

were not all of these, at least in their time. The point is rather that the great majority of the plays produced in more recent years have not only lacked the kick of such plays but that of even the relatively poorer specimens, and as a consequence have driven the theatregoing public back

to the stuff, good or bad but in either case economical, between pocket book covers. A poor mystery at twenty-five cents is thus found to be paradoxically more acceptable than an equally poor one at \$4.80, which, all things today considered, may not be so very paradoxical after all.

## BROWN, THE GARDENER

BY ETHEL BARNETT DEVITO

The second of the month (when Brown is paid)  
Moran looks for his visit to the store:  
A stooped old man whose shuffling way is made  
Directly to the seed rack near the door.

And if his gentle handling and bent frame  
Do not proclaim his work to every one,  
There is his face, the color of his name  
And of the earth, as though he were her son.

Moran always waits and curbs his own delight  
At seeing Brown, to let him, by himself  
Make his discoveries till the time is right  
To bring the newest plant food from his shelf.

And then they talk till it is time to close:  
Arguing what is best to border walks,  
Gravely discussing symptoms of a rose  
Or how to fatten spindling lupine stalks.

And watching Brown go off with sacks of stuff  
Moran reflects how fine, these thoughtless days,  
To know one man profound or wise enough  
To give important things an important place.

## MR. DURANT

A STORY

BY DOROTHY PARKER

NOT for some ten days had Mr. Durant known any such ease of mind. He gave himself up to it, wrapped himself, warm and soft, in his freshly-gained calm, as in the voluptuous folds of a new and expensive cloak. God, for Whom Mr. Durant entertained a good-humored tolerance, was in His heaven, and all was again well with Mr. Durant's world.

Curious how this renewed peace sharpened his enjoyment of the accustomed things about him. He looked back at the rubber works, which he had just left for the day, and nodded approvingly at the solid red pile, at the six neat stories rising impressively into the darkness. You would go far, he thought, before you would find a more up-and-coming outfit, and there welled in him a pleasing, proprietary sense of being a part of it.

He gazed amiably down Centre Street, noting how restfully the lights glowed. Even the wet, dented pavement, spotted with thick puddles, fed

his pleasure by reflecting the discreet radiance above it. And to complete his comfort, the car for which he was waiting, admirably on time, swung into view far down the track. He thought, with a sort of jovial tenderness, of what it would bear him home to; of his dinner — it was fish-chowder night — of his children, of his wife, in the order named. Then he turned his kindly attention to the girl who stood near him, obviously awaiting the Centre Street car, too. He was delighted to feel a sharp interest in her. He regarded it as being distinctly creditable to himself that he could take a healthy notice of such matters once more. Twenty years younger — that's what he felt.

Rather shabby, she was, in her rough coat with its shagginess rubbed off here and there, and the pitiful pretentiousness of her inadequate shoes. But there was a something in the way her cheaply smart turban was jammed over her eyes, in the way her thin young figure moved under

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**DOROTHY PARKER** is the well-known short-story writer, poet and wit. In recent years she has devoted herself to scenario writing in Hollywood. Among the best-known collections of her work are *Here Lies* and *Not So Deep As a Well*. The present story, first published in the September 1924 issue of *THE AMERICAN MERCURY*, is here reprinted by arrangement with the Viking Press, New York; it is included in the one-volume edition of Mrs. Parker's work, *The Portable Dorothy Parker*, which was published in 1944.