



PHOTOGRAPH BY J. E. ROSCH

AUGUSTUS THOMAS



Augustus Thomas: Playwright

By Himself

[For a number of years past Mr. Augustus Thomas has held a foremost place among American playwrights. He has invention, skill in construction and dialogue, a trained sense of dramatic values—for he knows the stage and its requirements—and a notable gift of expression. His plays have had a distinct literary quality without any sacrifice of dramatic effectiveness. They have been written as plays; and that they are in many places literature has been due, in Mr. Thomas's case as with all the best playwrights, to the fact that he has a touch of literary genius. Without any sacrifice of force or freedom, Mr. Thomas's plays have been full of health as well as entertainment. "The Earl of Pawtucket" was a happy illustration of the real comedy which is full of refreshment and delight. His recent plays, "The Witching Hour" and "The Harvest Moon," have struck deeper notes and struck them with a strong hand. In order to give the readers of The Outlook as clear and lifelike an impression as possible of Mr. Augustus Thomas, the editors applied to him for such biographical information as he was willing to make public. They received in reply a letter so characteristic and so interesting that, on behalf of the readers of The Outlook, they asked Mr. Thomas's permission to print it, which was graciously given; and here it is.—THE EDITORS.]

New Rochelle, New York,
December 9, 1909.

My dear Hamilton Mabie:

I have your letter of the 7th, in which you suggest that The Outlook wishes to print my picture in some very good company, and in which you ask me for some facts which you may discreetly communicate.

I fear that it will require something more than discretion to make interesting such facts as attach themselves to my history. However, here is briefly all that does not appear in the stick and a half in "Who's Who."

After Farragut ran the New Orleans blockade my father took direction of the St. Charles Theater in New Orleans, then owned by Ben De Bar. When he returned to St. Louis in 1865, I was in my seventh year, and my earliest recollections are tinged with his stories of Matilda Herron, John Wilkes Booth, and others who played in that theater. Father was an orator of considerable ability, and I remember him, for the amusement of my mother, reciting long speeches from Kotzebue, Schiller, and Shakespeare. In his association with the theater he took me very early to plays, and I have always been an attendant; consequently, dialogue seemed the most natural literary vehicle. I found later that this impression was justified when I discovered that the most telling things in Homer and later Greek poets and philosophy were in dialogue—that this was true of Confucius and of Christ.

I began writing plays when I was about fourteen years of age. When I was sixteen and seventeen, an amateur company that I organized played in certain railway centers on the old North Missouri Railway for the benefit of local unions of the workingmen. In 1882 I made a dramatization of Mrs. Burnett's "Editha's Burglar." With this as a curtain-raiser and a rather slapstick farce called "Combustion," I made a tour of the country with a company that I organized and with which I ran in debt several thousand dollars. In 1889 a four-act version of "The Burglar," arranged by me, was played in New York and was successful, and since that time my royalties have enabled me to give my attention on the business side exclusively to play-writing.

You ask why everybody who knows me is my friend? I might answer laconically that it was because they didn't know me thoroughly, but, dismissing that defensive assumption of modesty and making such self-inquiry as I can, I think I have a capacity for companionship from the fact that I was painfully poor as a kid. My consecutive schooling stopped when I was ten. I gave up all attempt to attend school, even irregularly, when I was thirteen. Between that age and my twenty-second year I worked in various sections of the freight departments of railways. Most of the midday meals of that time I took from a tin bucket. This meal was in the company of freight-handlers on the platform, men recruited almost exclusively from the Irish at that time in the Middle West; or the meal was with the brakemen in the switch shanties, these brakemen generally Americans rather near the soil; or was with the engineers and firemen in their cabs, or on the running-boards of box cars with trainmen. Without knowing it, I acquired the ability of getting the other fellow's point of view, and when I got old enough not to be overwrought by sympathy that was inclined to be too partisan, I found an immense intellectual enjoyment in watching the interplay between temperament and environment. I think this answers your question. I have retained a gossip's ability to be interested in most anybody else's affairs.

If I might add one other factor that I think has had some weight, it would be this: So many years ago that I forget its source, I read somebody's statement that the surest cure for the blues was to promptly and actively do something, not for one's self, but for some other; and I believe that I have occasionally won the good will of people in a rather selfish application of this panacea.

I find, as I dictate, that this is a very agreeable subject, and I am quite willing to tell more if you need it.

Sincerely yours,

AUGUSTUS THOMAS

The Income Tax Amendment

By Norris Brown

United States Senator from Nebraska

Senator Brown belongs to what may be called the younger and progressive group in the United States Senate. He was born in 1863 in the State of Iowa, and is a graduate of the University of Iowa, class of 1883; received the degree of M.A. in 1885; was admitted to the bar in 1883. He moved to Nebraska, where his first office was that of County Attorney of Buffalo County. He then became, successively, Deputy Attorney-General, Attorney-General, and United States Senator representing Nebraska. His present term in the United States Senate expires in 1913. He is a Republican in politics. While Senator Brown is heartily in favor of an income tax, the following article is not itself an argument for the tax, but an argument for the wisdom of giving power to Congress to impose the tax should it decide in the future that such a tax is for the advantage of the country.—
THE EDITORS.

THE American Constitution, with its fifteen amendments, completes the labors of the American people in an effort to build for their Government its foundation. Gladstone said of it: "As the British Constitution is the most settled organism which has proceeded from progressive society, so the American Constitution is the most wonderful work ever struck off at a given time by the brain and purpose of man."

Gladstone was right. It is the greatest document containing the simplest plan for a self-governing people ever framed. It leaves in the hands of the people to whom the government belongs all the machinery of government. Under it public policies are determinable alone by the people. They have the power, if they choose to exercise it, to repeal every law on the statute books or to enact any new law, limited only by a Constitution which they have the power to amend. There is, in truth, no limit to the power of the people in free America under our form of government. The sun never rose on another people so blessed with power or so freighted with responsibility.

For forty-one years the Constitution as it now reads has stood with no sustained effort on the part of Congress or the people to further amend it. But at the last session of Congress a joint resolution was introduced and passed, receiving every vote in the United States Senate and all but fourteen votes in the House of

Representatives, proposing the Sixteenth Amendment.

It reads:

"Congress shall have the power to lay and collect taxes on incomes from whatever source derived, without apportionment among the several States and without regard to any census or enumeration."

The question presented is, Should this amendment be ratified by the States? I hold the affirmative of the proposition. My conviction is unalterable that the safety of the Nation may depend on the power conferred by this amendment. Its ratification is therefore imperative.

In the first place, the issue does not raise a question of party politics. On the record, the two great political parties of the country stand in favor of the amendment. One indorsed it in its last National platform, and both indorsed it by voting for the joint resolution in the last Congress.

This amendment should receive the support of every man who believes as an economic policy that the incomes of the country should at all times bear a share of the burdens of government. It should also have the support of those who do not believe in that economic policy in times of peace because other forms of taxation fail in times of war. No patriotic citizen can deny his country in distress this source of revenue even if he would do so in times of peace and quiet. As the Constitution reads to-day under the last inter-