

shelves, the Literary Club Edition, limited to seven hundred and fifty sets, is devoid of an index; and the same is true of their Dent Edition of Hazlitt. The Columbia Pope, on the contrary, like the Swift (Bohn Library), are admirably equipped, the index in the latter case running to upward of a hundred and seventy pages.

But let us suppose, for sake of argument, that we have persuaded some amiable editor that he would like us to compile an article on the colour of the heroine's eyes in modern fiction, or her favourite composer, or the way she does her hair and puts on her gloves,—in short, any sort of an article that requires a cursory glance through several score novels. Now to go to any one of the large city libraries means a formidable expenditure of time,—and even with the best sort of luck we would be told that a good half of the books we most needed were in use. But there happens to be a very cosy and well-equipped little li-

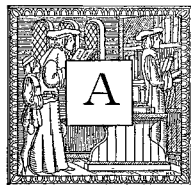
brary in a suburban town which may be readily reached by trolley in about an hour, and which offers the several advantages of free access to all the books, a compact and well-chosen fiction section, and a minimum of noise and confusion. The loss of time in coming and going is as nothing in comparison to the gain in time by having precisely what one wants all within arm's reach. It is possible on occasion to consult and glean material from over a hundred volumes in the course of one working morning.

These suggestions are more or less tentative. They are the outcome of personal experience and represent, not so much practical rules, as a habit of thought. They may perhaps be best summed up in this one little rule: In all your library work, consider every bit of stray knowledge as to the location and the contents of books which you may, sooner or later, find useful, as a valuable part of your mental equipment, and something to be treasured accordingly.

THE IRISH NATIONAL THEATRE

BY CLAYTON HAMILTON

I



RT and Nature compete eternally with each other in the great task of making humanity aware of what is true and beautiful and good. They are the two teachers in this school-room of a world to which we are come—we know not whence—as scholars; and we have much to learn from both of them in the little time allotted before school is suddenly let out and we frolic forth—we know not whither. It would be difficult to judge decisively whether Art or Nature is the greater teacher. Nature has more to tell us, but Art is better skilled for utterance. Nature has so much to say that she has no patience for articulation. She thrills us with a vague awareness of multitudinous indecipherable messages; but she speaks to us in whispers and in thunders—elusive, indeterminate, discomfiting.

Art, with less to say, has more patience for the formulation of her messages; she speaks to us in a voice that has been deliberately trained, and her utterance is lucid and precise. She does not try, like Nature, to tell us everything at once. She selects, instead, some single definite and little truth to tell us at a time, and exerts herself to speak it clearly. We can never estimate precisely what it is that we have learned from Nature; but whenever Art has spoken to us, we know exactly what we have been told. Nature stirs and tortures us to a mazy apprehension of illimitables; but Art contents us with careful limitations and calms us with achieved lucidity.

But, in this compensatory universe, every advantage carries with it a concomitant disadvantage. The besetting danger to the usefulness of Art as a teacher of mankind lurks inherent in this very capacity for orderly articulation. Art is only human, after all, and is liable

to the human sin of vanity. More and more, as Art advances in efficiency of utterance, she tends to take delight in listening to the sound of her own voice; she tends to value method more dearly than material; she tends to forget that the thing to be said is immeasurably more important than any gracefulness in saying it. Thus artistry, as it advances toward perfection, destroys its purpose and defeats itself.

Whenever artistry becomes too cleverly and nicely organised, whenever Art succumbs to the vanity of self-consciousness, it is necessary that seekers for the truth should forsake Art and return to Nature. At such a time the really earnest scholar will throw away his books and seek his reading in the running brooks. Humanity advances not along a straight line but along a circulating spiral; it progresses through a series of revolutions and reversions; and the motive of every progressive revolution is the recurrent yearning to return to Nature. "Let us return to Nature! Let us turn backward in order to move forward!"—this has been the watchword of the revolutionists in every age when Art has grown inefficient through efficiency. There is no other way than this to cure the vanity of Art and make her useful once again.

