necessary to study the program. Nobody had yet invented that system of marking the characters "in the order of their appearance". You had to try and learn up the whole lot before the play began. You couldn't really. But you began conscientiously enough. Hiram Haycroft, a farmer; Martha, his wife; Hope, their daughter; Phoebe, a girl help; Zeke, a hired man,—Rube also a hired man,—and by that time you had just forgotten the farmer's own name and looked back for it when just then——

Up went the curtain with a long stately roll, two men at the side hoisting it, and there you were looking at the farmstead by the sea.

Notice how quick and easy and attractive that old fashioned beginning was. One minute you were eating peanuts and studying the program and the next minute the play had begun. There was none of that agonizing stuff that precedes the moving pictures of to-day: No "*Authorized by the Board of Census of the state of New York*." The world and New York State was so good in 1880 that it had never heard of a censor. Nor was there any announcement of something else altogether heralded as "*A Great big compelling life drama—next week*."

If the moving picture people could have been in control (forty years before their time) they would have announced the farm and lighthouse play with a written panegyric on what they were going to show,—"a gripping heart-drama in which the foam of the sea and the eerie of the spendrift carry to the heart a tale of true love battled by the wind, next Thursday."

But if they had worked that stuff on an audience of 1880 it would have gone out and taken another drink, and never came back until next Thursday.

So the play began at once. There was the farmhouse, or at least the porch and door, at the right hand side of the stage, all bathed in sunlight (yellow gas) and the grass plot and the road in the centre, and the yellow wheat (quite a little bunch of it) at the left, and the fields reaching back till they hit the painted curtain with the lighthouse and the rocks and the sea.

Everybody who looked at that painted curtain and saw that lighthouse knew that it wasn't there for nothing. There'd be something doing from that all night, and when they looked back at the program and saw that Act IV was marked *In the Lighthouse Tower—Midnight*, they got the kind of a thrill that you can never get by a mere announcement that there is going to be a "gripping heart-drama next Tues., Thurs. and Sat."

Surely enough there would be something doing with that lighthouse. Either the heroine thrown off it, or the hero thrown over it—anyway something good.

But for the moment all is peace and sunlight, on the sea shore farm. There is no one on the stage but two men on the left, evidently Zeke and Rube, the hired men. They've got scythes and they are cutting the little patch of wheat over at the edge of the stage. Just imagine it. Real wheat, they're actually cutting it! Upon my word those stage effects of 1880 were simply wonderful. I do wish that "Doug" Fairbanks and those fellows who work so hard to give us thrills could realize what we used to get in 1880 by seeing Zeke and Rube cutting real wheat on the left hand side of the stage.

Then they speak. You can't really hear what they say—but it sounds like this:

Zeke says, "I swan b'gosh heck b'gosh gum yak! yak!" And Rube answers: "Heck gosh b'gum, yes, yak! yak!" And they both laugh.

These words probably have a meaning, but you don't need it. The people are still moving into their seats and this is just the opening of the play. It's a

mere symbol. It stands for New England dialect, farm life, and honesty of character. Presently Rube gets articulate. He quits reaping and he says:

“So Miss Hope’ll be coming back this morning.”

They must have air. They’ve gone to look for it outside the theatre.

“Yes, sir, that she will. A whole year now it’ll be that she’s been to boarding school.”

And Rube says:

“Yep, a whole yer come Gurdlemas.”

Rube and Zeke have a calendar all their own.

"She'll be a growd up lady now all right."

"Yes sir, and as purty as a pitcher, I'll be bound, by heck."

They whet their scythes with a clang and out comes Martha, the farmer's wife, and Phoebe, the help, from the porch on the right. With them comes a freckled boy, evidently the younger son of the farm family. This freckled boy is in all the melodramas. It is his business to get his ears boxed, mislay the will, lose the mortgage, forget to post the letters and otherwise mix up the plot.

"Do you see the buggy yet, Rube? Can you see them coming yet, Zeke?"

Zeke and Rube hop about making gestures of looking down the road, their hands up over their eyes.

"Not yet, Missus, but they'll be along right soon now."

"There they are," calls Phoebe, "coming along down in the hollow."

There is great excitement at once. Martha cries, "Land's sake, if it ain't Hope all right," and boxes the freckled boy's ears. The others run to and fro saying, "Here they come!" so as to get the audience worked up with excitement, at the height of which there comes the actual clatter of the horses' hoofs and the next moment a horse and buggy, a real horse and buggy, drives on to the stage. That clattering horse coming on to the stage was always one of the great effects in 1880,—a real horse with real harness and with added anxiety for fear that the horse would misbehave himself when he came on.

The buggy stops with a lot of shouting of "Whoa there,"—intended to keep the horse lively. If they didn't shout at it this stage horse was apt to subside into a passive melancholy not suited for the drama.

So here is the farmer sitting in the buggy in a suit of store clothes and a black slouch hat, and beside him is Hope, his daughter, just home from boarding school. How sweet and fresh she looks in her New England sun hat with the flowers on it. I don't know what they did to the girls in the boarding schools of 1880—some line of algebra perhaps—to make them look so fresh. There are none like them now.

Hope leaps out in one spring and kisses her mother in one bound and she cries, "Well, mother! Well, Phoebe! Why, Zeke! Why Rube!" They all

circulate and hop and dance about saying, “Well, Miss Hope, well I never!” And all the while there’s the sunshine in the yellow fields and the red hollyhocks beside the porch, and light and happiness everywhere.

You’d think, would you not, that that old homestead represented the high water mark of happiness? And so it does. But wait a bit. Before long they’ll start trouble enough. All the audience know in advance that that farm will be mortgaged and the farmer ruined and Hope driven from home,—oh, there’s lots of trouble coming. Trouble was the proper business of the melodrama. So presently they all get through their congratulations and Hope has embraced everybody, and the farmer’s wife has got off two jokes about the size of Boston and then the freckled boy wants to take Hope away to see the brindle cow, and they all fade away off the stage except the farmer and his wife.

And right away the whole tone of the play changes, just like that.

The farmer stands alone with his wife.

And Martha comes over to him and puts her hand timidly on his shoulder. The joy has gone out of her face.

“Hiram,” she says, “Lawyer Ellwood’s agent was here this morning.”

The farmer fairly humps into his shoulders with anger.

“Ay,” he snarls.

There is a cry of "Saved! Saved!"

"And Hiram, Lawyer Ellwood wants his money."

"Ay! he wants his money, does he? Curse him!"

The farmer's fist is clenched and there's a scowl on his face.

"He says, Hiram, that it's got to be paid to-morrow. Oh, Hiram, we can't never pay it."

Martha puts her apron up to her face and sobs.

The farmer turns and shakes his clenched fist at the scenery away off to the left.

"Curse him!" he rages. "Ay, curse him. This three years he has thrown a blight across our life."

"You was friends once, Hiram," sobs Martha again, "years ago before he went to the city you was friends."

“Friends!” raves the farmer, “a fine friend, drawing me on with his schemes of money and profit. ‘To make my fortune’ he said—a fine fortune—ruin, ruin it meant—till I had signed this and signed that, till it was all mortgaged away and till he held me, as he thought, in the hollow of his hand. Martha, if that man stood before me now, by the God that lives, I could choke him with these hands.”

Hiram makes a gesture so terrible and yet so passionate that the one hope of the audience in the top gallery is that Lawyer Ellwood will happen along right now and get choked.

Martha tries to dry her eyes.

“Nay, Hiram, you mustn’t talk like that. Those are evil thoughts. It is God’s will, Hiram, and it must be right. But we can’t never pay.”

“Not pay,” shouts Hiram. “who says I can’t pay? I *can* pay and when that man comes to-morrow I *can* throw the money in his face. Look, Martha, there it is!”

Hiram Haycroft draws a great wallet from his pocket and slaps it down, on the palm of his hand.

“Two thousand dollars, every cent of his accursed debt. Martha, it will mean poverty and hard times for us where all was plenty, but, thank God! it can be paid.”

“Why, Hiram!”

“I’ve raised it, Martha. I’ve sold the stock, I’ve parted with this and I’ve pledged that—everything but the roof above our heads is sold or pledged. But this accursed mortgage can be paid.”

“Oh, Hiram!”

“It will mean hard times again, hard and bitter times—”

“I don’t mind that, Hiram,”—and Martha puts her hands up to her husband’s neck, “we’ve borne it together before and we can bear it together again.—But oh, Hiram, if only our boy Jack had been spared to us, I could have borne it so easily then.”

Martha begins to cry.

“There, there, Martha,” says the Farmer, “you mustn’t lay it so to heart. The sea has taken him, Mother, as it has taken many a brave lad before him—”

“The sea, the sea—” groans Martha, “I see it there so bright and calm in the sunlight. But will it give me back my boy? Three years this day Hiram since he left us. I can feel his good-by kiss still on my cheek. And since then no word, never a word.”

Hiram draws his wife to him to comfort her.

“Come, mother, come into the house; we mustn’t show sad faces for Hope’s home-coming—come—”

They go in through the wooden porch under the flowers on the right leaving the audience sad and disturbed. That infernal lawyer! But they were all alike in 1880. Show them a sun-lit farm and a happy family and they clap a mortgage on it at sight. And to think that farmer Haycroft and his wife had lost their only son at sea—that calm blue sea in the back curtain with the sunlight on it.

In fact the play is getting too sad so it has to be relieved and Rube and Phoebe are brought on to the stage again and go through one of those rural love scenes that were used to ease the strain of the melodrama. Rube shambles over to her in a sheepish way, evidently proposing to kiss her, and says:

“Ain’t you got nothing for me this morning, Phoeb?”

And Phoebe says:

“Go along, you big thing. I’ve got *that* for you,” and swats him over the face with a thistle. The audience roar with laughter, the strain is removed and they’re ready to get on with the play when Phoebe disappears with Rube in pursuit.

“Why, Mother,”—it is Hope calling—“where are you, Mother?”

“I’m here, daughter,” says Martha, reappearing out of the porch.

I was looking for you all over, Mother,” says Hope, coming over to her coyly. “I have been wanting so much to talk to you all by ourselves.”

“Ah! And I think I can guess something of what that’s about.” Martha has taken Hope’s hand in hers and is patting it and Hope is looking at the ground and swinging herself about on one heel in a way that in a New England play always symbolized the approach of love.

“—and now Hope tell me all about it,” says the farmer’s wife.

“You remember, Mother, that I wrote and told you that I had a secret—”

"Yes, dearie, a *great* secret, you said,—"

"—a secret that I didn't want to put on paper and didn't want to tell to anybody till I could tell it to you first, Mother dear."

Hope has snuggled up close to her mother, who is patting her on the shoulder and repeating, "Ay, lass a great secret and I'll be bound I can guess a little of what it is—I suppose it means that there is someone—that my little girl—"

She whispers into Hope's ear.

"Oh, Mother," Hope goes on, "it's even greater than that. Look, Mother, see what's on my hand."

Hope holds out her hand, her face downcast and not only her mother but even the girls in the gallery can see the plain gold ring that's on her finger. The men in the audience don't get it, but the girls and women explain to them what it is.

"Why Hope, darling," says Martha, all in a tremble, "what does it mean?"

"Why, Mother, it means—it means," Hope takes a flying leap into her mother's arms—"it means, Mother, that I'm married."

"Married!"

"Yes, married, Mother, last Saturday in Boston at eleven o'clock in the morning."

"Married, my little girl married!"

Martha has to be terribly astonished so as to keep the audience in the same frame of mind: not at Hope being married the very day she left her finishing school. That was nothing.—That was a favorite way of getting married in 1880—but at the fact that she hadn't told her mother about it. So Martha keeps repeating—

"Married! My little girl married!"

"It was all in such a hurry, Mother—I couldn't tell you. It all came so sudden—"

Hope is half crying, half smiling.

"But I shouldn't cry, Mother, because really I'm so happy—"

"That's right, darling, and now tell me all about it."

“We were married in Boston last Saturday, Mother. And, oh, I did so want you to be there, only it couldn’t be. It was all in such a hurry—because Ned was offered a new ship—just think, mother, captain of a ship at twenty-one.”

“Not a sailor, dearie,” says Martha Haycroft in evident agitation, “don’t tell me that your man is a sailor.”

“Why, yes, Mother, Ned’s been at sea ever since he was fifteen.”

“The sea, the sea,” groans the farmer’s wife. “I see it lying there in the sunlight. I hear it roaring in the winter wind. When will it give me back my boy?”

“Mother, you mustn’t cry. It was years ago and it was God’s will, and Mother, Ned will only be at sea a little while longer now—just this one voyage in his new ship, and listen, Mother, Ned’s new ship, (it’s a schooner, Mother, and it’s Ned’s father who owns it and it’s called the *Good Hope*, after me)—will be off the coast here this evening, and if Ned can manage it he’ll come ashore and see us all, and his father,—though I’ve never seen *him* —will be with Ned. And Ned is to settle down and be a farmer, Mother, on a farm beside the sea. His father is a rich lawyer in Boston, Mother, and Ned says that his father has a mortgage on a farm right on the sea shore just like this, and after this one voyage—”

“A lawyer, a rich lawyer!”

“Yes, Mother, a rich lawyer in Boston, but he once lived in the country, near here I think, years ago.”

“His name? What name?”

“Ellwood, Mother, Lawyer Ephraim Ellwood.”

Martha breaks from her daughter in alarm.

“No, no, not that, don’t say it’s that name—Hope, it couldn’t be, it can’t be.”

And at that moment the farmer, Hiram Haycroft, steps onto the stage.

“Why, Mother! Why, Hope! What’s—what’s all this?”

Hope (tearfully)—“I don’t know father; I only began to tell mother a secret—”

“Yes, daughter!”

“That I—that we—that I am married, Father.”

“Married, my little girl married! That don’t seem possible. But what’s all this ado about, mother, and who’s the lucky man that’s gone and taken my little girl?”

Hiram comes over affectionately and takes Hope’s two hands.

“Only yesterday, it seems,” he says, “that I held you on my knees, little gal, and now to be married.”

All the audience waits in a luxury of expectation. They know that the farmer is going to get an awful jolt.

Then he gets it.

“He is the son of a rich Boston lawyer, Father, who—has a mortgage on a farm—”

The farmer has dropped Hope’s hands, his face is darkening.

“And Ned is to have the farm—Ned Ellwood is his name, Father, see it here.”

Hope timidly takes out a paper from her dress.

“Here on my marriage certificate.”

But the farmer doesn’t hear her. He stands a moment, his fists clenched, then bursts into wild rage.

“Ellwood, Lawyer Ellwood. My daughter marry a son of that man! By the living God, Hope, sooner than see you married to a son of his, I’d see you lying fathoms deep under the sea beside my son. God hears me say it, and may God so order it!”

And as Hiram Haycroft stands, with this fateful invocation on his lips, the freckled boy runs on the stage and says:

“Say, Hope, ain’t you never coming to see that brindle cow?”

And with that the curtain slowly falls, and Act I is over.

No wonder that as the curtain falls there’s a terrible feeling of sadness and apprehension all over the audience. No wonder that even before the curtain has reached the floor a great many of the men in that 1880 audience have risen and are walking up the aisles to got out of the theatre. They can’t stand the strain of it,—the thought of the beautiful old New England homestead all brought to sorrow and tragedy like this. It’s too much for them. They must have air. They’ve gone to look for it outside the theatre.

Even though the playbill says that only six hours elapse between Act I and II (pretty rapid work for 1880) they're taking a chance on it.

So the able-bodied men in the audience go out leaving behind only the young, the infirm, and the women (women never took anything to drink, anyway, before prohibition). There is a great sadness over the audience now because they know by experience that once the old homestead starts going to pieces like this things will go from bad to worse. Even the fact that the orchestra is now playing *In the Gloaming, Oh, My Darling* doesn't help things much.

So presently the men come back and the orchestra is stopped and the gas cut down and the curtain is hauled away up to the roof and it's—

ACT II—Same Evening
The Kitchen of the Haycroft Farm

"You'll find us plain folk, sir, just plain folk. But if it'll please you to take what plain folk can offer you're heartily welcome. Now then, Phoebe girl, a chair here for the gentleman. Put another stick in the stove, Rube, it's a cold night in this November wind."

The stranger, in a strange voice, "Ay, it's a cold night."

The scene is in the farm kitchen, one of those big old farm kitchens of 1880 that filled the whole stage. There was a cooking stove,—about 10 feet by 6 off to the right side and in the centre stage a fireplace with a mantel off at one side, and doors and windows—, in fact all the things that will be needed in the act, not forgetting a shotgun hanging ominously on two hooks. At the back is a big table all laid out for about a dozen guests, with Phoebe all done up in her best things fussing round laying dishes. Martha Haycroft, also in her best things (black satin with a sort of crispiness to it), is cooking at the stove. Putting the farm people with their best clothes was always supposed to imply a comic touch. Rube has on clothes like a congressman's, only lower in the coat tails and higher in the collar.

This, of course, was the supper that the farmer spoke of when he said they'd call in the neighbours.

Only for the moment all the eyes of the audience are turned on the stranger. He has a crop of straight white hair (a wig evidently) and a white beard—false, of course—and he walks partly bent with a stick, and he looks all about him, all round the room with such a queer look, as if he recognized it.

All the audience feel instinctively that that stranger is disguised. Indeed in this sort of play there always had to be somebody who turned out to be someone else.

"A raw night, sir," repeats the farmer, "there's an evil howl in the wind; I reckon there'll be stormy weather at sea, to-night, sir—"

The farmer is evidently right—for just as he says it somebody behind the scene turns on the wind with a wild and mournful howl. Luckily they don't leave it on long, just enough to let the audience know it's there.

"I just been down to the shore, sir," the farmer goes on. "I tend the light here at the foot of the farm. 'Twill be a bad night at sea to-night."

"A bad night for those at sea," repeats the stranger.

The wind howls again. Martha pauses in her cooking, looks a moment towards the window and murmurs, "The sea, the sea."

Martha, the farmer's wife, had to play alternately a pathetic character and a comic one. It was hard to do, but the audience understood it. So she mutters "The sea! the sea!" with the yearning of a mother for her lost son, and then goes back to blowing up pancakes on the cookstove. If that violated the unity of the drama we didn't know it in 1880, so it did no harm.

"But come, come," says the farmer, "this ain't no night for feeling downhearted. I hear the neighbours outside. Come, Martha, we'll go out and bring them in."

This leaves Phoebe and Rube alone except for the stranger who has gone across the room and is standing with his back to them, lost in thought. So Rube and Phoebe do another love scene. Rube comes to her along side the table and has only just time to say "Phoeb!" with a slow grin and to try to take her by the waist when she lands him across the face with a pancake. The audience roar with delight and continue laughing till they suddenly come to a full stop when they see that there is something happening with the stranger.

He has been standing with his back turned, silent. Then without, warning, he speaks, his back still turned, not in his counterfeited tone, but in a loud clear voice, the voice of youth:

"Rube!"

Rube and Phoebe start. “What voice is that?” says Rube, shaking with agitation.

The stranger turns, plucks away his white wig and his white beard and stands revealed.

“Jack! It’s Mr. Jack, come back from the dead!” cries Phoebe.

“Ain’t you drowned?” cries Rube.

