

more sympathetically drawn than is Schnitzler's wont, is in difficulties; each of the persons whom he meets comes in—like strangers in real life—as an enigma to be solved, an enigma which in each case contains a menace and a promise. One by one these riddles—Bogner, Consul Schnabel, Uncle Robert, Leopaldine, and the rest—are all answered, but when the last riddle is read the lieutenant is not there to hear it. His failure to solve the enigma of love has cost him his life. The story runs swiftly through two days and nights, and its feverish events are ironically framed in the coolness of impassive dawns. Thus Schnitzler, with the coolness and impassivity of nature, looks upon the lives he has created, from the far vantage-point of his station above good and evil.

## A Lovely Book

THE OLD BENCHERS OF THE INNER TEMPLE. By SIR F. D. MACKINSON. New York: The Oxford University Press. 1927.

Reviewed by A. EDWARD NEWTON

THIS is a lovely book. Charles Lamb in any format is always appealing; and how pleased and amazed and amused he would be to think of the great Oxford University Press making into a beautiful and substantial volume his little paper on The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple, where, as he says, he was born and passed the first seven years of his life.

The best essays are always autobiographical—the creator of the essay, old Montaigne, taught us that—and Charles Lamb's most delightful papers are those in which he refers to his own experiences: the names of dozens of them spring to our lips. But in essay writing, as Dr. Johnson said of a man writing an epitaph, one is not under oath: the essayist may take a thread of truth and string thereon a pearl—many pearls—of fiction. And commentators are frequently misled thereby. I have been told that Lamb's "Oxford in Vacation" was written not after a visit to Oxford but after a visit to Cambridge. The story fits one place quite as well as another. Lamb made love to several shadowy maidens in his essays that may never have lived at all, and we know—what his contemporaries did not—that he loved and proposed and was declined by Miss Kelly, "she of the divine plain face."

And so we who love the choicest cuts of Lamb have always taken his "Benchers" with a grain of salt. Did they all live in the flesh and did Lamb see them clear or only in his mind's eye? These questions and many another Sir F. D. Mackinson, himself a Master of the Bench, has answered for us and given us little biographies and reproductions of many portraits which make us wish we were a Bencher. I might perhaps be mistaken for a wise man, did I wear a wig and a robe.

How fully saturated with London Charles Lamb is and it with him! Only a few weeks since, one moonlight night I spent an hour wandering in the Temple thinking of the realities and the shadows which once had habitation there, and of the Shakespeare story of the white rose and the red, and of Tom Pinch and his sister and John Westlock. And then I come home and find a letter from the editor of *The Saturday Review* asking me to write a few lines about a beautiful book he is sending me: I turn its pages: once again I am in the Temple. Can the fountain which Charles Lamb "made to rise and fall" many times be the one in which I threw a penny not long ago? Hardly,—but one fountain is as good as another if one be not thirsty and it suggests pleasant memories.

How felicitous is Lamb in a phrase!

Example: "Lawyers I suppose were children once."

How wonderful his selection of the right word!

Example: "What a dead thing is a clock with its *embowements* of lead!"

But Lamb is in danger of being somewhat overdone. Thackeray called him a "saint;" that was silly: let me not say another word, but this—to end where I began: "The Benchers" is a lovely book.

An amusing instance of the hold which new terms coined by authors can take upon the public is to be found in the latest application of Karel Capek's "robot." An English journal writes several paragraphs on the introduction of the dial telephone system, referring to it consistently as the "robot exchange."

## The Play of the Week

By OLIVER M. SAYLER

THE DOCTOR'S DILEMMA, a Tragedy in Five Acts. By BERNARD SHAW. Produced by the Theatre Guild at the Guild Theatre, New York, November 21, 1927. New York: Brentano's.

Reviewed from Performance and Published Manuscript

AS American purveyor in ordinary to His Britannic Masquerader, Bernard I, the Theatre Guild has extended its Shavian canon by bringing to late, but not too late, life on our stage at the age of twenty-one his sixteenth *opus*, "The Doctor's Dilemma." The Granville Barker production of this discursive but absorbing comedy, which its author chooses to label a tragedy, left such confusion in its wake a decade ago that the Guild's revival, shrewd and subtle with the expertness of repertory acquaintance with other Shaw plays on the part of its acting company, amounts to its effective première in New York. Though clearly not in the first rank alongside "Man and Superman," "Heartbreak House," "Caesar and Cleopatra," and "Saint Joan," this animated debate on the foibles of physicians emerges on the Guild's stage from the uncertain limbo of printed drama and securely takes its place high in the second plane of Shaw's plays, incidentally adducing further evidence in proof that a Shaw play well played plays better than it reads.