We live at present in an age when the dramatic art has attained a technical efficiency which has never been approached before in the whole history of the theatre. Our best-made plays are better made than those of any other period. Consider for a moment the craftsmanship displayed in such a work as that ultimate monument of intensive artistry, *The Thunderbolt* of Sir Arthur Pinero. There is no play of Shakespeare's that is so staggeringly admirable in every last and least detail of technical adjustment. When artistry has gone so far as this, there is nothing more for it to do. Such accomplishment defeats itself, for it leaves the artist nothing further to accomplish. What is to be done when we are brought to such a period? . . . There can be but one answer to that question:—Let us return to Nature.

For it is evident that though Art has taught our present playwrights more

than she ever taught their predecessors, Nature has taught them less. Our drama is too technical; our dramatists care more for artistry than they care for life. The highest pleasure that we may derive from the contemporary drama at its best is the critical pleasure of following point by point the unfaltering development of a faultless pattern. But the theatre—as we know from Sophocles and Shakespeare and Molière—is capable of affording a greater pleasure than this,—a pleasure less critical and more creative. Our contemporary plays are masterly in method, but comparatively unimportant in material. It is a sign of their essential insignificance that they tell us truths that are not even beautiful; for it is only when truth has ascended to that level where—as in the vision of Keats—it becomes identical with beauty, that it is, in any real sense, worth the telling. Our drama deals mainly with the artificial emotions of super-civilised aristocrats who dwell in cities: it sets before us a Criticism of Society instead of the Romance of Man.

When we have dwelt for many months in a metropolis, and dressed for dinner every night, and exchanged small talk concerning trivialities, and grown exceedingly clever and witty and graceful and urbane, there comes a time for us to break away—it is the time when violets are peeping—to far places where people have no manners, where they talk from the heart instead of from the head, and where a wide earth is swept with winds all murmurous with whispers from the sea, and at night there is a sky of many stars.—The theatre has its seasons also; and when the drama has grown too clever and urbane, too artistic and too trivial, it is time to break away. For, somewhere, terrific seas are surging on forlorn coasts far away, and simple folk are making music to each other in imaginative speech. Let us then be riders to the sea, and wander till we meet a playboy, talking deep love in the shadow of a glen.

II

These general considerations must be held in mind as we turn our critical attention to the aims and achievements of

the Irish National Theatre Society. This society was organised in 1901 by Mr. William Butler Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory. The founders had two purposes in view:—first, to develop a drama that should be distinctly national, so that Ireland might have a voice in the concerted theatre of the world, and second, to reachieve a union between truth and beauty in the drama by effecting a return to nature, in both material and method. In practice, these two purposes soon proved themselves to be identical; for both the authors and the actors found that the surest method for accomplishing the first was to devote themselves enthusiastically to the second.

These Irish idealists at once rejected from their range of subject-matter all themes suggested by the life of cities and by the manners of what are called the upper classes,—first, because such material was not definitively Irish, and second, because it was not—in any deep sense—human. Facility of intercommunication has made every modern metropolis more cosmopolitan than national; and to seek the heart of any country it is now necessary to delve into aloof and rural districts. Furthermore, our modern civilisation—which is largely artificial—has refined the higher classes of society to such a point that they now ignore, or cynically smile upon, those basic, impulsive, and primordial emotions that spring spontaneously from the heart of man.

The Irish authors decided also, from the outset, to revolt against that tyranny of merely technical achievement to which the international contemporary drama is subservient. This is an age of plot and stage-direction,—of emotion evidenced in action, of action elucidated to the eye by every deliberate aid to visual illusion. The Irish playwrights would have none of this. Not plot, but character, was what they chose to care about, since people are more real than incidents. They renounced the technical empery of plot, and rejected the tradition of the well-made play. If they could reveal character sufficiently in situation, they did not consider it a further duty to set it forth in action. They did not deem it necessary to rely on stage-direction to con-

vince the eye, since they could revert to an earlier stage of the development of the drama and rely on eloquence of writing to convince the ear. They chose to make a drama that is less visual and more auditory than that to which we have become commonly accustomed in the international theatre of to-day. They decided that the surest way to return to nature was to return to literature.