They crowd close to him in eager recognition; and Jack, young and boyish now, laughs and greets them. “Let me run and call the boss and the missus.” pleads Phoebe; but Jack restrains her.

“Not now,” he says, “they mustn’t know yet.”

He goes on to reveal, all in whispers and in gestures which the audience are not intended to unravel, that his father and mother must not know yet. He takes from his pocket a bundle of something—is it paper or money or what? The audience can’t see it decently but Rube and Phoebe seem to understand and he is just explaining about it when the noise is heard of the farmer and his wife and the farm guests all coming back.

The stranger motions Rube and Phoebe to secrecy and is disguised again in a minute.

In they all come, the farm people all dressed in the queer pathos of their Sunday things and there follows the great supper scene, without which no rural melodrama was complete. Hear how they chatter and laugh. “Well, for the land’s sake, taste them doughnuts!” “Neighbour Jephson, try a slice of this pie.” “Well, I don’t mind if I do.” “Farmer Haycroft, here’s your good health and Miss Hope’s good health and of all present.” “Hear! Hear!” and then someone chokes on a crumb and is beaten on the back.

The supper scene lasts ten minutes by the clock. The stranger has sat silent, beaming quiet approval and at the height of the merriment retired quietly to his room, a side room opening on the kitchen. Martha has lighted a candle for him and as he thanks her for it she says—“You’re a stranger in these parts, sir? There’s something in your voice I seem to know.” All the audience want to shout “He’s your son.” It is a touch taken right out of Sophocles. Hope meantime busies herself among the guests. Hiram Haycroft drinks great flagons of cider. At intervals the wind is turned on against the window panes to remind the audience that it’s a wild night outside.

Then for a moment the farmer leaves the room because he has to go trim his light down on the shore.

While he is still out there is loud knocking at the door. Rube goes to it and opens it—with a special biff of wind produced for his benefit—and then shows in two strangers.

A young man and an old. The young man is tall and bronzed and sailorlike and Hope runs to him at once, with a glad cry of "Ned! My Ned!" His arms are about her in a moment and the whole theatre knows that it is her husband.

"We've put in under the point," Ned explains, "and I come ashore. But it's only to say good-bye. The *Good Hope* can't lie there in this rising wind. We'll have to put off at once. This is my father, Hope. You'll be a daughter to him while I'm gone!"

Hope goes up to the old man and puts her two hands in his and says, oh so sweetly, "I will indeed, sir, for Ned's sake."

But her mother has risen, shrinking from her place.

"Ellwood," she says, "Lawyer Ellwood."

All the audience look at the old man.

A fox certainly—oh, a sly old fox—just that look of mean cunning that stamped every rural lawyer in every melodrama for thirty years. But Hope sees nothing of it.

"No, Ned, you mustn't put to sea to-night. It's too wild a night. Hear how the rain is driving at the windows. You must stay here and your father, too. Mother, this is Ned, my husband, and this is his father, and these are our friends, Ned, and father's only gone to the light. He'll be back in just a minute—"

And at that moment the door swings open and Hiram Haycroft—shaking the wet from his black oilskins—strides back into the room. Hope comes to him pleadingly.

"Father, father dear, this is my husband—"

But he doesn't see her. He is staring at Ellwood.

"You!" he shouts. "You that have sought to bring ruin upon me and mine!"

Ellwood comes towards him, raising a protesting hand.

“Hiram!” he says.

“Out of my house!” shouts Haycroft. “Your accursed money is not due till to-morrow and to-morrow it shall be paid. Out! before I lay hands on you.” He steps forward menacingly, his hand uplifted. Ned Ellwood steps in his way.

“Put down your hands,” he says, “and listen to me.”

Hiram refuses to listen. He reaches for the gun that hangs above the mantel. The affrighted guests crowd around him. There is noise and confusion, above which is Haycroft’s voice, calling “Out of my house! I say.”

The father and son move to the door, but as they go Hope rushes to her husband.

“Father! he is my husband! Where he goes I go. Ned, take me with you, out into the night and the storm.” (At these words the wind which has been quite quiet breaks out again) “Out into the world, for better or for worse. Where you go I follow, my place is at your side!”

There is a burst of applause from the audience at this sentiment. That was the kind of girl they raised in 1880. There are none left now.

And so with her father’s imprecations ringing in her ears Hope casts a little grey cloak over her head and shoulders and with arm clinging to her husband passes out into the storm.

The door closes after them.

There is a hush and silence.

Not even Rube and Phoebe can break it now. The farm guests, almost inarticulate, come and say goodnight and pass out. Martha, lamp in hand, goes tearfully up the stairs. Rube and Phoebe fade away.

Hiram Haycroft sits alone. The lights are dimmed down. There is a flicker of light from the fire in the stove but little more. At times the rattle of the storm at the window makes him lift his head. Once he walks to the window and stands and gazes out into the darkness towards the sea.

And once he goes over to the dresser at the side of the room and takes from it the wallet that has in it his two thousand dollars, holds it a moment in his hand and then replaces it.

At intervals the storm is heard outside. The audience by instinct know that the act is not over. There is more tragedy to come.

The farmer rises slowly from his chair. He lays aside his oilskins. Then, still slowly, he takes off his boot—with a boot jack—a stage effect much valued in melodrama.

He moves about the room, a candle in his hand, bolts and chains the door, and so, step by step slowly and with much creaking, ascends the stairs to bed.

The audience follow in a breathless stillness. They know that something is going to happen.

Deep silence and waiting. You can hear the audience breathing. No one speaks.

Then a side door in the room is opened, slowly, cautiously. You can see a dark figure stealing across the stage—nearer and nearer to the drawer where the wallet of money is lying. Look! What is he doing? Is he taking it, or is he moving it? Is it a thief or what?

Then suddenly the farmer's voice from above.

"Who's that down there?"

You can half see the farmer as he stands on the upper landing, a candle in his hand.

"Who's that, I say?" he calls again.

The crouching figure crawls away, making for the door.

What happens after that follows with a rush. The farmer comes hurrying down the stairs, tears open the drawer and with a loud cry of "Thief! A thief!" rouses the sleeping house. You hear the people moving above. You see the lights on the stairs as the crouching figure rushes for the door. The farmer has seized his shotgun. There is a cry of "Stand there, or I'll shoot," then the flash of fire and the roar of the gun and the crouching figure falls to the floor, the farmer shouting, "Lights here. Bring a light! A thief!"

It is Rube who enters first, the others crowding after. It is Rube who lifts the fallen body, Rube who holds the light on the pale face so that the audience may see who it is—but something has long since told them that. It is Rube who pulls aside the white wig and the white beard that had disguised the youthful features. There is a loud cry from the farmer's wife as she sinks down beside the body.

“Jack, Jack, it’s my boy come back to me.”

And the farmer, the gun still clenched and smoking in his hand cries:

“My son! I have killed my son.”

And with that down sinks the sombre curtain on a silent audience.

That’s the way, you see, that the drama was put over in 1880. We weren’t afraid of real effects,—terror, agony, murder—anything and the more of it the better. In a modern drawing-room play the characters get no nearer to murder than to have *Pup No. 1*, dressed in grey tweeds, discuss the theory of homicide with *Pup No. 2*, dressed in a brown golf costume. That’s all the excitement there is. But in this good old farm melodrama they weren’t afraid of mixing the thing up.

So the farmer is ruined, he’s driven his daughter from the door and has shot his son—and there you are.

When the play reaches this point, at the end of Act Two, there is nothing for it but a two years’ wait. So the play bill at this point bears the legend *Two Years Elapse between Acts Two and Three*. The audience are glad of it. Without that they couldn’t have stood the tragedy of it. But as it is there are two years; the men rise and file out up the aisle; very slowly—there was no need to hurry with two years ahead of them.

The gas is turned up now and the audience are gradually recovering; a boy comes down the aisles and shouts “Peanuts!” That helps a lot. And presently when the orchestra begins to play *Little Annie Rooney is my Sweetheart* they begin to get reconciled to life again. Anyway, being used to this type of play they know that things aren’t so bad as they seem. Jack can’t really be dead. He’ll be brought to life somehow. He was shot, but he can’t have been killed. Every audience knows its own line of play; in fact in all the drama the audience has to be taken for granted or the play wouldn’t be intelligible. Anybody who has seen a moving picture audience snap up the symbols and legends and conventions of a photoplay and get the required meaning out of it will know just what I mean. So it was in 1880. The audience got cheered up because they realized that Jack couldn’t really be dead.

So they look at their programmes with a revived interest to see what happens next.

Here it is:

ACT III—Two Years Later
The Fore Shore After Sunset A Gathering Storm

Ah! Look at the scene as the curtain goes up now. Isn't it grand! The rocks and the breaking water and the white foam in the twilight! How ever do they do it? And the lighthouse there at the right hand side, how it towers into the dark sky! Look at the fishermen all in black oilskins and sou'westers, glistening in the wet, moving about on the shore and pointing to the sea.

Notice that short flash of yellow lightning and the rumble of thunder away behind the scene. And look at the long beams of the light from the lighthouse far out on the water.

Don't talk to me of a problem play, played in a modern drawing-room as between a man in tweed and a woman in sequins. When I attend the theatre let there be a lighthouse and a gathering of huddled fishermen and danger lowering over the sea. As drama it is worth all the sex stuff that was ever slopped over the footlights.

"A wild night!"

It's a fisherman speaking—or no, it's Rube, only you would hardly know him—all in oilskins. In the New England play all the farmers turn into fishermen as the plot thickens. So it is Zeke, as another fisherman, who answers:

"It's all that! God help all poor souls out at sea to-night."

The lightning and thunder make good again, the fishermen and the women on the shore move to and fro, talking, and excited, and pointing at the sea. Rube and Zeke come together in the foreground, talking. Their function is to let the audience know all that has happened in two years.

"A wild night," Zeke repeats, "such a night as it was two years ago, you mind, the night that Mr. Jack was shot."

They both shake their heads. " 'Twould have been a sight better," says Rube, "if the farmer's bullet had killed him that night. A sad sight it is to see him as he is, witless and speechless. It's cruel hard on them all. Is he here to-night?"

"Ay, he's here to-night—he's always here on the shore when a storm is on. Look, see him there, always looking to the sea!"

The audience look at once and see in the little group standing in the gathering storm, Jack—holding to his mother hard and looking out to sea.

“She’s leading him away. She’ll be wanting him to go home. . . .”

So Jack isn’t dead! But what is that queer, strange look on his face? Something blank, unhuman, witless. His mother leads him down the stage.

“Jack, come home, Jack. It’s no place for you here in the storm.”

The thunder and lightning break in again sharp and vivid and the wind roars behind the scenes.

Jack turns a vacant countenance upon his mother. His face is pale and thin. His eyes are bright.

The audience get it. Since he was shot down he has been there two years speechless and demented.

His mother keeps begging him to come home. He tries to drag her towards the sea. Demented as he is, there is a wild and growing excitement in his manner. He is pointing at the waves, gesticulating.

“What does he see?” Rube is asking. “What is it? He has a sailor’s eyes. What does he see out there?”

And at that minute there comes a shout from the clustered fishermen on the Fore Shore.

“A ship! A ship! There’s a vessel out on the reef. See! look!”

They run up and down, pointing and shouting. And far out on the waves, lit for a moment by a flash of lightning, the audience sees a dismasted schooner—she’s made of cardboard—out beside the breakers of the reef.

At this moment the freckled boy, all in oilskins, rushes breathless onto the stage. He hasn’t grown an inch in two years, but nobody cares about that.

“Mother, Rube,” he gasps. “I’ve been down to the Long Point—I ran all the way—there is a schooner going on the reef. Look, you can see, and Mother, Mother—”

The boy is almost frenzied into excitement. The crowd gathers about him.

“Mother it’s the *Good Hope*, her ship!”

“The *Good Hope*!” exclaims everybody.

The boy gasps on.

“They were lowering the boats—I could see them—but nothing can live in that sea—one boat went down—I saw it—and I could see her, Hope, standing by the mast. I could see her face when the lightning came. Then I ran here. We must go out; we must get the life boats; we’ve got to go. You men, who’ll come?”

Come! they’ll all come! Listen to the shout of them. See! they are dragging forth the life boat from its wooden house on the left of the stage. There are swinging lanterns and loud calls and the roaring of the wind. The stage is darkening and the lightning glares on the sea. But even as they are trying to launch the life boat, there’s a new cry—

“Look—a boat! a boat! out there on the reef, right among the breakers.”

The fishermen rush up and down in great excitement. “There’s a woman in the boat! God help her! She’s lost!”

“Mother, mother, it’s Hope! See she’s alone in the boat, she’s kneeling up; she’s praying.”

There are new cries:

“Man the life boat! Man the life boat!”

The great boat is dragged out and ready. The men are climbing in over the side.

Then a fisherman shouts out and is heard, clear and single, for a moment in the lull of the storm.

“There’s only one man can pilot this boat across that reef, only Hiram Haycroft.”

There are cries of “Hiram! Hiram!” They point out at the lighthouse from which the long beams still revolve on the water. “He can’t leave the light.”

Noise and commotion.

“He must leave the light.”

“It’s life or death on this one chance. Lads, stand ready there with the life boat and come some of you with me and bring him down.” They rush towards the lighthouse. There is noise and thunder; a flash of light shows the boat, clearly in sight now, right out among the breakers and Hope seen for a moment kneeling in the bow praying, her face illuminated in the lightning. Then in a swirl of white water, the boat vanishes in the foam of the reef.

Then the scene changes—all done in a minute—from the shore to the *Lighthouse Tower*. It was what used to be called a “transformation scene.” It involved an eclipse of darkness punctured by little gas jets, and a terrible thumping and bumping with an undertone of curses.You could hear a voice in the darkness say quite distinctly “Get that blank blank drop over there,” and you could see black figures running round in the transformation. Then there came an awful crash and a vision of a back curtain sliding down amongst the dark men. The lights flicked up again and all the audience broke into applause at the final wonder of it.

Look! It’s the lighthouse tower with the big lights burning and the storm howling outside. How bright and clear it is here inside the tower with its great windows looking out over the storm sixty feet above the sea.

He stands beside the lights, trimming the lamps, calm and steady at his task. The storm is all about him, but inside the lighthouse tower all is bright and still.

Hiram peers a moment from the lighthouse window. He opens the little door and steps out on the iron platform high above the sea. The wind roars about him and the crest of the driven water leaps to his very feet. He comes in, closing the door quietly and firmly behind him and turns again to his light.

“God help all poor souls at sea to-night,” he says.

And then with a rush and clatter of feet they burst in upon him. the group of fishermen, Martha, and his demented son. crowding into the lighthouse tower and standing on the stairs. Jack is at the rear of all, but there is a strange look on his face, a light of new intelligence.

“Quick, Hiram, you must come. There’s been a wreck. Look, there’s a boat going on the reef. The men are ready in the life boat. You must steer her through. It’s life or death. There’s not a moment to lose.”

Hiram looks for a moment at the excited crowd and then turns quietly to his task.

“My place is here,” he says.

There is a moment’s hush. Martha rushes to him and clutches him by the coat.

“Hiram, they haven’t told you. The schooner that was wrecked to-night is the *Good Hope*.”

Hiram staggers back against the wall.

“And the boat that’s drifting on the reef, it’s Hope, it’s our daughter.”

Hiram stands grasping the rail along the wall. He speaks, panting with agitation, but firm.

“Martha—I’m sworn to tend the light. If the light fails God knows what it means to the ships at sea. If my child is lost it is God’s will—but—my place is here.”

And he turns back to the light.

The fishermen who have been crowding close to the window cry:

Look down below. The boat—she’s driving in here right on the rocks—the woman still clinging to her.”

Martha rushes to the window and calls: “My child! save my child! save her!” And at exactly this minute Jack steps out into the centre of the floor. His face is clear and plain beneath the light.

“Father,” he says. “Mother!”

They all turn to look at him. But no one speaks.

“The rope,” he says, “give me the rope.”

He points to a long coil of rope that hangs against the wall.

In a moment, with the end of the line around his body. Jack has thrown open the door and rushed onto the little iron platform. He pauses there for a second and then the audience see him mount upon the iron rail and then dive head-first into the sea below.

There is shouting and clamour from the fishermen. “There he is! He’s swimming to her! Hold fast the line there! He’s got her, now then all together on the line.”

And with one glorious haul up comes the line from the roaring sea with Jack at the end of it, and fast held in his encircling arm the fainting form of his sister.

Couldn’t be done? Nonsense. That was nothing to what we used to see in the old time plays. If need be Jack could have fished up a whole shipload.

There is a cry of “Saved! Saved!” and Hiram Haycroft clasping the senseless form of his daughter to his heart, cries:

“My little gal! Cast up by the Sea,” and down comes the curtain in a roar of applause.

ACT V—Six Months Later
Scene. The Kitchen of the Haycroft Farm

This last act in the melodrama is all to the good. There is no more tragedy, no strain, no trouble. The play is really over but this part is always put in as a sort of wind up to make everybody happy. The audience are now sitting in a swim of luxurious sentimentality. How fine everything has turned out—Jack has got his mind back, and Hope is saved and her husband too, and the old farm isn’t mortgaged or sold and the Haycrofts are not ruined after all. Yes, and more than that; there are all kinds of little items of happiness to be thrown in.

So here we are back in the old farm kitchen and here of course—are Rube and Phoebe again. And Rube tries to grab Phoebe round the waist, but she says, “Oh, you Rube, you go along,” and lands a dish towel in his face. But this time Rube *won’t* go along. He manages to catch Phoebe and tell her that he wants her to be his wife and to throw dish cloths at him all his life and Phoebe calls him a “big thing,” and gives him a kiss like a smack (worse than a dishcloth or a pancake). So there they are all set for marriage, as they might have been in the first act if Rube had had the nerve.

Well, they are no sooner straightened out than in come the farmer and his son, Jack, and Ned, Hope’s husband. The farmer seems very old and infirm, though suffused with the same air of peace and happiness as all the others. The two young men help him into an arm rocking-chair. . . “Easy now.” Then Hiram sits down with that expression of difficulty, “ay-ee-ee” always used to symbolize stage rheumatism. There is no need for the farmer to become so suddenly old in the last act. But it was a favourite convention of 1880 to make all the old people very infirm and very happy at the end of the play.

So they begin to talk, just to pile on the happiness.

“I’m getting old, lads, I’m not the man I was.”

“Old, father,” laughs Jack, “why you’re the youngest and spryest of all of us—”

“I’m getting past work, boys,” says the farmer, shaking his head, “past work—”

“Work,” says Jack, “why should you work?” and as the talk goes on you get to understand that Jack will never go to sea again but will stay and work the farm and they’ve just received the “papers” that appoint him keeper of the light in his father’s place, with a pension for the old man. And Ned, Hope’s husband, is going to stay right there too. His father has bought him the farm just adjoining with house and stock and everything and he and Hope are all ready to move into it just as soon as——

But wait a minute.

His father! Lawyer Ellwood! And the terrible enmity and feud!

Oh, pshaw, just watch that feud vanish! In the fifth act of an old time melodrama a feud could be blown to the four winds like thistledown.

Like this:—

There’s a knocking at the door and Ned goes to it and comes back all smiling and he says:

“There’s someone at the door to see you Mr. Haycroft. An old friend he says, shall he come in?”