It is futile, of course, to deny that sacrifice is involved in the loss behind the footlights of those sagely satiric stage directions which are almost as integral a part of a Shaw play published as his hortatory lecture-preface. Intelligent and sensitive actors will tell you, however, that these stage directions are just what they pretend to be—not verbal embroidery and gymnastics to titillate the reader's mind (a mere subsidiary by-product), but cogent and peppery stimuli to the imaginations of producer, designer, and player. They are of a piece with the playwright's own comments and suggestions when he is able himself to conduct rehearsals. They are his effort to insure adequate interpretation of his work in lands he cannot visit and in days beyond his own. If they serve their purpose, therefore, they assume increased import, while losing their original values, by their transmutation into the oral and visual media of the theatre.

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The test of any Shaw production, then, would seem to be the degree of subtlety, imagination, and thoroughness with which these stage directions are transmuted. By such a test, the Guild production of "The Doctor's Dilemma" ranks high in a record already brilliant. The atmosphere and personality of the four stage pictures are conveyed unobtrusively with conviction of the professional uses to which they are put. The characters are sharply and humanly differentiated in both of their dual functions as types and as individuals: Ridgdon, the pushing and egotistic pioneer; Schutmacher, the bland, suave, and self-contained Jew; Sir Patrick, the outwardly crusty but inwardly buoyant rusk of yesterday's baking; Walpole, the pessimistic and pugnacious jockey who rides the hobby of the knife; B. B., the optimist whose mount is vaccines; Blenkinsop, the whipped but uncomplaining dog of general practice; Jennifer, the eternal feminine, cousin to Ann Whitefield in "Man and Superman"; Dubedat, the artist without a moral or a lung; and Emmy, the czarina of the doctor's waiting room. Theories embodied as characters, but so deftly, with such human detail, that when they clash you have no mere debate but the give-and-take, the fast-and-loose, of life.

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To achieve this living and vibrant verisimilitude, the Guild's acting company is eminently equipped by having worked together not only in other plays but in several previous productions of Shaw. Nine members of a cast of fourteen and all but two interpreters of important rôles are Guild-graduate Shavians, while Baliol Holloway, imported from London, is a post-graduate in Shaw at home. Only the actor and his familiars can fully appreciate the subtle spiritual values that accrue from this playing together in like plays; but the public at large, though it may not understand the reason, is quick to sense common attunement within a playing group and its sympathetic penetration into even the subconscious motives of a familiar author, as the Moscow Art Theatre proved with the plays of Chekov. In di-

recting "The Doctor's Dilemma," Dudley Digges built his *mise-en-scène* round the indubitable genius of Alfred Lunt, here revealed in a wholly new facet, but he wisely permitted individual creative power a wide range, trusting to its instinctive sense of bearings.

"The Doctor's Dilemma" wears well. What play or story about human ills and their treatment doesn't, especially if it be satiric? Probably the Chinese physician, paid only while he keeps his patient well, is no such literary temptation. But "Le Malade Imaginaire" is for all time. Recognizing the absence of "occasion" in the play, the Guild has sensibly set and costumed it as of today.

Two aspects of the play bear scrutiny, particularly since they come to full focus only on the stage. One is the lyric note, so sternly repressed in the plays of Shaw and yet so dominant a component of his character, as those who know him are aware. This vein of pity, of human compassion, expressed in lines of poetic fervor, provides Alfred Lunt in Dubedat's death scene with one of the most thrillingly beautiful moments of his acting career. What exaltation could Shaw have brought into the theatre if he had not been so confirmed a crusader!

The other annotation, more obvious after seeing a performance than on reading, is the lack of an author's mouthpiece. Shaw, like the medieval painters, is fond of limning his own portrait, or rather his mind and tongue, in a corner of the canvas. In "The Doctor's Dilemma," however, he has kept himself so aloof, except for a flash of self-raillery, that it is difficult even to be sure where the preponderance of his sympathies lies. With Ridgdon, I imagine, intellectually; though with poor Blenkinsop emotionally. In other words, if Shaw had a headache, he'd call the old family doctor; if he were in mortal danger—and sure his wife wouldn't tempt—he'd summon the great specialist.