Actuated by these aims, the Irish playwrights found, in the peasant life of Ireland, innumerable subjects made to their hand. That life was at once definitively national and primordially human. By geographical position and by historical isolation, that emerald island floating in the far Atlantic has remained the utter outpost of European civilisation. Only the larger cities have been annexed—in any real sense—to the British Empire; only the aristocracy is cosmopolitan. The peasants of the rural counties are not British, but Celtic, in ancestry and temperament; and the life of those aloof and desultory districts is not modern, but early mediæval. The far, forgotten islands that are washed by the isolating western sea are populated with a peasantry who have escaped the long and gradual advance of time and who, defended from modernity, still play around the nursery of this grown-up and over-wearied world. Age has not withered them, nor custom staled. They love and hate and worship and blaspheme like little children, gloriously irresponsible to the calming, cold dictates of modern civilisation, and panged with the terrible and thrilling growing-pains of the primeval human soul.

And, by a providential accident, these crude, uncultured people speak to each other with an easy eloquence that hovers only a little lower than the speech of angels. They have not yet, as we have, filed and simplified their speech to a workaday and placid prose. Their words have longer memories than ours, and float forth trailing clouds of glory. Their common speaking surges with a tidal chant, like that of the recurrent singing of the sea. When Wordsworth, leading his own lonely and much-ridiculed return to Nature, sought to restrict the utterance of poetry to the daily speech of

dalesmen, he lost his aim amid a diction inadequate to the occasion; and, for his greater sonnets, he found himself necessitated to revert to the language of the mental aristocracy. But the language of Lady Gregory and J. M. Synge is unfalteringly eloquent; and Synge, in his prefaces, and Lady Gregory, in her conversations, have both assured us that they have used no words in their writings that they have not heard falling naturally from the lips of Irish peasants incapable of reading or of signing their own names. Thus, in returning to Nature, they discovered a well-spring ebullient with poetry. Faring forth to seek the true, they found the beautiful.

III

Such being the purposes of the founders of the Irish National Theatre Society, it was evident from the outset that they could not entrust the presentation of their plays to professional London actors trained to other aims. They therefore organised a company of their own, composed of young men and women engaged in various businesses in Dublin, who were eager to devote their leisure hours to the pleasant exercise of acting. This company, in origin, was *amateur*; and it was not till 1904, when it became established permanently at the Abbey Theatre, that it grew to be professional. In spirit, the Abbey Theatre Players are still *amateur*; and this is said, of course, in praise of them. It is evident that they act for the love of acting. It would seem to be their motto that "no one shall work for money, and no one shall work for fame, but each for the joy of the working." Fame and money have been added unto them in recent years, for they have captured London and set siege to Boston and New York; but it is apparent from their work that they are inspired still, as ever, with the joy of working. And this is the main reason why their artless artistry is charming; for there is nothing more enjoyable than joy.

Their acting is so different from ours, in aim, in spirit, and in method, that there can be no profit in arguing as to whether it is better or whether it is not so good. Their stage-direction is ele-

mentary and casual. They are sparing of gesticulation. They care far less than we do about making appealing pictures to the eye; and they care far more than we do about the delicate, alluring art of reading. They never move about the stage unnecessarily, in the fancied interest of visual variety; often, for long passages, they merely sit still, or stand about, and talk. But, with them, the lines are all-important. Their plays are written eloquently; and they repeat this written eloquence with an affectionate regard for rhythm and the harmony of words.

Character, not action, is the dominant element in the Irish plays; and it is therefore not surprising that the Irish Players are inferior to our own in representing rapid and emphatic action, and superior in the deliberate and gradual portraiture of personality. All the Irish Players are what are called, in the slang of the theatre, character actors. But they draw their portraits mainly by the means of speech, and rely far less than we do on make-up and facial expression. With them, as with their authors, the drama has returned to literature.

IV

We may now examine several of the most characteristic pieces in the repertory which the Abbey Theatre Players have been presenting in America; and, first of all, it will be pleasant to turn our attention to the one-act plays of Lady Gregory. In the sense of the word to which we have grown accustomed in the conventional theatre, these delightful little sketches are scarcely plays at all. It would be more precise to speak of them as anecdotes. The author sets forth two or three characters in a single situation, and draws them thoroughly in dialogue; she does not seem to care especially whether the incident which reveals the characters is active or passive; she does not work the situation up to any emphatic climax; but having opened a momentary little vista upon life, she smilingly remarks "That's all" and rings the curtain down. Her vision is both poetical and humorous; she enjoys the rare endowment of sagacity; and she writes with eloquence and ease.