“An old friend?” And in slips Ellwood—the farmer’s enemy, Hope’s father-in-law—looking pretty hale and hearty, but with the same touch of the old age of the fourth act visible.

He comes over and says:

“Well, Hiram, have you a shake of the hand for an old friend?”

And the farmer, rising, unsteadily:

“Why, Ephraim, it’s not your hand I should be taking; it’s your forgiveness, I ought to ask for my mad folly these two years past.”

“Forgiveness,” says the lawyer; how honest and cheery he looks now, not a bit like the scoundrel he seemed in the second act—“forgiveness!”

And off he goes with *his* explanation.

What’s the whole purpose of the fourth act,—explanation!

And what do you think! He’d been Hiram’s friend all along, and was not in earnest about wanting the money back from Hiram, didn’t want it at

all! And he knew all about Hope's love affair and Jack's safe return with his son and was tickled to death over it—and that night two years ago when the farmer drove him out he had come over to tell the Haycrofts that the debt was cancelled, and he was going to buy a farm and start the young people, Ned and Hope, in life—and it was the cancelled mortgage that Jack was trying to sneak over and put in the drawer when his father shot him down! and—why dear me, how simple it all is in the fifth act. Why didn't he explain? Why didn't he shout out, "Hiram I'm not a villain at all. I'm your old friend—" Oh pshaw, who ever did *explain* things in the second act of a melodrama? And where would the drama be if they did?

So they are still explaining and counter-explaining and getting happier and happier when the last climax is staged.

The audience hear Martha's voice as she comes onto the stage, talking back into the wings, "Carry him carefully there, Phoebe, for the land's sake, if you drop that precious child—"

And in they come.

Martha and Hope! Looking as sweet and fresh as when she started out years ago in the first act. And bringing up the rear Phoebe—*carrying the Baby*.

Yes, believe it or not, a baby! or the very semblance of one all bundled up in white.

Hope's baby!

No melodrama was ever brought to its righteous end without a baby.

How the women all cuddle round it and croon over it! They put it on the farmer's lap—and say, isn't he just clumsy when he tries to take it—and when Rube offers to help, and Phoebe slaps his face with a dish rag, the audience just go into paroxysms of laughter.

So there you are—and everybody saved. All happy, the baby installed on the farmer's knees and explanations flowing like autumn cider.

All that is needed now is the farmer to get off the *Final Religious Sentiment* which is the end and benediction of the good old melodrama. So he utters it with all due solemnity: "Ay, lads, pin your hope in Providence and in the end you land safe in front."

It sounds as convincing as a proposition in Euclid. Then the curtain slowly comes down and the matinee audience melts away, out into the murky November evening, with the flickering gas lamps in the street, and

the clanging bells of the old horse-cars in their ears, but with their souls uplifted and illuminated with the moral glow of the melodrama.

II. "The Soul Call"

An Up-to-date Piffle Play. Period, 1923

In Which a Man and Woman, Both Trying to Find Themselves, Find One Another

But the really cultivated people want to know whether Helga should or should not have poisoned her husband.

At the opposite pole of thought from the good old melodrama, with its wind and sea-weed and danger, and its happy ending, is the ultra-modern, up-to-date Piffle Play.

It is named by such a name as *The Soul Call*, or *The Heart Yearn*, or *The Stomach Trouble*—always something terribly perplexed, and with sixty per cent. of sex in it. It always deals in one way or another with the Problem of Marriage. Let it be noted that marriage, which used to be a sacrament, became presently a contract, and is now a problem. In art and literature it used to constitute the happy ending. Now it is just the bad beginning.

You always hear of *The Soul Call* long before you see it. It is being played in London before New York or in New York before London, or, at any rate, it is always played somewhere else first. It has to be. That's part of the charm of it: so that, long before you see the play, you have heard people discussing it at dinner and debating whether Helga was right in wanting to poison her husband, and whether Lionel Derwent could live with such a woman as Mabel.

When at last it is played, it is put on in a little theatre, a small bijou place with seats for only two hundred and fifty. Even that is too many. The great mass of the theatre goers don't go to *The Soul Call*; they are all round the corner in the huge picture-house (capacity three thousand) looking at "BIG-

HEARTED JIM,—A FILM OF WESTERN LIFE, THROUGH WHICH BLOWS THE OZONE OF THE COW PASTURE.” That’s the stuff they want. But the really cultivated people want to know whether Helga should or should not have poisoned her husband and whether Mabel could or could not live with Lionel Derwent. So they are all there in evening clothes, with other people’s wives, with white necks and plenty of jewels in their hair. So it is not a bit like the setting of the old melodrama with the huge theatre full of noise and clatter, the boys shouting “Peanuts, Program!”

In the little theatre all is quiet, with just dim red lights here and there and noiseless ushers selling the Book of the Play on embossed paper for fifty cents. This is the only kind of atmosphere in which people can properly analyze the Problem of Marriage.

When the Piffle Play begins, the curtain doesn’t go up; it is parted in the middle and silently drawn aside by a thing in black silk knee breeches. When it is drawn back the scene is a room. It is called A Room in The Lionel Derwent’s Residence and it is evidently just a “room.” The stage of the old melodrama had wings and flies and drops and open spaces up above and glimpses at the sides of actors not wanted and waiting till they were. But the stage of the Piffle Play is made into a room with a real ceiling and real doors and a real fire burning in a real grate.

By the time the audience have examined this, they see that there is an ineffective young man in a grey tweed suit seated at a little table on the left, playing patience with a pack of cards.

He flings down a card and he exclaims, “Oh, hang these cards!” then calls, “Meadows, I say, Meadows!” The audience by looking up on their programmes “The characters in the order of their appearance,” know that the ineffective young man at the table is Lionel Derwent, husband of Mabel Derwent. The book of the play explains to them that “Lionel Derwent is the type of young man who would rather smoke a cigarette than work in a coal mine. In appearance he looks as if a proposition in solid geometry would bore him. He is quite visibly a man who might be fond of a Pekinese dog, but one sees at once that he would not care to attend a Hotel Men’s Annual Convention at Niagara-on-the-Lake.” Reading this, the audience knows exactly what sort of man he is.

When Derwent calls “Meadows, I say, Meadows!” in comes the butler. Derwent says, “Get me some more cards, will you, Meadows. These are perfectly rotten,” and Meadows says, “Yes, sir, at once, sir,” exactly as a

butler would say it. The acting is so perfect that it isn't acting at all. Meadows is, or at least *was*, a butler. That's how he got the part. In the old melodrama days the actor made the part. Now the part makes the actor. The old time actor used to act anything and everything. One day he was a villain, the next a hero, one day old, the next young. One week he was six feet high, the next he had shrunk to five feet, four inches. He acted a bishop one night and an idiot the next. It was all the same to him. Bring him anything and he'd act it.

But in the Piffle Play on the New Stage the actor is cast for his part. When they want a man to act as a butler they don't advertise for actors; they advertise for butlers.

Meadows has in his hand a little silver tray with a card on it and he says:

"Mr. Chown is downstairs, sir. May I show him up—"

Derwent says:

"Queen—four—Queen—yes, do, Meadows."

Derwent goes on:

"King—six—eight—" till the door opens again and Meadows announces, "Mr. Chown."

In comes another young man with a hat and stick in his hand. This is Charles Chown. He is just as well dressed as Derwent (only well-dressed people can get into a Piffle Play) but he looks somewhat rougher in texture. In fact the book says of him:

"Charles Chown is evidently the kind of man who would react to a share of Canadian Pacific stock rather than to a bunch of carnations. His air is that of a man who would fail to read a page of Bergson's philosophy but would like a marginal option in an oil company. He would probably prefer a Cattle show to a meeting of Secondary School teachers." So we know exactly what Charles Chown is like.

Lionel says languidly:

"Ah,—Charles. Sit down,—ace—ten—queen—"

"I've just run in for a minute," says Chown, "to give you your cigarette case. You left it at our house last night. Still nothing better to do than play patience, eh?"

"My dear fellow, what *is* there to do? Everything's been done long ago."

Chown grunts and sits down.

"After all, what is there in *life*? One simply *lives*."

Chown grunts.

"Take the thing anyway you will, I'm hanged if I can see anything more in existence than simply existing. One breathes, but why?"

Chown grunts. He evidently doesn't see why.

"I mean, here one is. Did one ask to be? Hardly. It is a matter in which one had no say. One wasn't consulted."

At this point Lionel Derwent gets up and walks over to the mantelpiece where he takes a cigarette and lights it.

This thrilling piece of action quite palpably lifts the whole play up.

Charles Chown goes and puts his hat and stick down on a table and pulls a chair near the fire and lights a cigar. This again is a regular thriller. In fact the action of the play is getting too wild altogether. So Lionel and Charles go back to their analysis of life. Some of the audience, who don't understand that they are "analyzing life" wonder what in Hades they're talking about. But these are uncultivated people who have no business in the Little Theatre and ought to be at *Big Hearted Jim* next door. The bulk of the audience are fascinated.

Chown speaks.

"That's all right, Derwent, but it's all rot—puff—You ought to come down to the Exchange—puff—some morning, then you'd know that there's something doing in life—puff."

"My dear fellow!"

"*This* morning, for instance. Steel fell fifteen points."

Lionel, very languidly, "Fell down or fell up?"

"Why, down, of course. You never heard such a racket as the fellows made."

"How can they care about it?"

"Why, hang it, think of the *money* it meant!"

"Money! Oh, I say, Chown, money! Come, come!"

Lionel who has been standing, stretches his elbows with a yawn and walks over and stands looking at a picture and muttering, "Money? I say, Chown that's rather thick! Money!"

Lionel's acting when he yawns is simply admirable. In fact it was principally his yawn that got him where he is. In the old melodrama a good actor was one who could handle a broadsword in a Highland duelling scene, or leap off a lighthouse into the sea. In the Piffle Play it means one who can yawn.

"Well, I must skip along," says Chown. "I must get down to the Exchange. So long."

When Chown goes out Lionel shrugs his shoulders as he lights another cigarette.

"What a clod!" he murmurs; then he pushes a bell button and calls out, "Meadows!"

The butler reappears.

"Will you kindly dust off that chair where Mr. Chown was sitting."

"Yes, sir,—"

Lionel watches Meadows dusting the chair for a minute. Then he says:

"I say, Meadows."

"Yes, sir."

"Has it ever occurred to you, Meadows, that some men have souls about the size of a share of preferred stock?"

"No, sir, I can't say it has—ah, excuse me, sir, there's the bell."

In another half minute Meadows reopens the door with the words:

"Mrs. Chown!"

Helga Chown comes sliding into the room. She is dark, very beautiful and as slender as a liqueur glass. Her clothes are pure art and droop on her like a butterfly's wings.

As to her character, the audience know all about it already from reading about *The Soul Call* before they see it; and, anyway, they have the book of the play which says:

"Helga, the wife of Charles Chown, is a woman whose soul has overgrown her body. Life presses on her on all sides and she cannot escape.

She beats her wings against the bars in vain"—On the old fashioned stage this beating her wings against the bars might have been misunderstood. But not so now.

Derwent rises and they come together, saying "Helga!" and "Lionel!" with an infinite depth of meaning.

Helga draws off her gloves and drops into a chair.

"Charles here?" she says.

"Just left. Did you want to see him?"

"No, to not see him. Give me a cigarette."

Lionel comes over near her and gives her a cigarette and lights it.

"Where's Mabel?" she asks.

"Gone out to the Dog Show!"

They both shudder.

"And Charles?"

"Went to the Stock Exchange."

They both shiver.

The audience are following the play with great expectancy and growing excitement. They don't expect a passionate love scene. They know better than that. But Lionel and Helga are going to "analyze themselves!" and the audience wait for it with breathless interest.

Lionel starts first.

"How easy people like Charles and Mabel seem to find life!"

Helga nods. "Yes, don't they?"

"They never seem to stop to analyze themselves."

"Perhaps," murmurs Helga, "they can't." This terrible thought holds them both silent for a minute. Then Helga, beating her wings against the bars, speaks.

"Lionel," she says, "lately, I've been trying to think it all out, what it all means. I want to see it all clearly—you and me and everything—"

Lionel has taken her hand very gently.

"Yes, dear?" he murmurs.

“No, don’t. I mean don’t take my hand, not now.” She turns to him with a perplexed, beautiful face, “I want to *think*!”

It is evidently so difficult for her to think that if he takes her hand he’ll queer it.

“I want to think it all out and when I think about it, I want to be all *me*, can’t you understand, just me and not a bit *you*. Do you know how I mean?”

“I think I do, dear.”

He doesn’t really, but this is the kind of lie that must be told.

Helga goes on with rising animation, breaking into passionate analysis of herself.

“Sometimes I sit by myself and think, and try to analyze myself and everything seems so small and myself so small too, as if nothing mattered, just like an infinitely small bit of something bigger, something lost in itself and looking for itself in itself. You know what I mean?”

“I think I do.”

“Often it seems as if there were just nothing—”

“I know,” Lionel murmurs.

“—and then, sometimes, it seems as if there must be something—”

“I know,” murmurs Lionel again.

Then they are both silent. Presently Helga speaks in a more commonplace tone.

“Doesn’t it seem queer, Lionel, how people just go on living? Take Charles and Mabel. There they are; two commonplace, ordinary people. They go about together, to Dog Shows and things—and that seems to be enough—I suppose they like one another and that’s all—they seem satisfied—and with you and me it’s so different—people like them don’t seem to know when the soul calls to another soul—”

“I know,” Lionel murmurs. His part here is very difficult. He has to sit and look like a soul and keep murmuring, “I know,” and he can’t even yawn.

Helga goes on.

“The other night at that silly Dog Show as soon as I saw you I could feel my soul calling to yours, right over the dogs—and at the Cat Show, the same

thing. But Charles and Mabel don't seem to feel things like that. At the Dog Show they seemed to be looking at the dogs. Just imagine!"

There is a long silence, and then Lionel gets up and walks the whole length of the room and back again and sits down again. This dramatic piece of action means that something is coming.

He speaks.

"Helga," he says, "I only mention this as an idea. Have you ever thought of poison?"

Helga very calmly takes out a cigarette from a case and lights it very deliberately. The audience are desperately anxious. Has she or has she not?

"Have I ever thought of poison? Poison for whom! Do you mean for us, for you and me?"

"Oh, dear, no. For Charles and Mabel. Mind, it's only an idea. If you don't like it, I'll say no more."

Helga turns to him a face of passionate yearning.

"Yes, Lionel, I *have* thought of it,—often, and often. In fact I came over here to talk of it. Every time I look at Charles I feel that the only way my soul can grow is to poison him."

"I know," Lionel murmurs. "I feel that way towards Mabel and it's only just to her, poor girl, to poison her."

Presently Helga says:

"When can we do it?"

"To-day would be all right. Mabel's going out to tea with you this afternoon, isn't she? We can arrange it for then."

"But I don't know whether I have any poison in the house. I am so unpractical a housekeeper, you know, dear."

"That doesn't matter. I'll tell Meadows to get some and take it over to Annette, your maid."

"But then Meadows would know."

"So he would. But that needn't matter. One could poison Meadows too."

"But Annette?"

"The simplest thing would be to poison Annette as well. After all, what does life mean for people like Annette and Meadows? They breathe, but

that's all."

"And after it's over?"

Lionel and Helga have risen and he draws close to her and puts his hand on her shoulders and is looking into her eyes.

"After it's over, then we shall be *free*, free to be ourselves and go away, far, far, away—together—"

They embrace and when they break away Lionel leads Helga to the door and shows her out.

Then he goes and sits down again and picks up a newspaper to read. After a minute he rings the bell. Meadows comes.

"I say, Meadows, pack up a trunk of my things. I'm going away to-night."

"Yes, sir."

"And, Meadows, I wish you'd be good enough to go out and get a packet of arsenic."

"Yes, sir."

"Get enough to, let me see——"

"To poison an animal, sir?"

"Yes, four animals. Thank you, Meadows—-"

And with that the two sides of the curtain fall slowly together and the act is over.

In the old melodrama when the curtain fell there was always a wild burst of music and bright lights and shouts of "Peanuts." Not so in this. Only very soft lights, mostly red, are turned on and mere wisps of music thin as smoke.

Meantime everybody discusses the play. In the old days the men used to go out and drink. Now they stay in and discuss. There is a general feeling among the women that Helga is quite right in proposing to poison Charles. Till she does that she can never expand. The case of Mabel being poisoned is not so clear. The audience haven't seen her yet, so they can't tell. But it is certain that two commonplace people like Charles and Mabel have no right to prevent Lionel and Helga following the higher call of their natures. The discussion is still at its height when the curtain slides aside on

ACT II—The Drawing-Room of the Chown Residence

And there are Lionel Derwent and his wife Mabel being shown in by Annette, the stage maid.

"*Every time I look at Charles I feel that the only way my soul can grow is to poison him.*"

It is a large and sumptuous room with a real ceiling like the one in the first act, and with real mahogany furniture and Chippendale chairs and vases of Beauty roses—in fact just like the room that the audience have come out of. There are tea things on a large Hindoo brass tray on eight legs.

Mabel Derwent goes over to the Hindoo tray and picks up a big cream-candy out of a box and eats it and says "Yum! Yum!" with animal relish. All the audience look at Mabel. They see in her a dashing, good looking woman,

a blonde, all *style*. All the women in the audience decide at once that she ought to be poisoned, but the men aren't so sure.

Mabel says:

"I say, Lionel, do eat one of these. They're just scrumptious."

This is meant to show how terribly material she is.

Lionel just shrugs his shoulders in mute appeal to Heaven.

Mabel walks around the room looking at things. She picks up a book and reads the title. "Bergsonian Illusionism," she says, "oh, help!" and drops it.

This shows how uncultivated she is.

Presently she says:

"Wonder where Charles is. If he's out in the stables I'll go out and dig him up. He told me he has a new hunter, a regular corker. Suppose we go out to the stables—"

Lionel says with great languor:

"Thank you. I take no interest in stables."

By this time the audience are supposed to have the exact measure of Mabel Derwent, materialism, ignorance, candy, and the horse stable. But even at that a lot of the men would refuse to poison her. Her figure is too good. On the other hand all the thin women in the audience think her too fat. The amount of fat permitted to actresses in the Piffle Play is a matter of great nicety. They have to be cast for it as carefully as tallow candles.

So as the audience now know exactly what Mabel Derwent is like, the play passes on.

Charles Chown comes briskly in, shaking hands with both of them, "Hullo, Mabel. How do you do, Lionel; so sorry to keep you waiting. I think Helga's in the conservatory, she'll be here in a minute."

In which Lionel Derwent says, "In the conservatory? Then I think I'll go and look for her. I want to see that new begonia that Helga's so keen about."

And with that out he goes, leaving Charles and Mabel together, as they are meant to be.

And just the minute they are alone Mabel comes close up to Charles and looks all round and says:

“Well?” in quite a different voice from anything she has used before. So the audience are certain that there is going to be something doing.

Charles says:

“It’s all right. Everything arranged.”

And Mabel says, “Good boy—” and then she says, “Take that,” and comes and gives him a kiss. A real one, one with no new art or new thought about it.

Charles goes on.

“It’s all arranged. We’ll go out to the stables presently and I’ve got a taxi coming round there with your things in it.”