Ironically enough, for all its vindictive and merciless assault on vaccination, "The Doctor's Dilemma," more patently than most of his other plays, reveals Bernard Shaw as the greatest living prophylactic agent for the salutary inoculation of the body politic and social. Like vaccines, a little of Shaw goes a long way. Like vaccines, Shaw adduces paradox, if not error, to correct error. But it is the greater error he would cure. And like vaccine, for over three decades, he has been stimulating the phagocytes (or whatever they are called in December, 1927) of human society to listen to him, right or wrong, combat him, and think their own way through to mental and moral health and vigor.

(Mr. Sayler will review next week "The Plough and the Stars," by Sean O'Casey.)

## The Spider

By DAVID MCCORD

NOW with a clean thread  
Of a single span,  
Softly he has spread  
His silken fan

That shrub and thorn enclose  
By the dead well,  
Sweet where the sunning rose  
Binds in a spell

The bee, the butterfly,  
All foolish wings  
That open at the sigh  
Of lineal springs.

And there, against the day's  
Delicious draft,  
He carries in old ways  
His cunning craft:

Dropping along the cool  
Invisible track,  
A spider with a spool  
Upon his back.

A lord within the cone  
Of his domain,  
He reckons from his throne  
The shriveled slain:

A bottle fly, the moth  
Who tried to pass  
The filter of his cloth  
And found it glass.



## Mr. Moon's Notebook

THANKSGIVING DAY: *Hating One's Friends.*

TO have achieved, however undeservedly, a reputation for mild affability, seems at times like a stigma. I am as observant as the next man. It interests me to peer into faces and to hear ragged ideas emerge from mouths. The odd physical shapes of people often fill me with rich appreciation. My philosophy is: let the individual flourish. I am, therefore, by the way, more nearly an anarchist than a savior of society. People do the most peculiar things. To be able to observe people placidly as variegated natural phenomena is to live, as I conceive it, in a state of grace. At least, it is the blander manner. It is certainly the least tedious; and my inertia is excessive. Yet I greatly fear it is all mere pusillanimity.

My private thoughts are often and often quite the reverse of benign. Someone's casual remark about something will itch in my memory for days; someone's negligible opinion concerning something else savagely fester. I find myself morbidly sensitive to people's manners, to their personal appearances, to their idiosyncrasies. My visage hypocritically beams while I harbor lurid dreams of mayhem and murder. As a poetess of the day has pithily put it, "For what I think I'd be arrested." I smile and smile and am a villain. And so, upon this day of exaltation of the turkey you are going to get some cranberry sauce. I can be thankful, at least—and I suppose you wish me to be thankful for something—that most of my friends suppose me quite other than I am. But here we rend the veil, tear down the curtain, and positively stamp upon the portieres.

I have a few friends. Naturally, they are mostly literary. Frequently I think of them "all in a genial glow"—for a short period. But in the arts one's ego becomes quite as bloated (really!) as in other occupations. It is a mistake to believe, for instance, that literary people are the great-hearted, vastly tolerant, expansive-souled, deeply sympathetic, to-a-fault-generous, high, wide and handsomely spiritual folk you may have imagined them. Or perhaps you didn't. Well, you were right. Neither, I conjecture, though I have hardly ever known a banker (at least to borrow from), are bankers. And I don't suppose firemen are very different; or bakers; or plumbers. I even have my doubts concerning policemen.

I say I have a few friends. But the slate, I suppose, must be sponged clean. For my true inner nature is now going to consider some of them.

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Among literary people there are critics. I know some critics. Take the case of my friend Ralph Edgewood. He is a critic. And how often he annoys me! Ralph is scathing; therefore, they call him a good critic. But Ralph is also always "discovering" people. I have laid a like flattering unction to my soul at times. Perhaps that is why he irritates me so. I usually know the work of the people of whom he talks. A year or so ago Edgewood "discovered" Olivia Nash. I listened to nothing but the praises of Olivia Nash every time I met Ralph. It was, "At last we have a novelist!" or "Have you met her? A most astounding person." or "Heavens! Of course she doesn't live in the city. She cares nothing for all this drivel around us. She lives in the mountains. She belongs to literature." or "She walks in beauty like the night—" (No, but he would have said that, I am convinced, if he hadn't been beaten to it.) Well, Olivia Nash could write. Most of Ralph's enthusiasms can really write. But in less than three months he was talking of nothing but Carfroy Howard. My first remark, rather silly, I admit, was that nobody could really have a name like "Carfroy." Ralph glared at me through his glasses. "Oh, bosh! Nonsense! Here at last we have a poet. Naturally, he is not likely to be recognized—but Howard is a poet. He has put the kibosh on all this claptrap. Let me read you—" He read me a bit of the kibosh.