Spreading the News is a good-natured satire of the extravagant growth of gossip among people whose imagination is stronger than their common sense. A farmer forgets his pitch-fork, on the outskirts of a fair; and a second farmer, finding it, hurries after to return it to him. A by-stander remarks casually to a deaf old apple-woman that Bartley Fallon is running after Jack Smith with a pitch-fork. The apple-woman tells some one else that Fallon has attacked Smith with murderous intent. The story grows and grows as it passes from mouth to mouth, until an assembled crowd believe that Smith is slain and invent a number of plausible motives for the murder. The rumour reaches the ears of the police; and Fallon is arrested, protesting vainly against the embattled certainty of the accusing public. Then Smith strolls back, safe and sound, and finds it difficult to convince the crowd that he is not a ghost.

The Workhouse Ward is a deliciously sagacious bit of humorous characterisation. Two old paupers are discovered lying in adjacent beds. They have been lifelong friends; but now, having nothing else to do, they spend their entire time in arguing and quarrelling. To one of them there comes an opportunity to leave the workhouse and be cared for in a comfortable home; but he declines this opportunity because the offer is not extended also to his friend, the other pauper. Immediately afterward, the inseparable cronies fall once more to altercation, and beat each other eagerly over the head with pillows.

There is less humour and more sentiment in *The Rising of the Moon*. A constable is guarding a quay from which it is expected that a fleeing political prisoner will endeavour to escape to sea. There is a large reward upon the prisoner's head, and his apprehension would also mean promotion for the constable. An itinerant ballad-singer appears, sits back to back with the constable upon a barrel-head set lonely in the streaming of the moon, and sings him many songs which strum upon the chords of memory and remind him of his childhood and his home. Having tuned the constable to a proper key of sentiment, the ballad-singer

confesses that he is the fleeing prisoner; and the constable, scarcely knowing why, connives at his escape.

In *The Gaol Gate* Lady Gregory has turned to tragedy and written in a sombre mood. Outside the gate of Galway Gaol, the mother and the wife of a prisoner make lamentation, because he has, as they think, saved his own neck by betraying his companions. The Gate-keeper unwittingly contributes to this belief of theirs by telling them that the prisoner has died in hospital. He gives them the dead man's clothes; and over these they make a melancholy keening. But later they discover that the Gate-keeper has lied to them, and that the prisoner has in reality been hanged. He had not sold his friends to purchase immunity for himself: he had died gloriously, after all. And now the two women lift their voices high in praise of him, chanting the grim glory of his doom.—This little tragedy is written in a very regular rhythm; and the keening of the women reminds the ear of the forlorn falling of many of the ancient Hebrew psalms and lamentations.

Another of the Irish dramatists, named William Boyle, has displayed a great gift for humorous characterisation. In his three-act comedy, *The Building Fund*, a miserly old woman is shown clinging passionately to her gathered wealth upon the very verge of death. Her son is just as miserly as she is, and has been waiting all his life for her to die. As her end approaches, he suffers a panic fear lest she may be persuaded to give a little something to his niece; and, to avert this calamity, he induces her to make a will. After her death, the parsimonious son discovers, to his consternation, that—with grim, sardonic humour—she has left all her money to the parish building fund.

The Mineral Workers, by the same author, deals with the efforts of an energetic Irishman, who has emigrated to America and returned thence to his native township, to develop a mining company to work out a vein of copper that he has discovered in the land. He has to contend against the conservatism of the peasants, who feel that the land should be used only, as it always has been, for



"BIRTHRIGHT"—ACT II

"There is a tragic fight by fire-light; and the younger slowly strangles his elder brother with his hands."

superficial cultivation, and the active opposition of one especially hard-headed farmer who for a long time prevents him from securing the water-rights that he needs for power. Almost every trait of Irish peasant character that militates against the advance of modern enterprise is satirically elucidated in this comedy. The plot is inconsiderable; but, as in *The Building Fund*, the humour of characterisation is rich.