“And it’s all right about the trains—”

“Right as rain,” says Charles, drawing out a railroad folder. “We get the five thirty at the Central. Change trains half an hour out of town to get the Havana boat to-morrow evening.”

“Lovely!” Mabel says, and then repeats more slowly and thoughtfully, “Lovely—and yet do you know, Charlie, now that it’s come at last I feel—don’t you know—half afraid—or not that—but don’t you know?” hesitating.

Charles, says “Nonsense,” and is just about to draw her to him when the door opens and Lionel and Helga come in. Lionel says to his wife:

“Helga’s just been showing me her new begonia, a most amazing thing.”

And Mabel says:

“A new begonia! Where did it come from, Helga?”

And Helga answers.

“From Havana. They grow so beautifully there. I should just love to see Havana. Shouldn’t you?”

Some of the audience. . . wonder what in Hades they're talking about. But these are uncultivated people.

This little touch makes quite a hit with the audience. The irony of truth always does. As a matter of fact Sophocles started it four or five hundred years before Christ. But they don't know it. They think it awfully up-to-date.

After this there's a little random conversation just to fill up time and then Charles says:

"I say, Mabel, how would you like to come out to the stables and see my new mare before we have tea?"

And Mabel answers:

"Oh, I'd love to. I want to ask you about her. Come along. We won't be long, Helga."

And with that they go out and Lionel and Helga are left together.

Just as soon as they are alone Helga says:

"So you're off the poison idea?"

"Clear off it," says Lionel, "as I told you just now, I don't think it's worth it."

"Worth it?"

"Yes—I mean it would involve such a terrible fuss and nuisance. Here's the poison—Meadows got it all right—"

Lionel takes from his pocket a large packet in light green paper, marked with a skull and crossbones and labelled ARSENIC in large letters.

"We can use it if you like. I'm not awfully particular. Only I don't believe that much would kill Mabel anyway."

Helga takes the packet of poison and holds it in her hand musing—

"But think," she murmurs, "of the relief of death. Think of the relief to a person of Charlie's temperament to be dead—"

"Oh, I know that. And for that matter, Meadows ought to be glad to be dead. But you see Helga, it isn't done."

Lionel walks across the stage and lights a cigarette.

"But what can we do?" says Helga. She clasps her hands about her knees as she sits. When she does that the audience know at once that she is going to analyze herself. "Do you ever look into yourself, Lionel, deep, deep into yourself? I do. Sometimes I try to picture to myself that it's not me but just something inside of me. Do you know what I mean, dear."

"I think I do," murmurs Lionel.

They're off. For the next ten minutes Helga plunges into a fierce analysis of herself. As the critics of the play say afterwards, she "bares her soul," and when she has bared it it's "the soul of a woman buffeted by the intense light of self-perplexity and finding no anchorage in it."

When she is finished or as nearly finished as she is likely to be, Lionel says—

"Then I suppose we must simply go on as we are—"

"I suppose so, Lionel. If, as you say, Charles and Mabel have a right to live, it seems as if we have to be satisfied."

"Perhaps it does," says Lionel. He takes a turn up and down the room and then he says:

"There's just one thing I've thought about Helga. It's only an idea, so of course you can say no to it at once if there's nothing in it. But couldn't we perhaps get just get on a train together and go away together?"

"Where?" says Helga.

"Oh, just anywhere. It's only an idea. You mentioned Havana just now. Couldn't we just get a train or a boat or something and go to Havana?"

"I don't know, Lionel. It all seems so strange. I must *think*."

Helga presses her hand to her forehead; this is always a sign that she is thinking, or trying to. Lionel lets her think undisturbed.

"I don't know, Lionel, I must think it all out. I must analyze myself and try to analyze Havana. Listen, Lionel; let me think a month. Perhaps it will be clearer then—"

Lionel looks at his watch.

"I say," he says, "Charles and Mabel seem a long time in looking at that mare. How strange it seems that commonplace people like Charles and Mabel can know nothing of the kind of thing that means so much to us. I suppose they never stop to think."

"They never analyze themselves—" murmurs Helga.

And just then there is a light knock at the door and Annette steps in with an envelope on a tray.

"Mr. Chown asked me to give you this letter, Ma'am, after he had gone."

"Had gone?"

"Yes, ma'am, he went away in a taxi with Mrs. Derwent."

"In a taxi?"

"Yes, ma'am, with luggage in it."

"A taxi with luggage. Give me the letter."

Annette presents the letter and goes out.

Helga takes the letter, tears open the envelope and reads aloud—

"Dear Helga: Mabel and I have decided to go away together. We are taking a train South this afternoon. I have made every arrangement for you in regard to money and that sort of thing and of course now you will be completely free. We shall not be in your way at all, as we are going far away; in fact we are going to Havana!"

As Helga finishes reading, she and Lionel remain looking at one another.

"To Havana!" they both repeat and then there is a little silence.

After which Lionel says—

"Do you know, Helga, it rather occurs to me that it's the commonplace people who do things."

On which the curtain comes sliding together and the audience rises and wraps its furs round its neck, and goes home with a problem theme to ponder over and with an impression of profound thought.

III. "Dead Men's Gold"

A Film of the Great Nevada Desert

"*I do like these choking scenes, don't you?*"

A film of the great Nevada desert in which Red-Blooded, Able-Bodied Men and Women a hundred per cent. American live and love among the cactus and chaparral. Something of the Ozone of the Cow Pasture mingled with the gloom of the great canyons blows all through this play.

Shall we go together this raw, gusty afternoon to the enchantment of the moving pictures? Here, this looks a good place, this large and lighted hallway leading off the street itself. Let's get our tickets from this golden girl behind the glass, seated there under a magic spell no doubt. This *must* be a good play, look how pretty the girl is! Two, yes please, downstairs.—extra ten cents? oh, the Amusement Tax, of course!

Now through these doors and down this corridor, and through these swinging doors again and into the dark. What a vast place it is. Dear me, it's absolutely empty! Empty? Oh, no, they are all there but you don't see them yet, seated silent in the dark like toads under leaves. Excuse me, sir, I'm afraid I stepped on your foot. I beg your pardon madam. I didn't see the little girl. All that bright picture stuff being flashed on the screen? Never mind it now till we get our seats. It's not part of our play anyhow. There, sit down in this row—now we can look—what does it say?—TURKISH TROOPS ENTER THE—something—I couldn't see—anyway it doesn't matter where they enter, it's only the News of the World. PASADENA CALIFORNIA PRESIDENT HARDING PRESENTS FLOWERS TO GIRL GUIDES—

STATE UNIVERSITY OF OHIO DEFEATS MIAMI AT BASKET-BALL—NATIVES OF DUTCH PAPUA HUNTING FROGS—PRINCE ARTHUR IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY CATCHING TARPON: Oh, don't let us bother with all this, the pictures haven't begun yet.

Ah, now it's going to begin. Look at that notice on the screen—

Dead Men's Gold In Which Full-Blooded Men and Women Live and Love Among the Cactus and Chaparral Authorized by the Censor of New York State.

That sounds interesting, doesn't it? Now let's see what's put up next. Ah, a great face, a huge face under a cowboy hat, a face with a grin on it, yes, that's him, see it says so underneath:—

Big-Hearted Jim Sheriff of Dead Bones County Nevada

See him turn his face round as he grins. My! how honest and attractive the human face looks when you make it four feet long. I wish they'd put it upside down. I think it would look even better. Now, what's this next—ah—

Bessemer Steel, Banker of New York.

—Very rich indeed evidently. How do I know that?— Oh, pshaw, you don't understand moving pictures—look at his grey spats and that white frill along his waistcoat—that means a millionaire. No, no, this isn't the play yet, these are only the people who are going to be in the play when it starts. Ah, *now* look!

Maisie, Bessemer Steel's Only Daughter

Isn't she just cute? See her smile, no wonder they applaud her—and who is this?

Dan Yegg, Bad Man of Dead Man's Gulch

Bad, well I should say so. And now see all these little scenes going rapidly past—well, they're not the play yet—those are merely places that are going to be in the play—just little touches of lonely desert, and terrible caverns, and a dear little vignette of a man choking another in a cave—and a pretty little wee glimpse of a man dying of thirst—just little foretastes of the play itself. It looks good stuff, doesn't it? Now, we're off!

Bessemer Steel of New York, Banker and Financier, Has Spent His Life In the Amassing of Millions

A great face, a huge face under a cowboy hat, a face with a grin on it.

There he is in his office; see all the desks and stenographers round him. What a big, dull face he has; like a bull-frog, you say? Yes, all New York bankers have faces like that in the movies. See him speaking into his desk telephone. Say, isn’t he authoritative? Now, look, he’s listening. Must be about money from the way he shuts up his face. I guess he’s refusing somebody one of those millions that he’s amassed. Now he’s signing a cheque. Now he’s receiving a telegram . . . . in fact by this time I think we’ve quite grasped the idea that he’s a rich banker with no soul. In fact, I think I could have grasped it a little sooner, couldn’t you? But, still, remember the moving pictures have to be made clear to the humblest

intelligence. And that isn’t us . . . Ah, ha, no soul did we say?—Look at this;—

> *The Only Tender Spot In the Banker’s Heart Is For His Daughter Maisie. To Her He Denies Nothing.*

See, the pictures are about to establish the fact that Maisie is denied nothing. Look at her there in her palatial home, romping with a pet dog. Oh, how sweet she is! See her kiss that dog—oh, my, I wonder what they pay that dog for his part. There she is, riding her pony round the grounds; now she is entertaining a whole bevy of her girl friends on the lawn—now she’s in a store buying rich things—say, I think it’s proved up to the hilt that that girl is denied nothing! On with the film!—but wait,—just a minute—did you notice among the clerks in the office, that young man? . . . sort of Spanish-looking, mean-looking—kind of a crook—species of skunk—evidently *not* a hundred per cent. American—in fact hardly twenty per cent. See the way he keeps a sort of furtive eye on the banker. Say, I believe that fellow must come into the play somehow—just watch him. Never mind, he’s gone, but he’ll come in again. Now we go on. Ah, this is more like.

> *Ascot Wright, Student At Harvard.*

I’m glad it’s Harvard. So much more class to it than the Ontario Agricultural College—

> *Has Discovered In His Researches In The Harvard Library The Location Of a Lost Gold Mine In A Cavern In Dead Men’s Gulch Near Graveyard Canyon In Dead Bones County Nevada*

Here we have him. Ascot Wright researching in the library, the way all Harvard students do. How neat he is. I thought all researchers looked pretty dusty, but perhaps not. Anyhow Ascot is as neat as a pin, and athletic-looking, and awfully well dressed for a student. Perhaps his father is a Harvard professor.

Now see! Evidently he’s struck something among the books—see him take paper from the leaves of an old volume! He’s examining it—feverishly: say, I can just tell that Ascot has discovered a gold mine. He’s working his face just the way a student does when he finds one. Ah, see that! You don’t understand? Those pictures represent what Ascot is reading about. Look! that’s the Great Western Desert . . . See the little troop of people! horsemen and mules with pack-saddles, crossing it, see the steel uniforms and

breastplates, and swords—early Spaniards, that's what they are . . . the first discoverers of the west . . . look! they've entered a cavern: say, the gloom of it! They're digging with pickaxes! Look, look! They're piling up great bars of gold. They're mad with excitement, they're quarrelling—they're fighting—they're stabbing one another . . . Look, dead bodies—dead bones—dead bones in the cavern—dead bones all along the trail—it means the survivors tried to escape, do you see? Look, here's one, he's the last . . . he's dying of thirst in the desert; see him writing on a bit of paper . . . there, he's folded it into a missal, a prayer book or something. I know what it is—it's the description of all about the mine in the cavern, and the piled-up gold, do you see? and that's the paper that Ascot Wright has found in the Harvard library three hundred years later. Look! it's saying so:—

> *The Manuscript Written In Latin By The Dying Spanish Explorer Pedro Alvarez De Estorga Is Deciphered By The Harvard Student.*

There's Ascot, look at him with the paper in front of him, deciphering it!—deciphering *Latin*! Isn't he a bird? My! A Harvard education is a wonderful thing . . . Now what's it saying?

> *The Harvard Student Lays His Discovery Before The Great Financier.*

There he is, that's Ascot in Bessemer Steel's inner office. How neat he looks in his covert coat and his hard hat. These Harvard students certainly have class. He's explaining to the banker all about the mine. . . . The great banker is listening. . . . He's hearing all about the documents. See! the pictures go by again—desert—cavern—bones—more bones—dying Spaniard—document—bones—gold— He's got it. These New York bankers are just lightning at picking up bones and gold.

Now he's speaking—

> *Mr. Wright, This Must Be Kept A Profound Secret.*

Oh, but can it be? Look who's listening . . . that clerk, you remember the crook, the one with the cunning face—he's pushed open the door a little way — He's standing listening—they don't see him.

> . . . . *We Will Go West At Once. I Will Defray The Expenses Of The Search And Divide With You Fifty-Fifty*

What splendid English, those great bankers use! So clear, isn't it?

And just then, who comes dancing into the office through the side door—Maisie. Isn't she just sweet with her fur around her neck; say, look, she's got one of those new skirts. Watch her go and throw her arms around the banker's neck . . . see his face light up! In fact, you can see him light it up . . . Now he is introducing Ascot Wright to Maisie— They bow to one another—say, Ascot is taken with Maisie right away, isn't he?— Now the Spanish clerk comes in with papers in his hands. He bows to Maisie. How coldly she nods to him. But look at his eyes when he looks at her. I get it, don't you? And that look of hate that he hands to Ascot! Those Spaniards certainly have temperament. The moving pictures would be lost without them.

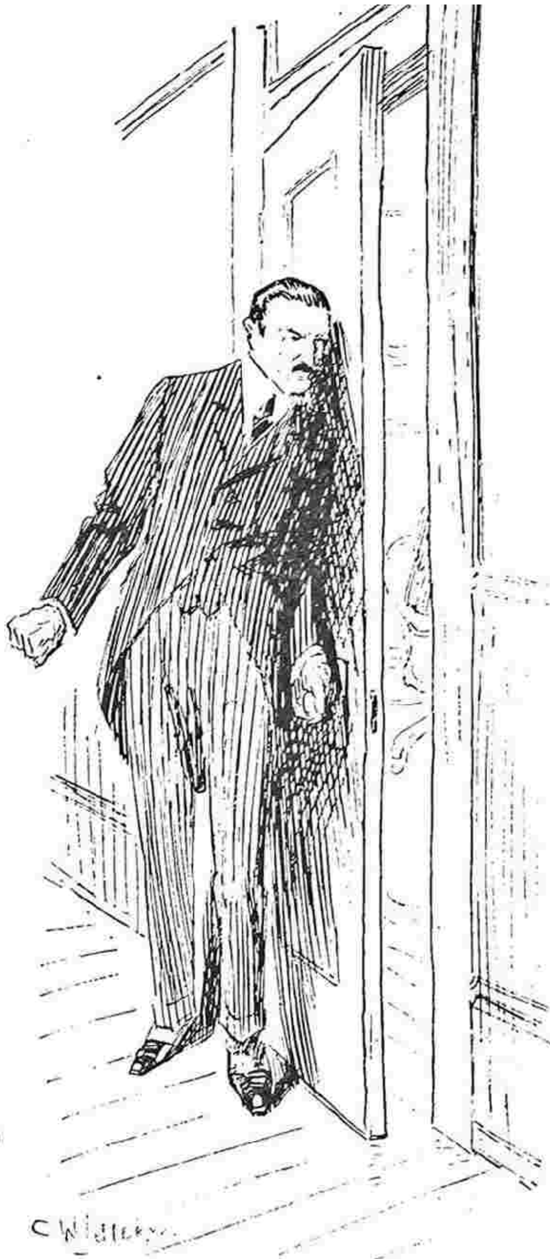
Now, the banker is speaking:

> *Mr. Gonzalez, I Am Leaving To-night For Nevada. Will You Kindly Make The Arrangements For My Transportation——*

Look! Maisie wants to go too . . . She's questioning her father . . . he's shaking his head . . . She's put her arms around his neck. Oh, take her, take her, or I'll buy a ticket to Nevada and take her myself . . .

Scene changed. The Pennsylvania Station. Look at all the people. Isn't it just wonderful to see the Pennsylvania Station in moving pictures; much better than in real life; but then, so's everything. They're leaving for Nevada. Maisie is going too; there she is: do you notice, she's got on one of those new coats they're wearing. Do you like them?

And there's Ascot. That's a nice valise he has . . . and the banker, and Gonzalez. No, he's not going, he's just seeing them off. The banker's giving him papers and instructions . . . there, they're getting on their journey— See the landscape flying past—now they're in a dining-car. See the darky waiters—look at the banker ordering lunch . . . I'll bet he knows how: He'll eat lunch all the way to Nevada.



It’s always called Pete’s Place or something like that.

But look—we’re back at the station. It’s Gonzalez, he’s buying a ticket. He’s getting on the train. . . . I see it, don’t you? He’s following them. I knew he would—

Now the scene has changed altogether. They're arriving in Nevada. This is Canyon City . . . a queer, empty spot . . . shack houses and desert and hills all around it . . . see the wooden hotel with the verandah and the men on horseback with leather trousers and with lariats on the pommel of the saddle . . . and the men leaning against the verandah posts with lariats slung over their arms. Look at that big man with the slouch hat and the wide face. That's the one it showed at the beginning . . . he's big Jim, the sheriff . . . he's talking to them . . . they're explaining what they want.

Now it's changed again. Where is this place? Oh, yes, I recognize it—it's a saloon—see the bar and all the bottles and the bar-tender leaning over it—pretty tough looking, isn't it . . . see the men sitting at the little table drinking whiskey . . . I've seen this sort of place a hundred times in the movies, haven't you? It's always called Pete's Place or something like that . . . That's Gonzalez, one of the men drinking, and that other is Dan Yegg, the bad man that we saw, and the rest, I guess, are bandits . . . they must be . . . Now, Gonzalez is explaining. He's telling about Bessemer Steel and Ascot Wright coming to hunt for the gold . . . he's telling the story of the Spanish explorers . . . There it goes—desert—bones, gold, more bones, dying Spaniard,— They've got it:— Look how excited they get——

Look who's listening . . . that clerk.

Now it's changed back to Ascot and his friends . . . They're mounting on horseback. Doesn't Maisie look nice in that short skirt? I guess she brought it with her on purpose. Look at the armed men! quite a troop of them. Oh, I

guess they'd need them in a place like that . . . Big Jim is pointing and giving advice: I suppose he's telling them the way to Dead Men's Gulch. There, they're off—clattering out of the town and away.

Separated From Their Armed Escort, Ascot And His Companions Make Their Way Into The Heart Of Dead Men's Gulch.

Separated from their armed escort? A crazy thing to do in a place like that, you say? Oh, yes, but they always do it, in all romances. The first thing you have to do with an armed escort is to separate yourself from it.

But say! look at the Gulch. Isn't that the gloom spot? See the great walls of rock towering above their heads, and the litters of boulders where they pick their way. Look, that's a snake, a real snake. Ugh! Aren't they crazy to go into a place like that? There's Ascot leading them, with a little bit of map or chart in his hand. And, oh look! look! Do you see that? Those heads behind the rocks, they're being followed—it's Gonzalez and Dan Yegg and Mexican bandits. Say! it's just madness to get separated from that escort.

What's this? They've stopped. Ascot's pointing. He's found the entrance of a sort of tunnel into the cliff . . . they're going into it . . . They're carrying flashlights . . . The light shines on the rock walls . . . What a fearsome place. Look—written there on the wall in strange lettering:

Pedro Alvarez De Estorga
1621

They gather round it . . . They're reading the inscription . . . Now they're going on—the tunnel is widening—it's opening into a great cavern . . . notice the high ceiling and the hanging rocks—with the water dripping from it . . . I suppose it's dripped like that for centuries—see the floor all sand—and there! bones of dead men,—and a steel breastplate and part of a broken sword . . . and over in the corner gold piled up in bar, and great nuggets of it heaped up—on the floor.

Ascot is picking up the gold and showing it to Maisie. Bessemer Steel has taken up a nugget and is examining it. I bet he knows to a fraction what it is worth—Ha! He's showing it and speaking:

I Estimate That There Is At A Conservative Estimate Two Million Dollars Of Gold Lying At Our Feet.

Say! Two million! and at a conservative estimate! Think of the coolness of the man making a conservative estimate in a place like that.

Great Heavens! The whole three of them have turned in sharp alarm! They hear something—someone in the tunnel. Here they come dashing into the cavern—armed men—Gonzalez and Yegg and the bandits. They've rushed at Ascot and the banker—three of them are fighting Ascot all at once . . . go to it, Ascot, that's the way—Now he's down—no, he's up again—he's down—they're clubbing him—and the banker, Dan Yegg has him down and is choking him— That's the way, choke him—keep it up—Now this is really enjoyable. This is the real thing . . . go on—keep on choking him. that's right, pound Ascot over the head with a rock—admirable! I do like these choking scenes, don't you?

They're both insensible—inanimate on the floor of the cave—now they've grabbed Maisie—they're binding her with cords—good . . . twist her up tight—that's the way—give her another wind. It enhances the educational value of the film . . .

There, they've gathered her up . . . they've put the gold into bags . . . they're carrying Maisie and the gold down the tunnel . . . they're coming out at the entrance. Oh, see what they're doing! . . . they're blocking the mouth of the tunnel with great rocks . . . the bodies of Ascot and Bessemer will never be found. . . .

Now they're lifting Maisie into a motor car . . . that must have been waiting down the Gulch . . . they've got her mouth gagged; I hadn't noticed that before. That's a good touch, isn't it? . . . There! they're all in . . . they're off . . . out of the gulch . . . out on the mesa . . . away . . . away . . . fading into the distant hills . . . gone.

Where is it now? It's such a poor light, I can't see, can you? Oh, yes, I got it. It's inside the cave again. . . . Ascot and Bessemer Steel flat on the sand . . . the light is that electric torch still lying on its side and burning . . . Look, Ascot moved his arm . . . he's reviving . . . he's half sitting up . . . he's feeling Bessemer Steel's heart. Bessemer is reviving too. They'll both be all right in a few minutes. They were only clubbed with rocks and stabbed and choked. That's nothing. Movie actors go through far worse than that and revive . . . Didn't I tell you? . . . Ascot has stood up . . . he walks painfully . . . for five seconds . . . now he walks all right . . . he's looking round . . . he's taking the torch and going into the tunnel . . . he's coming back, he is speaking to Bessemer:

They Have Walled Up The Mouth Of The Tunnel

Yes, Ascot, we knew that, we saw them doing it. But look at the horror on Bessemer Steel's face . . . now he's speaking:

Ascot, We Are Lost. There Is Nothing In Front Of Us But A Slow Death.

But look at Ascot . . . see his set jaw and his clenched hand and his brave face! see what he says!

We Are Not Lost Mr. Steel. I Can Save Us Yet.

Oh, bully for you Ascot, that's the stuff. That Harvard training does it every time.

Whatever is Ascot doing now? . . . he's picking up the broken bits of the old Spanish armour . . . he's fitting things together . . . what's he making? He's taken out a long thin wire from his pocket, a coil of it . . . he's fastened a weight to it, he's thrown it to the roof of the cave . . . it's caught on a jag of rock . . . now he's fastening it down tight on the ground and attaching something to it. Ah, I catch on, I see it, don't you? Why, Radio! He's got a radio machine with him; now they'll make it all clear in writing in a minute —didn't I tell you? There it is—

Ascot Wright With The Aid Of A Wire And The Fragments Of Old Armour And An Electric Torch Makes A Radio. "Mr. Steel In Five Minutes I Shall Be In Communication With Canyon City."

Look! He's getting into communication . . . zik—zik—see the big blue sparks running down the wire and lighting up the cave—zik—zik—zak—zak—zik . . . he's sending his message. . . .

Ah! Here's the other end of it. The wireless station at Canyon City . . . see the operator in his room with a sort of helmet on and the wires and sparks all round him . . . zik—zak—zik . . . the message is coming through . . . Look at the operator—all hurry and alarm—he writes down the message, he's dashed out with it in his hand . . . he's reading it to Big Jim, the Sheriff, see the excited crown gathering . . . Jim's haranguing them.

Mr. Steel And Ascot Wright Are Walled Up In A Cave Off Dead Man's Gulch . . . Miss Steel Has Been Carried Off By Bandits. I Want Every Man That Can Ride And Handle A Gun.

Hurrah! That’s the way—off they go . . . see them leap on the horses and off in a whirl of dust . . . See the Winchester rifles slung over their shoulders . . . there’s Big Jim at the head of them . . . out of the town and over the desert . . . There, they’re riding into the Gulch . . . Ascot must have given them the directions . . . they halted . . . they’re at the walled up tunnel . . . they’re tearing down the stones . . . they’re entering the cave, it’s bright now with torches . . . and crowded with men . . . they’ve found Ascot and Bessemer Steel . . . Big Jim has put a flask to their lips . . . that’ll help them . . . Now Ascot’s explaining, the gold, the attack,—everything . . . see them crowd listening with the light on their faces . . .

Out of the cave . . . out into the bright sunshine . . . and riding, riding for life . . . but where? How can they know . . . and the motor had a long start. What is that they plan to do . . . riding, riding, they don’t seem to be chasing anything, they seem to be going somewhere. Oh! look! what’s this place with tall frame sheds and the level ground? Oh, I get it—fine! fine! See that great sign:

Aeroplane Station Of The Government Of The United States.

Isn’t that great? What a thing it is to live under a government that keeps aeroplanes even away out in the desert.

Now they’re running aeroplanes out of the shed—what a huge machine! They’re getting in, and Bessemer Steel, and Big Jim, the Sheriff, and his men; see, Ascot is going to steer: I guess his head is all right again now. That little thumping up with the rocks merely woke up his brain.

Away they go—up—up—see the machine soaring in the blue sky, floating, hovering like a great bird watching for its prey . . . it’s circling round searching for the motor car. Aha! they must see it now . . . Look at the aeroplane swooping down . . . and see, there’s the motor . . . rushing over the mesa . . . here it’s coming right past us. Gonzalez is at the wheel. There’s Maisie in the back of the car still tied . . . here’s the aeroplane right after it . . . look at Dan Yegg standing up in the car and shooting at the aeroplane with a revolver . . . They’re shooting back . . . that’s Big Jim with his Winchester leaning over the edge of the car . . . look, the motor running straight for the edge of the canyon . . . Great Caesar, it’s gone over . . . it’s a drop of a thousand feet . . . look . . . there’s the car falling through the air, the wheels still spinning . . . and there’s the aeroplane chasing it as it falls . . . watch Big Jim . . . he’s got a coil of rope, a lassoo . . . he’s lassooed Maisie with it . . . Hurrah, they’re hauling her on the aeroplane . . . The motor can

fall now, it doesn't matter where it falls to . . . there's the aeroplane, landed . . . Maisie's unbound . . . she's in her father's arms . . . he's handing her to Ascot. . . .

What's it saying?—oh? that's just the wind-up.

> *And So These Twin Souls Join Henceforth To Walk Life's Pathway Hand In Hand Next Week Mutt And Jeff Among The Monkeys Don't Miss It.*

IV. "The Greek Drama"

As Presented in Our Colleges

"*Attaboy, Oroastus! Good work, Teddy!*"

The Greek drama, as everybody knows, possesses a majesty that we do not find elsewhere. It has a loftiness, a sublimity, to which no later theatre has attained. Anybody who has seen the play of Alcestis put on by the senior class of the Podunk High School will admit this at once.

The Greek drama, unfortunately, is no longer exhibited to the ordinary theatre-going public.

It is too sublime for them. They are away beneath it. The attempt to put on one act of the Oedipus Polyphlogistus of Boanerges at the entertainment evening of the annual convention of the Rubber Men of America last January was voted down by a nine to one vote in favour of having Highland Dances of the Six Susquehanna Sisters.

Another difficulty is that a lot of the Greek drama is lost. Some critics think that all the best of it is lost; others, not all others, again claim that what we have ought to make us feel that we have no right to complain over what is lost.

But though the Greek drama is not presented in our commercial theatres, it still flourishes in our institutions of learning. One may yet see the stupendous tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides put on in the auditorium of

the Jefferson High School or acted, under pressure, by the boys of St. Peter's (Episcopal) Resident Academy, or presented in commencement week by the Fi Fi Omega (oil) Fraternity of the University of Atalanta.

The open season for the Greek drama in the college is the month of February. This gives the students four months to learn the Greek lines, and is based on a piece work rate of five words a day. After the play they have still time to get back to what is now called "normalcy" before the end of the college session.

Let us therefore transport ourselves in fancy to the winter evening in a college town when the Greek play is to be put on by the senior class in classics. There is no unusual light or brilliance in the streets to announce this fact. On the contrary, the general appearance is as of gloom. Here and there a glaring light against a hoarding brazenly announces the vulgar fact that Harold Lloyd, or rather his shade, is revolving at the Coliseum. But of the fact that the shade of Sophocles is to be at the auditorium of the Faculty of Liberal Arts there is no public indication. Nor is the location of Sophocles easy to find. Our first attempt to follow what seems to be the movement of the crowd leads us vainly towards the entrance of Third Street skating rink and then to the lighted portico of the Gayety Burlesque Theatre, Ladies Cordially Welcomed. No such lighted path leads to the august dead. Nor are the services of a taxi of any use to us. The driver has not heard of the performance, is not aware apparently of the existence of the college auditorium and can only suggest that Sophocles himself may be staying at the Jefferson: Most of the actors do.

But to anybody accustomed to colleges and their ways it is not difficult to find the auditorium. One has but to notice here and there among the elm trees of the side streets a few shivering figures moving in the same direction and wearing a costume halfway between fashion and disreputability. These are college professors and they are going to the play. Let us follow them.

"*Fetch in the girls by all means.*"

We do this and we easily find the auditorium; in fact, on a close inspection we can distinctly see light here and there in its windows and people going in. Entrance is effected in two ways, either by ticket, for those who have tickets, or without a ticket for those who haven't got a ticket. When we are well inside the place, we find a large placard, visible only to those who have got in, announcing the attraction:

A GREAT TRAGEDY
The Greek Play
"OROASTUS"

Put on in the original by
the Senior Class

A Masterpiece of Sorrow
Don’t Miss It.
“All Up.”

There is quite a sprinkling of people already seated. There must be what is called “easily three hundred.” But on such occasions nobody is mean enough to count the audience. We are shown to our seats by girl ushers in college gowns and bobbed hair, a touch of old Greek life which goes to our heart.

If the senior class understood advertising as well as they know Greek, they would have put that placard near the railway station and had a band playing and one or two of the girls with bobbed hair selling tickets behind glass. Nor would it have been necessary to select the girls who knew most Greek. But still—we started by saying that the Greek drama was lofty; let it remain so.

When we get to our seats we realize that we needn’t have come for a long time yet. There is no evidence of anybody starting anything, Greek or otherwise. There is a subdued chatter among the audience and people straggling in, one, two, and even three at a time. We notice presently that all the audience in the hall except ourselves have got little books or pamphlets—paper things that look like the uplift hymns at a Rotary Club six o’clock supper, or the hymnal of a Chautauqua Society. We go back to the outer entrance and get one (fifty cents each) and find that this priceless thing is the book of the play with the Greek on one side and the English (it seems English) on the other. So now we can take our seats again and study the thing out.

On the outside of the book of the play is an announcement for

KOLLEGE KLOTHES

Superb Suits, $13.50, Classy Overcoats, $9.50.

—but we had always known that education was a struggle and we pass this by.

On the inside the thing begins in earnest.

It is still a little sprinkled with advertisements here and there, but we rightly gather that they are not essential to the tragedy. The book runs thus:

OROASTUS

Kollege Klothes and Students Boots. A Greek Drama dating probably from the fifteenth century *Students Shirts* before Christ. The play is generally attributed to Diplodocus, who lived probably at Megara but also perhaps *Knit to Fit Underwear for College Men* at Syracuse. His work *All Wool* is generally esteemed on a par with that of his great contemporaries Iambilichus and Euarbilius. He is said on what seems credible ground to have died during the presentation of one of his own plays. But the place of his death *Third Avenue and Jefferson St. The Home Lunch Resort* is unknown.

The entire works of Diplodocus with the single extant exception of Oroastus are lost but they are none the less esteemed on that account. A full account of his life was written by Polybius but is lost. (*Rah! Rah! Join The Mandolin Club*). A critique of his genius written by Diogenes Laertius but attributed also to Pliny, has perished. The bust of Diplodocus, said to be the work of Phidias Senior, was lost, either at sea or on land. The bust now in the Louvre was executed one thousand six hundred years after his supposed death, and may or may not have shown him as he was. Internal evidence goes to show that Diplodocus was, internally, very unhappy *Try Possums Pills One A Day!* From the play before us many lines have unfortunately been lost. But the loss is in every case indicated by asterisks in the text *Get Your Neckties At Appletons*.

The simple theme of sorrow, the rigour of fate, and the emptiness of human desire dominate the play *Have You Joined the Bible Class. Now Is the Time To Join.*

And at this point the solid Greek begins, pages and pages of it, and facing it on the other side solid masses of English. And just as we begin to try and study it out—we ought really to have begun a month ago—we realize that the entertainment is beginning.

The huge white sheet that acts as a curtain slides sideways groaning on a wire and behold the platform of the Auditorium, converted into the severe stage of the Greeks with white curtains on the sides and a bare floor, and of stage properties no trace. No comfortable little red mica fire burning at the side such as cheers the actors of a drawing-room play; none of the green grass and the cardboard inn with the swinging sign that stand for eighteenth century comedy; nothing of the sweep of rock and the curtain of cloud that indicates that Forbes Robertson is about to be Hamlet. Nothing, just nothing: boards, a little sawdust, room to come in and out, and sorrow.

That is all that the Greeks asked or wanted. How infinitely superior to ourselves, who have so piled up panoply of life about us that our lightest acts and our deepest grief must alike be hanged with priceless decorations. But the Greek theatres like the four bare walls of the Puritan House of Worship—but stop, the play has started.

A tall figure walks in, a player in a long draped sheet of white, a bearded player, with a chaplet of leaves about his head. . . . This must be Oroastus, let me look, yes it's Oroastus, King of Thebes. What's he saying? A sort of long-drawn, howling "*Aie! Aie! Aie! Aie!*" My! My! Oroastus must be in a terrible way.

"*Aie, aie, aie, aie!*"

This must be that note of sorrow that I spoke about; or else it is some of the internal melancholy of Diplodocus.

Oroastus, King of Thebes, walks out pretty well into the middle of the stage and stands there groaning. Aie, Aie, Aie. . . .

So to get a clue to what is now going to happen we look at our book of the play to see that the next thing marked in the English text is:

Entry of the Chorus

Ah now! cheer up! that's something like, the Chorus! Bring them right along in. No doubt they will be of that beautiful type of classic Greek girls. If there is one thing that we specialize on in the modern drama it is the chorus. Fetch the girls in by all means.

In they come. Help! What is this? Three old men—very aged, with cotton wool beards and long white robes like the one Oroastus wears.

No, there is no doubt about it, the Greek idea of a chorus is a matter on which we take issue at once. These three old men may think themselves terribly cute, but for us, quite frankly, they are not in it. We knew before we came that the Greek tragedy was severe, but this is a pitch of severity for which we were not prepared.

However, as these three saucy old men are on the stage, let's see what they're doing. Look, they all lift their arms up straight above their heads and they all begin to moan.

Aie, Aie, Aie—e.

The king being left alone starts a new fit of sorrow. "Aie, aie, aie."

In fact just like King Oroastus. They evidently have got the same internal trouble that he has. Now they seem to be breaking into a kind of sustained talk in a sort of chant. It's impossible to know what they are saying because it's all in Greek—or no—of course we can follow it. We have the English in the book of the play: in fact you can see all the people in the audience turning the leaves of their little book and burying their heads in them up to their spectacles. At a Greek college play the audience don't look at the stage, they look at the little book.

This is what the three saucy old men are saying:

"O how unhappy is this (now-standing-before-us) King!

"O fate! with what dark clouds art thou about to overwhelm (or perhaps to soak) him.

"O what grief is his! and how on the one hand shall he for his part escape it. Oh, woe! O anxiety, O grief, Oh Woa!"

In other words in the Greek play the business of the Chorus is to come in and tell the audience what a classy spectacle it is going to be. Sorrow being the chief idea of Greek tragedy, the chorus have to inform the audience what they're going to get, and to get it good. It's a great idea in dramatic construction. It's just as if at the beginning of Hamlet the chorus stuck their heads over the battlements of Elsinore and said, in up-to-date English, "Say, look at this young man! Isn't he going to get it in the neck. Eh what? Isn't he in for hard luck? Just wait till his father's ghost gets a twist on him."

So the chorus groan and the King keeps howling, "Aie, aie, aie," and after they'd done it long enough, the three chorus walk out one behind the other like the figures on an Athenian frieze, and the King is left alone.

He speaks (and a footnote in the book says that this speech is one of the finest things in Greek tragedy.)

"What awful fate hangs over (or perhaps overhangs) me, this unhappy king!

"What sorrow now does the swift-moving hand (or perhaps the revolving finger) of doom make for me!

"Where shall I turn? Whither shall I go? What is going to hit me next?

"What would I not give, even if it were my palace itself, to be let loose from this overwhelming anxiety (or perhaps this rather unusual situation)!

"Beside it my palace and my crown are nothing."

The King pauses and lifts his two hands straight up in the air and cries:

"Oh Zeus, what next?"

And at this juncture the little book says:

Enter A Herald

and audience look up from their books a minute to see this herald come in. In runs the herald. He is young and has no beard. He has a tunic and bare legs and on his feet are sandals with wings and on his head also are wings and he carries a wand. The wings on his feet are meant to show how fast he

could go if he really had to—like the bicycle that the telegraph messenger pushes along with him. The wand means that if he needed to he could fly.

Enter a herald—the wings on his feet are meant to show how fast he could go if he really had to.

he entrance of this herald causes the only interruption from the audience that occurs during the play. There are cries from the gallery of "Attaboy! Good

Twork, Teddy!" The herald is one of the most popular members of the Fi Fi Omega Society. Anybody looking at that herald approves of him. He is the best stage effect of the lot. In fact there is more "pep" about the herald than in all the rest put together.