Mr. T. C. Murray's two-act tragedy called *Birthright* offers a revelation of a state of character rather than a resolution of a dramatic complication; but it flares up into sudden violent action at the end. It is a study of the hatred subsisting between two brothers of contrasted temperaments. The elder is an easy-going, pleasure-loving lad; the younger is more industrious and commonplace. Their father, in anger at the elder, transfers his birthright to the younger son; and this leads to a quarrel between the two brothers. There is a tragic fight by fire-light; and the younger slowly strangles his elder brother with his hands.

These plays are sufficiently indicative

of the materials and methods of the Irish dramatists, and represent the general level of their accomplishment. But we have still to consider the work of the one indubitable genius that the Irish National Theatre has yet given to the world.

V

There is a poem of Walt Whitman's in the course of which he says,—“O what is it in me that makes me tremble so at voices?—Surely, whoever speaks to me in the right voice, him or her I shall follow, as the water follows the moon, silently, with fluid steps, anywhere around the globe.”

The first thing to be said about the dead and deathless poet, John M. Synge, is that he spoke to the world in the right voice. He wrote with an incomparable eloquence. In the rolling glory of his sentences there is a rhythm as of waters following the moon. His words are immemorial and homely, ancestral, simple, quaint; they glow with gladness as they meet each other; and eagerly they glide along in rhythms, now lilting with laughter, now languorous with melancholy,



"RIDERS TO THE SEA"

making evermore sweet music to the ear.

But Synge is a great poet not only by virtue of his noble gift for style. He deeply felt the poetry, the pathos, the tragedy, the humour, of the incongruity between the littleness of human actuality and the immensity of human dreams. He writes of illusions and of disillusionments. Illusions are beautiful and funny; disillusionments are beautiful and sad. Life is at once pathetic and uproarious, being, as it is, a vanity of vanities: it is at once appalling and consolatory, being, as it also is, as glorious as imagining can make it. What would one have? . . . Life, with all its faults; life, with all its virtues; there is no greater gift than life. And now that Synge is dead, we may write of him, in Mr. Kipling's words, "He liked it all!"

Synge's continual balancing of illusion against disillusionment—a weighing in which each is found wanting, and yet ennobled by a sad and funny beauty all its own—is exhibited most clearly in his

three-act parable entitled *The Well of the Saints*. It would seem that the lot of Martin and Mary Doul was most unfortunate; and yet it has its compensations. Both of them are blind; they are aged, bent, and ugly; and they gather up a bare subsistence by begging at the wayside. But each of them has a dream of the world and what it looks like to those with eyes to see; and, dreaming in the darkness, they have moulded an imaginable scheme of things very nearly to their heart's desire. Each of them, for instance, believes the other to be young and lovely to the sight. They think the world unfalteringly fair, illumined by a light that never was on sea or land.

To them, contented thus in discontent, there comes a wandering friar who is able to work miracles. He anoints their eyes with holy water, and restores to them the dubious gift of sight. Martin seeks his wife among the young and glowing girls who have been gathered by the rumour of the miracle, and is startled at last to find his Mary ugly,

bent, and old. Both of them find the visible world less lovely than they had imagined it to be; and they begin to long once more for the fairer vistas of the dream-illuminated dark. Later on, their sight grows dim again. The miracle has been but temporary. The friar returns, to anoint their eyes once more; and he promises that this time the cure will be permanent. But Martin now prefers the visionary world of blindness, and dashes the holy water from the friar's hand.