He confronts Oroastus and they hold a dialogue like this:

"O King."

"O Herald."

"Aie."

"Me, too."

"Woe, woe! King."

"I believe you."

"Things are bad."

"They are indeed. What misfortune brings you in this direction?"

"A grave one."

"I guess it must be, but tell me that my ear may hear it."

"Grievous are my tidings."

"I am sure they are."

"And hard for you to hear."

The slowness of the herald in giving the bad news to the King is one of the striking things in the Greek drama. It is only equalled on the modern stage by the great detective revealing the mystery in the fifth act, or a lawyer explaining the terms of the secret will, or the dying criminal (shot, deservedly in a cellar) confessing the innocence of the heroine. In fact the Greek herald was the man who started this kind of trouble. He was the first original exponent of the idea of not telling a good thing in a hurry.

He speaks again.

"Things are not what they seem."

Oroastus groans.

"Things which were yesterday are to-day not."

Oroastus groans. "Yo." All the dialogue has by this time been knocked out of him. The herald realizes that he can't get another rise out of him. So

he gets down to facts.

“Your palace, O King, has on the one hand been destroyed by fire and your crown which in and of itself for the most part signified your kingship, has on the other hand been stolen.”

Oroastus: “Aie, Aie, Aie, my palace is destroyed and my crown is lost. Oh whoa, this is grief.”

The herald: “It is. Goodbye. I have other tasks (or perhaps avocations).”

The herald says this and withdraws and as he goes out in come the three old chorus men again. That was the great thing about the Greek tragedy. It never stopped. It went right on. In the modern play when the herald said “Goodbye,” the curtain would fall on Act I. In the moving pictures the scene would shift and show the palace being burnt. But the good old Greek tragedy went right on like sawing wood. This is called the unity of the drama and so far nothing beats it.

The chorus, of course, have merely come in to have a good time by piling up the sorrow and gloating over Oroastus.

They line up and they chant out:

“Oh! look at this—now-standing-before-us King (or sometimes rendered this ordinary man). Sorrow has struck him.

“His palace and his crown are destroyed.

“But Fate is not done with him yet.

“All-compelling fate is getting ready another arrow (or, perhaps, is going to take another crack at him).

“He has lost his palace.

“But watch out.

“There is more coming.”

And at this the three miserable old brutes troop out again. Then the King says:

“Oh, me, alas. My palace is gone and yet a further fate overhangs me. What is this hangover?

“For so much indeed have I borne that to me now it seems that nothing further could overwhelm me even if it were the loss of my tender consort

herself.”

And just as he says this,

The Herald Enters

The King speaks.

“What now? And why have your feet brought you back?”

It was evidently a favourite theory of the Greek tragedians that a man went where his feet took him. This was part of the general *necessity* or rigor of fate.

The herald says:—

“Terrible are the tidings.”

“What are they?”

“Something awful.”

“Tell me what they are.”

“How can I?”

“Go at it (or perhaps go to it).”

“Dark indeed is the news and terrible is the certainty.”

“What is it?”

“How can I say it? It is dark.”

“What is the dark stuff that you are giving to me? Does it perhaps concern my consort, the fair-fingered Apologee?”

“It does.”

“How much?”

“Very much.”

“Tell me then the whole extent of the matter, concealing nothing.”

“I will.”

“Do.”

“With my lips I will say it.”

“Do so.”

The King groans. The herald knows that the time has come to let loose his information. He says, “Listen then, oh King. Your queenly consort, the fair-fingered Apologee has gone to Hades.”

The King: “Too bad.”

The herald: “Gloomy Pluto has carried her off.”

The King: “This is deplorable (or perhaps reprehensible).”

The herald: “Goodbye. I have other avocations.”

The herald retires and the King has hardly had time to say Aie, before the Chorus come trailing on again and take up their station. They chant out:

“Look at this.

“How’s this for grief?

“The royal consort has been carried off by the Gloomy Dis, he of the long ears, to his dark home. But sorrow is not yet done. There is a whole lot more coming. For such is the fate of Kings. Either they have a good time or they don’t.”

With this sentiment the chorus all troop off again. We gather from the little book, even if we didn’t know it already that their last sentiment “either they have a good time or they don’t” is considered one of the gems of the Greek Drama. The commentators says that this shows us the profundity of the mind of Diplodocus. Some think that this places him above the lighter work of such men as Iambilichus or Euarbilius. Others again claim that this passage “either they have a good time or they don’t,” shows (internally of course) that the life of Diplodocus was not all sorrow. To write this Diplodocus must himself have had a good time some of the time. In fact these lines, we are given to understand, have occasioned one of those controversies which have made the Greek Drama what it is.

King Oroastus being now left alone, starts a new fit of sorrow. “Aie, aie, aie,”—in fact just as we expected that he would. By this time we have grasped the idea of the tragedy, the successive blows of sorrow that hit Oroastus one after the other. First the chorus say there’ll be sorrow. Then Oroastus says, here comes a sorrow, and then the herald comes in and says get ready now, stand by for a new sorrow, and lands it at him. There is a beautiful simplicity about it that you never see on the stage to-day. In fact this is that sublimity, that loftiness that only the Fi Fi Omega players can catch. So the King groans.

“Oh, what an absolutely complete sorrow this is, this last one!

“Oh, Apologee!

“Oh, Hades!

“For me, what now is left? My palace is destroyed and the fair-fingered Apologee has gone to Hades. What now is left to me but my old dog.

“Old dog that I am myself on the one hand, my old dog on the other hand is all.”

This passage “old dog that I am myself” is indicated in the text as one of the high spots. In fact it is a joke. The text says so. From where we sit we can see the professor of Greek laughing at it. Indeed we could easily prove by looking up the large editions of the play that this is a joke. The commentators say: “the bitter jest of Oroastus in calling himself an old dog illustrates for us the delicious irony of the great tragedian.” Certain critics have claimed indeed that the passage is corrupt and that Oroastus called himself not an “old dog” but a “hot dog.” We prefer, however, the earlier reading which seems to us exquisite. Diplodocus undoubtedly felt that the weight of sorrow at this point had become more than Oroastus or even the spectators could bear. By calling himself an old dog he removes exactly that much of it.

This contention seems pretty well sustained. In fact anybody accustomed to the modern stage will realize that we are here at the source of the alleviating joke, introduced at any moment of terrible tension. In the modern play a comic character is carried all through the piece in order to make these jokes. But the Greek Tragedy was nothing if not simple, direct, and honest. The hero has to make his own jokes.

Still, we are keeping the herald waiting. The time is ripe for him to come in again.

Enter The Herald

In he comes just as before (the Greeks didn’t believe in vanity) and the king at once asks him the usual question about his feet.

“For what purpose, oh Herald,” he enquires, “do your feet bring you this way again?”

The herald: “A gloomy one.”

“Let me have it.”

“I will.”

“Do. For however dark it is, I being now an old dog (or perhaps a hot dog) have no further consolation in life than my dog.”

It is to be noticed that Diplodocus here uses the same joke twice. Anybody who deals in humour will warmly approve of this. To get the best out of a joke it must be used over and over again. In this matter the Greeks have nothing on us.

This time the herald knows that Oroastus can’t stand for much more. So he says:

“Old dog indeed? Did your lips lead you to say old dog?”

“They did indeed.”

“Are you perhaps under the impression, oh King, that you still have an old dog?”

“Such is my impression.”

“In that case you never made a bigger mistake in your life.”

“Let me know it and if indeed I have made a mistake, let me hear it.”

“Hear it then. Your old dog is gone to Hades. Goodbye. I have other avocations.”

The herald leaves and the king breaks out into lamentations.

“Aie, aie,” he says, “my consort, the fair-fingered Apologee, and my old dog are in Hades. Why am I still left in the upper air (or perhaps up in the air)? Oh Whoa!”

The king lifts his hands up in sorrow and a note in the book says, “King Oroastus has now had nearly enough.” To this we quite agree. One might say, in fact, he had had plenty.

But the chorus are not done with him yet. On they come with the remorselessness of the Greek Drama.

They line up. “Look then at this standing-before-us King. What a load he has. But worse is yet coming. Keep your seats and watch him.”

They go out in their usual undisturbed way, and Oroastus says:—

“Oh, what a last final instalment (or hangover) of bitter grief is now mine. What now is left? Now that everything has gone to Hades, of what use

is life itself? Oh, day! Oh, sunshine! Oh, light! Let me withdraw myself, I, before my time, to my tomb, to my mausoleum which I have had made by the skilled hands of artificers and there let me join hands with Death."

Oroastus has hardly said this when the herald comes back. By this time everybody guesses the news that he brings. Under the circumstances, not even a Greek herald could string it out. The thing is too obvious.

The King says—well there is no need to write it again—the herald's feet, that same stuff—but what he really means is, "Are you back, again?" and the herald says, "Yes." This is the first plain answer that the herald has given all through the play.

Then Oroastus says:—

"Is it dark stuff again?"

And the Herald says:

"The darkest!"

At which the King gives a groan and says:

"Then let me not hear it, for already to me thinking over pretty well everything the matter seems more or less what you would call played out (or possibly worked to death). It is now in my mind hearing nothing further to retire to the mausoleum which I have long since caused to be built by skilled artificers and there lying down upon the stone to clasp the hand of Death."

The herald: "You can't."

The king: "Why not? What is which? For your words convey nothing. Tell me what it is."

The herald: "I will."

The king: "Do."

The herald: "All right. Get ready for something pretty tough. Are you all set?"

"I am."

"Know then that your mausoleum no longer is. It was broken into by burglars and is unfit to use. Goodbye. I have other avocations."

Oroastus: "Aie, aie, aie. . . ."

Then they line up for a last crack at Oroastus:

"Look at him!

"Isn't he the unlucky bean (or perhaps turnip).

"Did you ever hear of worse luck than his?

"Can you beat it?"

But such is life, Oroastus, and it is a necessity of the Gods that even Death is withheld from the sorrowful Aie, aie, aie.

And with that the play gives every symptom of being over. The white sheet that acts as the curtain glides down and there is quite a burst of applause in the audience. The actors line up on the stage and all the Fi Fi Omega crowd in the gallery call out "Attaboy, Oroastus! Good work, Teddy!"

After which the audience doesn't break up as an ordinary theatre audience does, but coagulates itself into little knots and groups. It knows that presently coffee and sandwiches are going to be passed around and the Greek Professor will stand in the middle of an admiring group while he explains to them that Oroastus is under the compulsion of *Anangke*.

But for us no cake nor coffee. Let us get back to the Jefferson Hotel Grill Room while the supper is still on and while we can still get places for the midnight vaudeville show with the Dances of the Susquehanna Sextette and the black-faced comedian with the saxophone. This Greek stuff is sublime, we admit it, and it is lofty, we know it: and it has a dignity that the Susquehanna Sextette has not.

But after seeing Greek Tragedy once, we know our level. And henceforth we mean to stick to it.

V. The Sub-Contractor

AN IBSEN PLAY

Done Out of the Original Norwegian With an Axe

Masterpieces of Other Nations

By STEPHEN LEACOCK

ILLUSTRATED BY C. W. JEFFERYS

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Slump	*A Builder*
Vamp	*His Wife*
Dump	*A Professor of Thermodynamics*
Simp	*A Maid Servant*
Yoop	*An Accountant*
Scoop	*His Sister*
Pastor Gymp	*A Pastor*
Cramp	*His Mother-in-law*

etc., etc., etc.

. . . and as many more with names of that kind and with occupations of that sort as there is room for on the page. Some of them may not get into the play at all. But that doesn't matter. An Ibsen Dramatis Personae is a thing by itself.

SCENE I.

A room in Slump's house.

(*There are flowers on the table.*)

Slump: What beautiful flowers.

Vamp: Yes, they are fresh this morning.

Slump and Vamp speak one after the other in short turns, like sawing wood with a cross cut saw. But there is no need to indicate which is speaking. It doesn't matter.

Are they indeed?

Yes, they are.

How sweet they smell.

Yes, don't they?

I like flowers.

So do I. I think they smell so beautiful.

It's a beautiful morning.

Yes, the spring will soon be here.

The air is deliciously fresh.

Yes, it is, isn't it?

I saw a bobolink in the garden.

A bobolink already? Then summer is soon here.

Soon, indeed: the meadows are already green.

I like the green meadows.

Yes, isn't it?

The angle of the sun is getting high.

I suppose it is. I noticed yesterday that the diameter of the moon was less.

Much less, and the planets are brighter than they were. Their orbits are elongating.

I suppose so.

Vamp: How I love the spring!

Slump: So do I. The evaporation of the air closes up all the pores of my skin.

This completes round number one. It is meant to show Swedish home life, the high standard of education among the Swedes and, just at the end, the passionate nature of Vamp. The spring fills her with longings. It also shows where Slump stands. For him the spring merely opens the pores of his skin.

With this understanding we are ready for a little action:

A bell rings. Then Simp, the maid, enters, showing in Dump, a professor in Thermodynamics.

Good morning Dump. Good morning Slump. Good morning Vamp. Good morning Dump.

Dump: The spring will soon be here.

Vamp: I saw a bobolink in the garden.

Dump: Yes, I saw a wagtail on the thatch of the dovecot.

“I think he is eating dynamite.”

Slump: Spring is coming.

Dump: It will do my cough good.

Vamp: Yes, you will soon be well.

Dump: Never well. (*He coughs again.*)

Slump: You think too much. You need pleasure; for me each time I finish a sub-contract I like to take my ease and drink sprott.

Dump: I can’t drink sprott. (*He coughs.*) I have a mortal disease.

Vamp: Don’t say that.

Dump: In six years I shall be dead.

Nonsense. Come, drink a glass of sprott.

No.

Have some yip?

No.

Take some pep?

No.

(*Dump goes and sits down near a window; the others look at him in silence.*) This completes round two.

It is intended to establish the fact that Dump has a mortal disease. There is nothing visibly wrong with Dump except that he look bilious. But in every Ibsen play it is understood that one of the characters has to have a mortal disease. Dump in the Ibsen Drama will die of biliousness in six years. Biliousness and ill temper take the place of Anangke in Greek tragedy.

Slump: Well, I must be about my work. Come, Simp, and help me get my wallet and my compasses.

Simp: Yes, sir. (*Simp and Slump go out.*) (*Vamp and Dump are left alone.*)

Vamp: Come and sit down.

Dump: I don't want to sit down. I'm too ill to sit down.

Vamp: Here, get into this long chair; let me make you comfortable.

(*Vamp makes Dump sit down.*)

Vamp: There now, you're comfortable.

Dump: Why should I be comfortable? I'm too ill to be comfortable. In six years I shall be dead.

Vamp: Oh no! Don't say that.

Dump: Yes I will. I am very sick. The bile is mounting to my oesophagus.

Vamp: Oh, no!

Dump: I say it is. There's an infiltration into my ducts. My bones are turning into calcareous feldspar.

This dialogue is supposed to bring out the full charm of Dump. The more bilious he is the better Vamp likes him. It is a law of the Ibsen drama that the heroines go simply crazy over bilious, disagreeable men with only from six to twenty years to live. This represents the *everlasting mother-soul*. They go on talking:—

Vamp: Let me sing to you.

Dump: Yes, yes.

Vamp: Let me dance for you.

Dump: Yes, yes, dance for me.

Vamp is evidently smitten with that peculiar access of gaiety that is liable to overcome the heroine of an Ibsen play at any time.

She dances about the room singing as she goes:

> Was ik en Butterflog
> Flog ik dein Broost enswog,
> Adjo, mein Hertzenhog,
> Adje, Adjo!

Dump: (*passionately*) More, more; keep on singing. Keep on dancing. It exhilarates my capillary tissue. More, more.

Vamp: Do you love me?

Dump: I do.

Vamp: No, you mustn't say that. It's wicked to say that. What put that into your head?

Dump: Dance for me again.

Vamp: No. I mustn't. Listen, I hear them coming back. (Slump and Simp come back into the room.)

Slump: There, I have everything, my wallet, my compasses, my slide rule—right, everything is here.

Dump: You are very busy. What are you building now?

Slump: I am laying gas mains. They are to go under the Market Hall. They are twenty feet under the pavement. I have forty workmen working—and six steam dredges digging. When I see them dig I want to shout "Ha! ha! dig harder! dig harder!" Do you like steam shovels?

Dump: No, they make a noise.

Slump: I like noise. It makes my veins tingle. Don't you like it?

Dump: No. It closes my ducts. I don't like it.

Ha! This morning we are to explode dynamite to blow out the boulders. When it explodes I like to shout "Ha! That was a good one." Don't you like dynamite?

No it oscillates my diaphragm.

Slump: Ha, you should learn to like it. Look, here are sticks of it—like shaving sticks, aren't they? (*Takes from his pockets some short sticks of dynamite.*)

Vamp: Don't speak so roughly. It is bad for Dump. It will make him cough.

(*Dump Coughs.*)

Vamp: You see. Come away, Dump, come into the conservatory. I have a lovely eschscholzia that I want to show you.

(*Vamp and Dump go out.*)

Round three is now complete. It is meant to show that Slump, the sub-contractor, is a man of terrible driving power. He is filled with the "drang" of life. You have to call this "drang" simply "drang" because in English we don't have it. It means something the same as "pep" but not quite. Pep is intellectual, drang is bodily. It means, as all the critics of the play point out, that Slump "represents the up-surge of elemental forces." But it simply means that he is full of beans.

Slump: (*calling*) Now, Simp, my hat, my stick and a glass of sprott. Where are you?

Simp: Coming, master.

(*Simp comes in with a hat and stick and with a glass of sprott in her hand.*)

Slump: Ha, give it to me! I like my sprott. It makes my eyes bulge.

(*He drinks greedily.*)

Simp: You shouldn't drink so fast.

Slump: I like to drink fast. It inflates me. Ha!

(*He finishes the glass and puts it aside.*)

Slump: Ha! That's good. You're a pretty girl.

Simp: Oh!

Slump: Come and give me a kiss.

Simp: No.

Slump: Yes, you shall. (*He takes hold of Simp and draws her towards him.*)

Simp: No.

Slump: Yes, I say. (*He kisses Simp greedily three or four times.*) There!

Simp: You shouldn't kiss me.

Slump: Why not?

Simp: I have a hereditary taint.

Slump: (*aghast*) What?

Simp: I have a hereditary taint. My grandfather died of appendicitis.

Slump: (*staggering back, his hand to his brow*)—Appendicitis!

Simp: Yes, look, I have the marks of it.

(*Simp raises her sleeve and shows a round red mark on her wrist.*)

Slump: Great Heavens. Sprott! Give me some more sprott. (*He stands staring in front of him while Simp fetches another glass of sprott. He drinks it eagerly.*)

Simp: How do you feel now?

Slump: Bad. There are specks dancing in front of my eyes. What does it mean?

Simp: Appendicitis!

Slump: I am doomed. Give me more sprott. Appendicitis! Sprott. Appendicitis!

The action of the play pauses here a moment to let the audience appreciate the full measure of retribution that has fallen upon Slump for kissing a Norwegian housemaid. Slump has sunk into a chair and sits with his eyes staring in front of him. Simp stands looking at him unconcerned. Vamp and Dump come back.

Vamp: Good Heavens! What is the matter?

Dump: What is it?

Simp: I don't know. I don't think he is well.

Slump: (*Beginning to bark like a dog.*) Wow! Wow!

Vamp: No, he is not well.

Dump: He is hardly himself.

Slump: Bow! Wow!

Vamp: I should say that he is ill.

Dump: Yes, he seems poorly.

Slump: Wow!

Vamp: He appears in poor health.

Dump: Yes, he looks out of sorts.

(*Slump takes the stick of dynamite out of his pocket and begins to eat it.*)

Vamp: What is he doing now?

Dump: I think he is eating dynamite.

Vamp: Will it hurt him?

Dump: Yes, presently.

Vamp: In what particular way?

Dump: After the warmth of his body warms it he will explode.

Vamp: How curious. How warm will it have to be?

Dump: About 90 degrees. It will take about a minute for each degree. He will explode in twelve minutes.

Vamp: Is it wise to stay near him?

Dump: No, it is highly imprudent. We had better go. Simp had better gather up your things. We will go together. It is scarcely wise to linger.

Vamp: No, let us hasten.

Slump: Wow! Wow!

The curtain falls leaving as usual after an Ibsen play a profound problem stated but not solved.

The Russian Drama As It Was and Is

BASILISK VANGOROD

A Russian Play

(*Old Style*)

This is the kind of play that used to deal with dear old Russia when there was nothing more dangerous there than the knout, and exile to Siberia, and the salt mines, and nihilists with black whiskers, and bombs as large as plum

puddings. The good old place is changed now. Life there, from what I can gather at a distance of six thousand miles—which is all I propose to gather —seems in some way—how shall I say it?—restrained, one might say unhomelike.

But in the dear old days there was a freedom and a space about Russia which reflected itself in the drama.

Here is the sort of thing that we used to gaze at spellbound in the middle eighties:—

Scene: *Siberian Post Station*.

In the old days there was always a peculiar touch about the very word "Siberia"—a sort of thrill, or chill, that you couldn't get elsewhere. It suggested great empty spaces, a vast plain of snow broken with dark pine woods, and moujiks with long whips driving one horse tarantulas over the frozen surface of the endless samovar. Everywhere was the tunga tufted here and there with vodka.

"For the freedom of Russia. Long live the czar."

At intervals in the snow was a post house; a rude building made of logs with outhouses for sheltering exiles in. Everywhere there were prisoners and exiles, wandering up and down in little strings. They never got anywhere that I know of. They were just driven from play to play and from story to story. Among the prisoners were nihilists with bombs, girls who had lost their fathers, anarchists, Tartars; in fact a varied and cheerful lot.

The opening scene was always laid:—

INSIDE THE POST HOUSE

It is a long room, with a fire burning at the side, a few rough chairs and tables—only one person is in it, a moujik or sort of peasant servant in a tattered cap and a chewed-up fur coat.

The door opens with a burst of paper snow and in stride two Russian officers. They go to the fire and stick their hands out towards its warmth.

“It’s a cold night, Petroff.”

“A cold night, Dimitri Dimitrivitch, but not so cold as in the outshed where the exiles are—ha! ha!”

Both officers laugh heartily.

This is a first-class Russian jest.

“One of the dogs,” says Petroff, expanding his back to the fire, “fell in the snow on the march to-day.”

“And what did you do, Dimitri?”

The moujik brings a bottle and glasses.

“I ordered him a touch of the knout. I think the dog died where he fell—ha! ha! ha! ha!”

Both laugh heartily again.

Petroff turns to the peasant servant.

“Here, dog, bring Vodka!”

"At once. Excellence, at once." The moujik fumbles in a cupboard and brings a bottle and glasses.

Both officers drink.

"To the Czar, Petroff!"

"Dimitri, to the Czar!"

A Russian soldier with a gun and a bayonet about two feet long steps in and salutes.

"Excellence! a woman is outside."

"A woman? Ha! What like of woman, Ivan."

"Excellence, a young woman."

"A young woman! Ha! Ha-ha-ha!"

The two officers stride up and down repeating, "A young woman! Ha! Bring her in." It is plain that they mean to eat her.

The soldier salutes and goes out and returns in a moment dragging in a girl by the wrist.

This is Nitnitska Nitouscha and she is looking for her father. She is very beautiful with her hair in two braids and a bright coloured schapska over her head and shoulders.

Petroff grabs her by the wrists and twists her arm twice around and says:

"Ha! Ha! The girl is not ill to look at, Dimitri, and what want you here, pretty one?"

Nitnitska: "I seek my father."

Petroff gives her arm two more turns and says:

"Your father?"

"Yes, he is among the prisoners."

Both officers laugh. "Among the prisoners, ha! ha!"

Dimitri slips up to the girl and twists her other wrist.

"And what might his name be, tell me that."

Petroff takes her by the ear and hurts it and says:

"Yes, tell us that!"

"His name is written here on this paper, and he is an old man, a very old man; he is too feeble to walk with the prisoners."

Dimitri laughs brutally. "So he is too feeble to walk? In that case we can help him with the knout, ha! ha!"

He takes the girl by the other ear and turns it twice round.

"And what would you with your father?"

"I want his freedom."

Both officers laugh. "His freedom, ha! ha!"

"His freedom. See, on this paper. I have an order for his freedom signed by the Czar himself."

"By the Czar?"

Both officers fall back from the girl, repeating, "By the Czar."

"Yes, there, it is on the paper," Nitnitska hands over a paper. Petroff takes it and reads it aloud, scowling:—

"By command of His Imperial Highness and in accord with the signed order herewith—you are commanded to release into liberty the person of Vladimir Ilyitch?"

Petroff with a start, repeats the name "Vladimir Ilyitch!"

Nitnitska: "Yes, yes, my father, Vladimir Ilyitch!"

Petroff: "Dimitri, a word in your ear." (*They step aside.*) "Vladimir Ilyitch! That dog that was struck down with the knout and left for dead—"

Dimitri: (*nods*) "That was his name."

Petroff: "The girl must never leave here alive."

Dimitri: "No, we must choke her."

Petroff: (*Turning towards Nitnitska.*) "Girl we are going to choke you."

Nitnitska: "Cowards!" She had set her back against the wall near the window and looks at them defiantly.

"If you dare to choke me, you shall die. Look!" She draws forth from her dress a silver whistle on a chain. "I have but to blow upon this whistle and Basilisk Vangorod and his Tartars will fall upon the posts."

Petroff: "Seize her."

They rush at her. Nitnitska blows a long blast on the silver whistle. Petroff and Dimitri start to choke her, both together, but before they get her more than half choked, there is a sudden outbreak of gunfire outside. Ivan, the sentinel, rushes in—

"Excellence, the post is attacked by Tartars."

Petroff: (*letting go the girl*) "Call all the guards, every man to his post!"

The guards—three of them—rush in and begin firing through the windows. There is a tremendous quantity of firing outside. Presently a full sized explosion blows in the door. In rushes Basilisk Vangorod followed by his whole Tartar army—four of them. The Roumanian guards are hopelessly outnumbered—four to three. They lay down their arms. Basilisk Vangorod rushes at Petroff and Dimitri, and fights them both in a sword combat which circles round the stage so that everybody can see a piece of it. As it concludes he kills Dimitri and Petroff, clasps Nitnitska in his arms, calls in her father (who is outside, and not dead) and stands in the middle of the stage waving his sword and says, "For the Freedom of Russia, long live the Czar!"

And the curtain falls.

The Russian Drama

(B)

(*New Style*)

DAMNED SOULS

(A bright little tragedy of Russian home life, written with a little assistance by Maxim Gherkin, Shootitoff, Dustanashej and a few men like that.)

Scene: An underground lodging in Pinsk; water exudes from the walls: dim daylight comes through a half window: there is a crazy table in the middle of the room, some crazy chairs, a crazy stove on which is a samovar with some crazy tea. In a corner of the room is a low vaulted door which opens on rickety stairs descending to a black cellar.

The Cast of (Want of) Characters

Stylipin	A thief
Yatschscha	His wife
Patch	An Imbecile
Hootch	A Homicidal Maniac
Itch	A Paregoric

All these are in the room already when the play begins.

Later the following further want of characters come in, namely:—

Pravda (aged eighty)	An Immoral Woman
Prybiloff	A Murderer

Their entry is kept until a little later to brighten things up in case they get dull. When the curtain rises Itch, the paregoric, is lying on a truckle bed, under dirty bedclothes, in a corner of the room. He is evidently dying by inches, in fact, by centimetres: his feet are already ossified. In fact he is quite sick.

The Imbecile is making faces at himself in a broken looking-glass. The Homicidal Maniac is sharpening a butcher's knife. Stylipin and Yatschscha are drinking vodka out of dirty glasses at the crazy table. In other words it's a regular Russian home scene.

There is an ill-smelling stove with a samovar steaming on it.

Itch: (*sitting up in bed*) "I'm hungry."

Stylipin: "Shut up."

Itch: "Give me some water, I'm thirsty."

Stylipin: "Shut up or I'll choke you."

Yatschscha: "That's right. Choke him." (*aside*) "He has money under his bed, in the mattress. I saw it yesterday. Choke him and take it."

Stylipin aside: "Later."

Itch: "Mother Pravda, Mother Pravda, give me some food!"

Stylipin: "Shut up I say. She's out. Mother Pravda is out."

Itch: "I'm dying."

The Imbecile, with sudden laughter: “He’s dying! Ha! Ha! Isn’t he lucky. He’s dying!”

Itch falls back on his bed. There is a gurgling in his throat. Nobody pays any more attention to him. Stylipin turns to Yatschscha, “Where is that money you brought in from the street?”

Yatschscha: “I brought no money from the street.”

“You’re lying, you foul huzzy. Give it me or I’ll beat you.”

He picks up a stick. Patch, the idiot, claps his hands, with insane laughter.

“Ha! Ha! beat her! That’s right, beat her.”

Stylipin: “Give me the money, or I’ll choke you.”

He takes Yatschscha by the throat and begins to choke her. Strange cries come from her. The idiot capers and chuckles.

“Choke her! That’s it! Choke her.”

Hootch, the homicidal maniac: “Stop your accursed noise. Do you want to bring the whole street in on us? Stop I say. There’s someone coming down the steps.”

All are still a moment, their motions arrested as they stand, but the gurgling noise is still heard from the throat of Itch, the paregoric.

> This opening part of the play up to this point is intended to develop that atmosphere of cheerfulness and comfort which surrounds the Russian drama of to-day. It can, if need be, be prolonged still more with little vignettes of choking, poisoning, and knifing. But there should be at least enough of it to develop the temperamental aspect of the Russian state. . . .

Stylipin: “Yes, there’s someone coming down the steps. Quiet, I say!”

There is a beating at the chained door.

Stylipin goes to the door. He motions for silence, his hand upon the chain. He calls “Who’s there?”

“It is I, open the door.”

“It’s Mother Pravda. Are you alone, little Mother?”

“No, one is with me. It is all right. Open.”

Stylipin opens the door. Mother Pravda enters, she is followed by Prybiloff the murderer. His face is like ashes. His eyes wander. He is afraid.

"Who has she got? What is it, who is she bringing?"

"This is Prybiloff, children. He has done a murder."

Hootch, the Homicidal Maniac: "Aha! a murderer, with a knife, was it, brother, with a knife? A knife like this?" His eyes glisten.

Prybiloff goes and sits down. He is shaking.

"I don't know. It was dark."

"And you struck him down in the dark? Eh, brother, in the dark? Was there blood? Tell me, if there was blood?"

Prybiloff: (*his face in his hands*) "I don't know, I didn't see."

The imbecile, going near him, "Don't cry, little brother."

Yatschscha, taking her husband aside, "Listen, there is money in his pocket,—coins, real money. I heard it jingle in his pocket!"

Stylipin: "I know it. I hear it too. Who did he kill, Mother Pravda?"

Pravda: "He killed a commissary. The people are after him in the streets. They are searching. They want to burn him. Listen!"

There is heard a confused sound of shouting and running feet as from the streets outside.

Prybiloff, lifting his head, his hands clenched on the table: "They're coming!"

Pravda: "Have no fear. Look, come with me. There is a cellar below here. I'll put you there, come."

She leads him towards the low vaulted room in the corner.

The Imbecile: "She's taking him below. Ha! Ha! Don't go, brother, it's too good a jest, don't let her take you."

Stylipin and Hootch: "Shut up, fool, shut up."

Mother Pravda opens the door, leads Prybiloff down the dark steps. The sound of shouting has died away. Pravda's voice can be heard down below: "This way, little brother. There, I will make a light."

One can see the gleam of yellow candlelight through the door.

Stylipin to Hootch: "Shall we go down?"

Hootch: “Let her do it alone.”

Stylipin: “No, no, I’m going down. I don’t trust her. She’ll take more than her share.”

Hootch: “All right. Here, take the spade with us. Better finish the job.”

Stylipin to Yatschscha: “Wait here. Keep the door chained. Let no one in. Come on, Hootch.”

They go through the door down the steps. There is a confused sound of voices from below, then the sudden noise of a scuffle, one strange cry, and silence.

The Imbecile with laughter: “Ha! Ha! He *would* go! Like the others! Now they will bury him down there with the shovels, oh what fun! Do you hear, little brother, what a rare joke.”

He goes over to Patch’s bed: “Do you hear, brother, a rare joke.”

Patch doesn’t answer.

Yatschscha: (*looking at Patch callously*) “He can’t answer. He’s dead.”

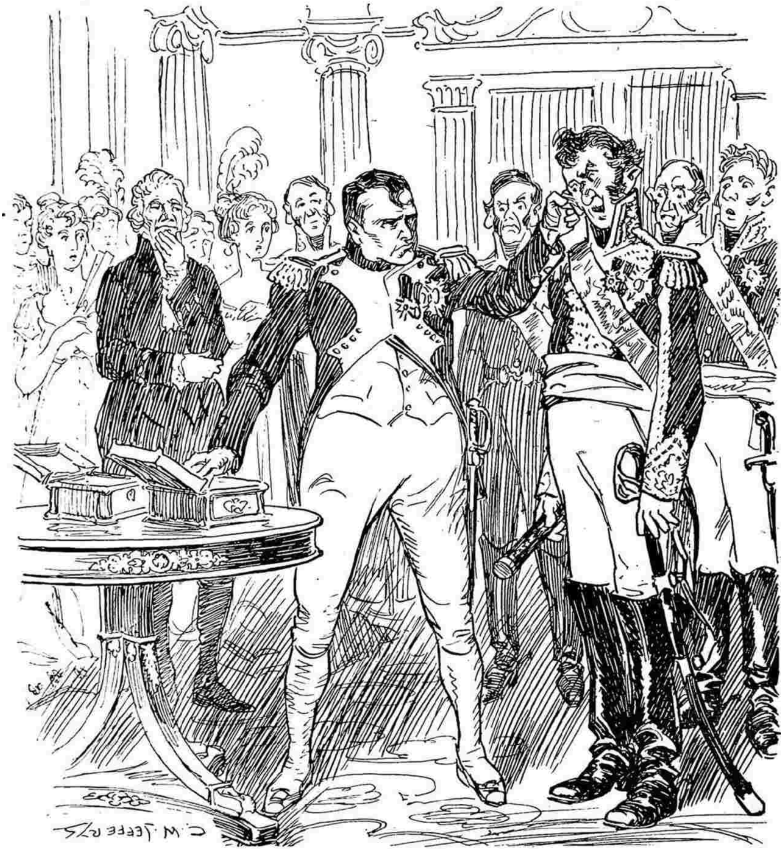
A voice calls from below: “Are you there, Yatschscha? Bring the vodka.”

Yatschscha: “One minute, one minute.”

She takes from her pocket a little phial with green liquid in it.

But there! there! What’s the use of going on with it? The full temperamentality of the thing has been developed by this time. What happens is that Yatschscha puts poison into the vodka. And when she has done that she goes out, stealthily to denounce her husband and Hootch to the commissaries of the police. She does this to get the blood money offered by the police for Stylipin dead or alive. In fact this is a favorite means of support in Russia. So Stylipin and Hootch and dear old Mother Pravda presently come up and drink the poisoned vodka and die in contortions. And when the commissaries of the police, led by Yatschscha, come in there is only the idiot laughing over all the corpses. Nice little thing, isn’t it? There is no doubt that life in Russia has a charm all its own and that Russian literature has a tang to it that you don’t get in the duller countries.

VI. “The Historical Drama”



Napoleon always pinched the marshal’s ears.

After all, there is nothing like the Historical Drama! Say what you will about moving pictures or high-speed vaudeville, they never have the same air and class to them. For me, as soon as I see upon the programme, “A tucket sounds!” I am all attention; and when it says, “Enter Queen Elisabeth to the sound of Hoboes,” I am thrilled. What does it matter if the queen’s attendants seem to speak as if they came from Yonkers? There is dignity about it all the same. When you have, moving in front of you on the stage, people of the class of Louis Quatorse, Henry Quinze, Oliver Cromwell, and Mary of Roumania, you feel somehow as if they were distinctly superior to such characters as Big-hearted Jim and Shifty Pete and Meg of the Bowery and Inspector Corcoran. Perhaps they are!

But of all the characters that walk upon the stage, commend me to Napoleon. What I don't know about that man's life, from seeing him on the boards is not worth discussing. I have only to close my eyes and I can see him before me as depicted by our greatest actors, with his one lock of hair and his forehead like a door knob, his melancholy eyes painted black and yellow underneath. And as for his family life, his relations with Josephine, his dealings with the Countess Skandaliska. I could write it all down if it was lost.

There is something about that man—I don't mind admitting it—that holds me. And he exercises the same fascination over all our great actors. About once in every ten years some one of them, intoxicated by success, decides that he wants to be Napoleon. It is a thing that happens to all of them. It is something in their brain that breaks.

Every time that this happens, a new Napoleonic play is produced. That is, it is called *new* but it is really the same old play over again. The title is always entirely new, but that is because it is a convention that the title of a Napoleon play is never a straight out statement of what it means such as "Napoleon, Emperor of France" or "Napoleon and Josephine." It is called, let us say, "Quinze Pour Cent," or "Mille Fois Non," or "Des Deux Choses L'Une"—that sort of thing. And after it is named, it is always strung together in the same way, and it is always done in little fits and starts that have no real connection with one another, but are meant to show Napoleon at all the familiar angles. In fact, here is an instance showing how it goes:

DES DEUX CHOSES L'UNE

A Drama of the First Empire

(Adapted from the French of Dumas, Sardou, Hugo,
Racine, Corneille, and all others who
ever wrote of Napoleon).

The opening part of the play is intended to show the extraordinary fidelity towards the Emperor on the part of the Marshals of France whom he had created.

Scene: The ball room of the palace of the Tuileries. Standing around are ladies in Directoire dresses, brilliant as rainbows. Upright beside them are the marshals of France. There is music and a buzz of conversation.

Enter Napoleon followed by Talleyrand all in black, and two secretaries carrying boxes. There is silence. The Emperor seats himself at a little table. The secretaries place on it two black despatch boxes.

The Emperor speaks: Marshal Junot.

The Marshal steps forward and salutes.

The Emperor: Marshal, I have heard strange rumours and doubts about your fidelity. I wish to test it. I have here—he opens one of the boxes—a vial of poison. Here, drink it!