There is a deeper poignancy in Synge's terrible and massive one-act tragedy entitled *Riders to the Sea*. Old Maurya is a mother of men; and it has been their calling to ride down to the sea with horses, to fare forth upon the sea in ships, and to be overwhelmed at last and tumbled shoreward by rolling desultory waves. Her husband, and her husband's father, and five of her strong sons, have succumbed successively to the besieging and insidious sea. Some of them have been borne home dripping in a sail-cloth; others have been dashed unburied on forsaken coasts. Michael has only recently been washed ashore in distant Donegal. And now Bartley, the last of Maurya's living men-folk, is about to ride down to the sea. She suffers a dim foreboding, and implores him not to go; but a man has his work to do, and Bartley rides away, mounted on a grey horse and leading a red pony by the halter. His mother walks across fields to meet him by the way, so that she may give him the blessing that she had withheld when, manfully, he parted from her. But as he rides past, she sees a vision of the dead Michael riding on the red pony; and she comes home to lament the doom that is foretold. And as she is lamenting, the villagers carry to her something dripping in a sail-cloth,—the body of Bartley, the last of all her sons, whom the red pony has jolted into the aware and waiting sea. Maurya, confronted with the fact of ultimate and absolute bereavement, ceases to lament, and succumbs to an appalled serenity of acquiescence. She has lost all; and thereby she has achieved a peace that passes understanding. And thus it is she speaks at the conclusion of the tragedy:—"They're all gone now, and there isn't

anything more the sea can do to me. . . . It's a great rest I'll have now, and it's time surely. . . . No man at all can be living forever, and we must be satisfied."

In the Shadow of the Glen is a grimly comic revelation of the incongruity between life as it is lived and life as it is longed for. Nora Burke has lived unhappily with her gruff and aged husband, Dan, in a lonely cottage far away among the hills. Now Dan is lying dead in bed; and when a casual tramp appears, seeking food in that far cottage, Nora tells him of the thwarted longings of the years that she has wasted. A young herd-boy comes to woo her; but after he has spoken, the hated Dan sits up in bed and makes it known that his apparent death was but a sham. He orders Nora out of his house; and the timid herd-boy ranks himself expediently on the husband's side. Nora goes, indeed,—but not alone; for the irresponsible and roving tramp goes with her. There is something still to seek in the adventurous and hospitable world beyond the shadow of the glen.

But Synge's masterpiece is that uproarious and splendid comedy that is greatly named *The Playboy of the Western World*. It satirises, with poetic sympathy, the danger that besets an airy, imaginative temperament, unballasted with culture, to lose itself in divagations of extravagant absurdity. The action passes among the whimsical and dreaming peasants on the coast of Mayo. A lonely lad with a queer, fantastic strain in his soul—an essential romantic launched amid a daily life that bewilders him with trivialities—having submitted for a long time to the tyranny of a hard-headed father who despises him, suddenly—in an impulsive moment—hits him heavily over the head and leaves him dying. He wanders, frightened and alone, for many days, and ultimately stumbles into the public-house of an isolated hamlet. Here, when he furtively tells that he has killed his father, he finds himself looked upon with an awe that soon warms to admiration. Unexpectedly—and for the first time in his life—he perceives himself regarded as a hero. This circumstance, of course, unleashes his unballasted imagination. He



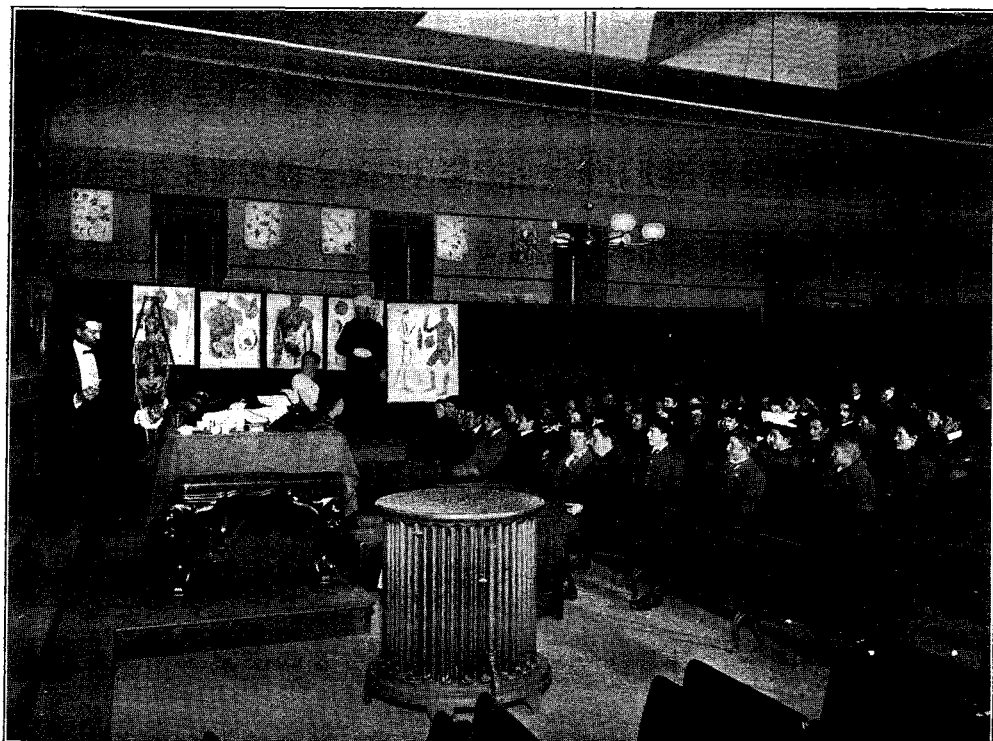
"THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD"—ACT III