Junot: With pleasure, Sire.

Junot drinks the poison and stands to attention.

The Emperor: Go over there and stand beside the Countess de la Polissonerie till you die.

Junot (saluting): With pleasure, Sire.

Napoleon turns to another marshal, Berthier.

Berthier: Here, Sire!

Berthier steps out in front of the Emperor.

The Emperor (rising): Ha! Ha! Is it, you?—he reaches up and pinches Berthier's ear—*Vieux paquet de linge!*

Berthier looks delighted. It is amazing what a French marshal will do for you if you pinch his ear. At least it is a tradition of the stage. In these scenes Napoleon always pinched the Marshals' ears and called them—*Vieux paquet de linge*.

The Emperor turns stern in a moment.

"Marshal Berthier!"

"Sire!"

"Are you devoted to my person?"

"Sire, you have but to put me to the test."

"Very well. Here, Marshal Berthier (*Napoleon reaches into the box*) is a poisoned dog biscuit, eat it."

Berthier (*saluting*): With pleasure, Sire. It is excellent.

Napoleon: Very good, *mon vieux trait d'union*. Now go and talk to the Duchesse de la Rotisserie till you die.

Berthier bows low.

The Emperor: Marshal Lanner! You look pale. Here is a veal chop. It is full of arsenic. Eat it.

Marshal Lanner bows in silence and swallows the chop in one bite.

The Emperor then gives a paquet of prussic acid to Marshal Soult, one pill each to Marshal Duroc and Augereau, then suddenly he rises and stamps his foot.

"No, Talleyrand, no! The farce is finished! I can play it no longer. Look, *les braves enfants*! They have eaten poison for me. Ah *non, mes amis, mes vieux*. Reassure yourselves. You are not to die. See the poison was in the other box."

Talleyrand (*shrugging his shoulders*): If your Majesty insists on spoiling everything.

Napoleon: Yes, yes, these brave fellows could not betray me; come Berthier, come Junot, come and let us cry together—

The Emperor and his marshals all gather in a group, sobbing convulsively and pulling one another's ears.

But one must not think that the Imperial Court was all sentiment. Ah no! The great brain of the Emperor could be turned in a moment to other concerns and focused into a single point of concentrated efficiency. As witness:

SCENE II.

Showing how Napoleon used to dictate a letter, carry on a battle, and Reveal Business Efficiency at the Acme.

Napoleon in a room in a chateau, announced to be somewhere near a battle, striding up and down, dictating a letter with his hat on. On the stage the great Emperor always dictates through his hat. A secretary sitting at a table is vainly trying to keep pace with the rush of words.

"Now are you ready, de Meneval? Have you written that last sentence?"

De Meneval (*writing desperately*): In a moment, Sire, in a moment.

“Imbecile, write this then, ‘The Prefect of Lyons is ordered to gather all possible cannon for the defence of Toulon. . . . is reminded that there are six cannon on the ramparts of Lyons which he has apparently forgotten. The Emperor orders him to pass them forward at once.’ Have you written that, imbecile?”

“In a moment, Sire, in a moment.”

“To have them forwarded to Toulon. He is reminded that there are six more in the back garden of the ministry of the Marine, and two put away in the basement of the Methodist Church.”

The secretary collapses. Napoleon stamps his foot. A terrible-looking Turkish attendant, Marmalade the Mameluke, comes in and drags him out by the collar and then drags in another secretary and props him up in a chair where he at once commences to write furiously.

Napoleon never stops dictating—

“There are two more cannons in the garage of the Prefect of Police. One has a little piece knocked out of the breach—”

The secretary (*pausing in surprise*): Mon Dieu!

The Emperor: Eh, what, *mon enfant*. What surprises you?

“Ah, Sire, it is too wonderful. How can you tell that a piece is out of the breeches?”

Napoleon (*pinching his ear*): Ha! You think me wonderful!

The secretary: I do.

Napoleon (*pulling his hair*): I am. And my cannon! I know them all. That one with the piece knocked out of the breech, shall I tell you how I know it?

The secretary: Ah, Sire, you—

Marmalade, the Mameluke, comes in and salaams to the ground.

The Emperor says: Well, what is it? *Vieux fromage de cuir.*

The Mameluke gurgles about a pint of Turkish.

The Emperor: Ha! Bring her in. . . . You may go. You, Marmalade, stand after she enters, stand behind that curtain, so—your scimitar—So—if I stamp my left foot—you understand?

Marmalade (*with a salaam*): *Zakovaki, Anchovi.*

Emperor: Good. Show her in.

There enters with a rush the beautiful half Polish Countess Skandaliska. She throws herself at the Emperor's feet.

"Sire, Sire, my husband! I crave his life."

Napoleon (*taking her by the chin and speaking coldly*): You are very beautiful.

"Sire! My husband. I ask his life. He is under order to be shot this morning."

The Emperor (*coldly*): Let me feel your ears.

"Ah! Sire. In pity, I beg you for his life."

The Emperor (*absently*): You have nice fat arms. Let me pinch them.

"Sire! My husband . . ."

The Emperor (*suddenly changing his tone*): "Yes, your husband. Did you think I did not know. I have it here." He turns his back on the Countess, picks up a document from the table and reads:

"Scratchitoff Skandaliska, Count of Poland, Baron of Lithuania, Colonel of the Fifth Lancers, reported by the Imperial Police as in the pay of the Czar of Russia—Ha! Did you think I did not know that?—"

His back is still turned. The Countess is standing upright. Her face is as of stone. Slowly she draws from her bodice a long poniard, slowly she raises it above the Emperor's back.

Napoleon goes on reading.

"—conspired with seven others, since executed, to take the life of the Emperor, and now this fifth day of September . . ."

The Countess has raised the poniard to its height. As she is about to stab the Emperor, he taps slightly with his foot. Marmalade, the Mameluke, has flung aside the curtain and grasps the Countess from behind by both wrists. The poinard rattles to the floor. The Emperor turns and goes on calmly reading the document:

". . . this fifth day of September, pardoned by the clemency of the Emperor and restored to his estate."

The Countess, released by Marmalade falls weeping at the Emperor's feet.

"Ah! Sire, Sire, you are indeed noble."

Napoleon: "Am I not? Take her out, Marmalade." The Mameluke bows, takes out the weeping Countess and returns with a renewed salaam?

The Emperor (*dreamily*): We know how to treat them, don't we? old *trognon de chou*. Let no one disturb that mirror. It may serve us again. And now bring me a secretary and I will go on dictating.

In this way did the great Emperor transact more business in a week than most men would get through in a day.

But in this very same play of Des Deux Choses L'Une, we have to remember that while all these other things are happening, Napoleon is also fighting a battle.

In fact hardly is the Countess Skandaliska well off the premises before a military aide-de-camp comes rattling into the room. The great Brain is in full operation again in a second.

The secretary collapses. Napoleon stamps his foot.

"Ha! Colonel Escargot. What news?"

“Bad news, Sire. Marshal Massena reports, the battle is lost.”

The Emperor frowns: “Bad news. The battle lost? Do you not know, Colonel Escargot, that I do not permit a battle to be lost? How long have you been in my service? Let me see, you were at Austerlitz?”

“I was, Sire.”

“And you were afterwards in Cantonments at Strasburg?”

“It is true, Sire.”

“I saw you there for five minutes on the afternoon of the third of November of 1810.”

“Sire! It is wonderful.”

“Tut, tut, it is nothing. You were playing dominoes. I remember you had just thrown a double three when I arrived.”

Colonel Escargot (*falling on his knees*): Sire, it is too much. You are inspired.

The Emperor (*smiling*): Perhaps. But realize, then, that I do not allow a battle to be lost. Get up, *mon vieux bonnet de coton*, let me pinch your ear. Now then, this battle, let us see. De Meneval, give me a map.

The secretary unfolds a vast map on the table. The Emperor stands in deep thought regarding it. Presently he speaks:

“Where is Massena?”

Colonel Escargot (*indicating a spot*): He is here, Sire.

“What is his right resting on?”

“His right, Sire, is extended here—it is endangered.” The Emperor remains a moment in thought.

“How is his centre?”

“His centre is solid.”

“And where has he got his rear?”

“His rear, Sire, is resting on a thorn hedge.”

The Emperor: Ha! Ride to Massena at once. Tell him to haul in his centre and to stick out his rear. The battle will be won in two hours.

Escargot (*saluting*): “Sire, it is wonderful.” He clatters out.

Napoleon sinks wearily into a chair. His head droops in his hands. “Wonderful!” he broods, “and yet the one thing of all things that I want to do, I can’t do.”

Indeed the man is really up against it. He can remember cannons and win battles and tell Massena where to put his rear, but when it comes to Josephine, he is no better than the rest of us.

The Emperor rings the bell.

De Meneval comes in.

“De Meneval, listen. I have taken a decision. I am going to divorce Josephine.”

The secretary bows.

“Go to her at once and tell her that she is divorced.”

The secretary bows again.

“If she asks why, say that it is the Emperor’s command. You understand.”

De Meneval: I do.

“If she tries to come here, do not permit it. Stop her. If need be, with your own hands. Tell Marmalade she is not to pass. Tell him to choke her. Tell the guard outside to stop her. Tell them to fire a volley at her. Do you understand? She is *not* to come.”

De Meneval: Alas, Sire, it is too late. She is here now. I hear her voice.

One can hear outside the protests of the guards.

The Empress Josephine, beautiful and disheveled and streaming with tears, pushes Marmalade aside with an imperious gesture and dashes into the room. She speaks:

Napoleon, what is this? What does it mean? Tell me it is not true? You could not dare?

Napoleon (*timidly*): I think there is some mistake. Not dare what?

Josephine: To divorce me! You could not! You would not! Ah! heartless one, you could not do it.

She falls upon Napoleon’s neck, weeping convulsively.

The Emperor: Josephine, there has been a delusion, a misunderstanding; of course I would not divorce you. Who dares hint at such a thing?

Josephine: Outside, in the waiting room, in the court they are all saying it.

Napoleon: Ha! Let them dare! They shall answer with their heads.

Josephine: Ah! now, you are my own dear Napoleon. Let me fold you in my arms. Let me kiss you on the top of the head.

She hugs and kisses the Emperor with enthusiasm.

Napoleon: Ah! Josephine, how much I love you.

A voice is heard without. Colonel Escargot enters rapidly. He is deadly pale but has a triumphant look on his face. He salutes.

"Sire, everything is saved."

Napoleon: Ah! So the battle was not lost after all.

"No, Sire, your orders were sent by semaphore telegraph. Massena withdrew his rear and thrust out his centre. A panic broke out in the ranks of the enemy."

"Ha! The enemy! Who are they?"

"We are not sure. We think Russians. But at least, Sire, they are fleeing in all directions. Massena is in pursuit. The day is ours."

The Emperor: It is well. But you, Colonel Escargot, you are wounded!

The Colonel (*faintly*): No, Sire, not wounded.

Napoleon: But, yes—

Colonel Escargot: Not wounded, Sire, killed. I have a bullet through my heart.

He sinks down on the carpet.

The Emperor bends over him.

Escargot (*feebly*): *Vive l'Empereur.* (*He dies*).

Napoleon (*standing for a moment and looking at the body of Colonel Escargot*): Alas! Josephine, all my victories cannot give me back the life of one brave man. I might have known it at the start.

He remains in reflection. "I should have chosen at the beginning. Tranquility or conquest, greatness or happiness—*Des Deux Choses L'Une*

—”

And as he says that the curtain slowly sinks upon the brooding Emperor. The play is over. In fact there is no need to go on with it. Now that the audience know why it is called “*Des Deux Choses L’Une*,” there is no good going any further. All that is now needed is the usual Transfiguration Scene.

Napoleon, dying at St. Helena, seen in a half light with a vast net curtain across the stage and a dim background of storm, thunder, and the armies of the dead—

That with a little rumbling of cannon—the distant rolling of a South Atlantic storm—

—and then—the pomp has passed—turn up the lamps and let the matinee audience out into the daylight.

But we must not suppose for a minute that French history has any monopoly of dramatic interest. Oh, dear no! We have recently discovered that right here on the North American continent there is material teeming with dramatic interest. Any quantity of it. In fact it begins right at the start of our history and goes right on. Consider the aboriginal Indian; what a figure for tragedy. Few people perhaps realize that no less than seventeen first-class tragedies, each as good as Shakespeare’s, and all in blank verse, have been written about the Indians. They have to be in blank verse. There was something about the primitive Indian that invited it. It was the real way to express him.

Unfortunately these Indian tragedies can not be produced on the stage. They are ahead of the age. The managers to whom they have been submitted say that as yet there is no stage suitable for them, and no actors capable of acting for them, and no spectators capable of sitting for them. Here is a sample.

METTAWAMKEAG

An Indian Tragedy

The scene is laid on the shores of Lake Mettawamkeag near the junction of the Petitcodiac, and the Passamoquidiac Rivers. The sun is rising.

Enter *Areopagitica*, an Indian chief:

With *the Encyclopedia*—a brave of the Appendixes.

And *Pilaffe de Volaille*, a French Coureur des bois.

Areopagitica:

> Hail, vernal sun, that thus with trailing beam
> Illuminates with gold the flaming east,
> Hail, too, cerulean sky that touched with fire
> Expels th' accumulate cloud of vanquished night.

The Encyclopedia: Hail! Oh! Hail!

Pilaffe de Volaille: Hêle! Oh, hêle.

Areopagitica:

> All nature seems to leap with morn to song,
> Tempting to gladness the awakening bird,
> E'en the dark cedar feels the gladsome hour
> And the light larch pulsates in every frond.
> Who art thou? Whence? And whither goest thou?

Pilaffe de Volaille:

> Thrice three revolving suns have waxed and waned
> Since first I wended hither from afar,
> Nor knowing not, nor caring aught, if here or there,
> Who am I? One that is. Whence come I? From beyond,
> The restless main whose hyperboreal tide
> Laves coast and climes unknown. Oh, Chief, to thy sagacity,
> From France I came.

Areopagitica: Hail!

(*What Pilaffe de Volaille means is that he has been out here for nine years and lives near Mettawamkeag. But there is such a size and feeling about this other way of saying it, that it seems a shame that dramas of this kind can't be acted.*)

After they have all said "Oh, Hail!" and "Oh, Hêle!" as many times as is necessary, Areopagitica and the Encyclopedia take Pilaffe de Volaille to the Lodge of the Appendixes.

There he is entertained on Hot Dog. And there he meets *Sparkling Soda Water*, the daughter of Areopagitica.

After the feast the two wander out into the moonlight together beside the waterfall. Love steals into their hearts. Pilaffe de Volaille invokes the moon:

Thou silver orb whose incandescent face
Smiles on the bosom of the turgid flood
Look deep into mine heart and search if aught
Less pure than thy white beam inspires its love,
Soda, be mine!

Soda Water speaks:

Alas! What words are these! What thought is this!
Thy meaning what? Unskilled to know,
My simple woods can find no answer to the heart's appeal,
Where am I at?

Pilaffe de Volaille:

Flee with me.

Soda Water:

Alas!

Pilaffe:

Flee.

Soda Water (invoking the constellations of the Zodiac):

Ye glimmering lights that from the Milky Way
To the tall zenith of the utmost pole
Illume the vault of heaven and indicate
The inclination of the axis of the earth:
Showing sidereal time and the mean measurement
Of the earth's parallel.
Help me!

Pilaffe de Volaille (in despair):

Oh, Hêle!

Both the lovers know that their tragic love is hopeless. For them marriage is out of the question. De Volaille is sprung from an old French family, with eight quarters of noble birth, a high average even at a time when most people were well born. He cannot ally himself with anything less white than himself. On the other hand Laughing Soda knows that, after the customs of her time, her father has pledged her hand to the Encyclopedia. She cannot marry a pale face.

Thus, what might have been a happy marriage, is queered from the start, Each is too well born to stoop to the other. This often happens.

Standing thus in the moonlight beside the waterfall the lovers are surprised by Areopagitica and the Encyclopedia. In despair Laughing Soda leaps into the flood. The noble Encyclopedia plunges headlong after her into the boiling water and is boiled. De Volaille flees.

Areopagitica vows vengeance. Staining himself with grape juice he declares extermination against the white race. The camp of the French is surprised in a night attack. Pilaffe de Volaille, fighting with the courage of his race, is pierced with an Indian arrow. He expires on the spot, having just time before he dies to prophesy in blank verse the future greatness of the United States.

Areopagitica, standing among the charred ruins of the stockaded fort and gazing upon the faces of the dead, invokes the nebular Hypothesis and prophesies clearly the League of Nations.

The same dramatic possibilities seem to crop up all through American history from Christopher Columbus to President Harding.

But to see the thing at its height it is better to skip about three hundred years in one hop and come down to what is perhaps the greatest epic period in American history—the era of the civil war.

This great event has been portrayed so often in the drama and the moving pictures that everybody knows just how it is dealt with. It is generally put on under some such title as the Making of the Nation, or The Welding of the Nation, or the Riveting of the Nation, or the Hammering, or the Plastering—in short, a metaphor taken from the building and contracting trades compare this:

FORGING THE FIFTEENTH AMENDMENT

A Drama of the Civil War

The scene is laid in the Council room of the White House. There are present Abraham Lincoln, Seward, Stanton, Artemus Ward, and the other members of the cabinet.

Lincoln (*speaking very gravely*): Mr. Secretary, what news have you from the Army of the Potomac?

Stanton: Mr. President, the news is bad. General Hallock has been driven across the Rappahannock, General Pope has been driven across the Roanoke, and General Burnside has been driven across the Pamunkey.

Lincoln (*with quiet humour*): And has anybody been driven across the Chickahominy?

Stanton: Not yet.

Lincoln: Then it might be worse. Let me tell you a funny story that I heard ten years ago.

Seward (*with ill disguised impatience*): Mr. President, this is no time for telling stories ten years old.

Lincoln (*wearily*): Perhaps not. In that case fetch me the constitution of the United States.

The constitution is brought and is spread out on the table, in front of him. They bend over it anxiously.

Lincoln (*with deep emotion*): What do you make of it?

Stanton: It seems to me, from this, that all men are free and equal.

Seward (*gravely*): And that the power of congress extends to the regulation of commerce between the States with foreign states, and with Indian Tribes.

Lincoln (*thoughtfully*): The price of liberty is eternal vigilance.

“*But what I will not do is to sacrifice all of it to save none of it.*”

In the printed text of the play there is a note here to the effect that Lincoln did not on this particular occasion use this particular phrase. Indeed it was said by some one else on some other occasion. But it is such a good thing for anyone to say on any occasion, that it is the highest dramatic art to use it.

Lincoln (*standing up from the table to his full height and speaking as one who looks into the future*): Gentlemen, I am prepared to sacrifice any part of this constitution to save the whole of it, or to sacrifice the whole of it to save any part of it, but what I will not do is to sacrifice all of it to save none of it.

There is a murmur of applause. But at this very moment, a messenger dashes in.

Mr. President, telegraphic news from the seat of war. General Grant has been pushed over the Chickahominy.

Lincoln: Pushed backwards or pushed forwards?

The Messenger: Forwards.

Lincoln (*gravely*): Gentlemen, the Union is safe.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *The Drama As I See It* by Stephen Leacock]