"At the height of the playboy's wind-blown glory, his father enters, wounded but unkilld, with bandaged head and brandished stick."

tells his tragic story again and yet again, embroidering the tale of persecution and revolt more and more as he repeats it, until he finds himself worshipped by all the women-folk for his spirit and his savagery. He falls in love with the daughter of the publican, who loves him in return because of his poetical and dauntless daring; and so strong is the stimulus of admiration that he wins with ease the various athletic contests that are competed in the hamlet on the morrow. But at the height of his wind-blown glory, his father enters, wounded but unkilld, with bandaged head and brandished stick, to order the boy about as in the meagre years that were. The bubble of the playboy's fame is pricked; he is not a hero after all; and the simple-minded enthusiasts who lauded him now laugh at him with scorn. This is more than he can stand. In tragical and disillusioned anguish, he once again attacks his father,—this time in the sight of all. But the very people who regarded his imagined parricide as an heroic act when they were merely told about it in roman-

tic narrative now consider the playboy's immediate assault upon his father as a dirty deed. They noose him in a rope and are prepared to hang him; and he is saved only by the fact that his father has survived a second time. Now, "in the end of all," he has no friends; even the lass he loves has turned against him; and he is doomed to return home with his father, unappreciated in a lonely world. But he has had his little taste of glory; and he knows that henceforth he will rule his father, and "go romancing through a romping lifetime from this hour to the dawning of the judgment day."

But no summary can possibly suggest the imaginative richness of this comedy, its almost unexampled blend of poetry and humour, its rhythmic marshalling of fair and funny phrases that echo in the ear like laughing music over waters. The man who wrote it was a great man, for verily he has spoken to us in the right voice; and when, in his noon of years, he died and went away, we "lost the only playboy of the western world."



FIRST AID TO THE INJURED

"THE OPEN SCHOOLHOUSE"

BY GRAHAM BERRY



WHEN you leave the street car at Rivington Street on New York's East Side, you step into Southern Europe. So thought a man with a black manuscript book under his arm, as he picked his gingerly way through the forest of push-carts which bristles along the curb. It is a jabbering, shrill, exuberant world, and on its surface all the emotions and almost all the activities of human existence flare as frankly as the oil torches of the street-peddlers. But however interesting this foreign world, the man beheld it at that moment with a sinking heart; for the black manuscript book under his arm enshrined a carefully prepared lecture on Shakespeare. What did these people know or care for Shakespeare? What was Hecuba to them or they to Hecuba?

He found the schoolhouse which was his destination, and from the street door entered immediately into the auditorium. It was the concrete-floored, low-ceilinged play-room of all the schools in the building—cheerless and unadorned, with a row of spigots and a washing-trough in one corner and a group of camp-chairs huddled under an arc-light in another. His heart would have sunk still further had he not observed that, twenty minutes before his lecture was advertised to begin, the chairs were already half filled. He plucked up spirit at this. If these people wanted to hear his lecture enough to leave that gay, strident world outside for this cold and cheerless cellar, it must be that they were really interested. When it was time to begin, not only were the chairs completely filled but half as many people were standing on the stone floor. When he had finished they kept him un-