But Howard could write also. It wasn't that. It was that in all the spacious firmament on high there was no star even glinting weakly except the star of Carfroy—for three more months. Then I happened to say something about Carfroy to Edgewood. "Oh, yes," Ralph mumbled absently. "He's gaga. I expected his talent to flicker. But it's completely gone out. Anyway, it's hardly worth one's while to bother with most poetry, old or new. The book

is, of course, Blaxton Sturm's bitter analysis of western civilization, 'Delirium.' Read it? I thought not. That's a book not only for this century but for all time!"

"By the way," I offered, in passing, "I think that this last novel of Olivia Nash's is rather the best thing she's yet done."

"Olivia Nash?" Ralph frowned nearsightedly at me. "Who? What? Good Lord, you don't mean to say you still read Olivia Nash! That glow-worm only glimmered for a day."

Only one more example. A year had passed when after having at last got around to reading "Delirium" I thought I would like to discuss it with Ralph one evening. "My dear boy," he interrupted me, "for God's sake don't bring up Sturm! Really!" There was then what is known as a pregnant silence. Finally Ralph added weightily, "The case of Ethel Carricker is certainly an extraordinary one. Ethel Carricker's essays—know them? There at last is—"

Some day maybe I shall strangle my dear friend Edgewood—slowly, slowly. Or break the darned butterfly on a Ferris wheel!

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One knows editors also. In fact I, myself, am an editor. Though sometimes I hardly know myself. Fulton Tweet is supposed to be a good editor. He is always around, talking to authors. He is extremely busy in the office, usually in conference. He bounces to and fro with a crammed brief-case. He dictates a great many letters. Fulton Tweet edits a magazine of large circulation. He lunches a great deal. Perhaps that is all I should say about him, because there is usually very little else to say of an editor. However, I shall go on. Tweet has one trait in common with Edgewood. He is usually rushing out of his inner sanctum with the exclamation, "By George, this is the greatest—!" But, in his case, the manuscript concerning which he is rhetorical invariably turns out to be the latest journeywork of one of the plethoric and popular writers. Tweet is accustomed to talk in big figures to and of these large fry. "Oh, an amazing piece of work!" he will boom at you over the spotless napery of I-Know-a-Good-Little-Place-on-Forty-eighth-Street. Then he will unsparingly outline the plot. So far as I have been able to observe he is most expansive toward seductions and a lot of shooting. He also likes Big Themes. "Oh, a Big Theme!" he will gasp over his lobster. "I tell you, a Big Theme! This is one of the Biggest Themes a modern writer has ever tackled. I tell you, my boy, this story is full of dynamite." I am to infer that it explodes just about everything.

Yet, when I occasionally, but far more warily of late years, run through the presentation of this Big Theme when the magazine drifts eventually to my desk, I am surprised to find how conventional is the story's pattern, how floridly usual is the "love interest," how stale in its essentials the combination of the "action." Large illustrations are smeared all over the leading pages and the text thence pursues a narrow track through acres of advertisements. It is all "dressed up" to astound the eye, and one instalment of it is like worrying an underdone pork chop. Get Tweet on the past and he harps chiefly upon a single chord. "Ah, yes, then there were giants. Take Dickens! Take Thackeray!" But the trouble is that I have really "taken" them, as well as a few in other eras, and Tweet quite evidently has not, when it comes down to cases. But the few names he knows stood for Reputations in their time. They "got across." They were the Big Figures!

Some day, perhaps—I wonder which Tweet would prefer: arsenic or strychnine. . . .

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One knows what we call creative writers. Barker Glaive is acknowledged to be a creative writer. He has written a novel or two, a book or two of poems, a book or two of essays, a play or two. He is two two. His conversation is mostly, "Oh, yes, I know him very well—poor fellow!" This refers to any eminent literatus you may mention. Then Barker goes on. "You know, when I was writing my 'Scales Fallen' I remember Blank saying to me—it was at a luncheon given for me by old Howells—poor fellow!—I remember Blank saying to me, 'Ah, if I had my life to live over again, Glaive! Hew to the line, my dear man; so many of us have

taken the wrong track!' I remember receiving such a shock when I read of the old boy's death several months later. He accomplished so very little, of course, that is,—well, really,—but he was a kindly old soul."

Glaive will always with apparent diffidence show you something he has lately written. If you venture any comment, he will merely smile away at the wall, a smile he strives to make enigmatic. He will take back the fragment from you absently, with some such remark as, "Yes; yes; what a pity it is that any nuance so invariably escapes you, old man." Or—oh something endearing of that kind! Glaive can only work in the small hours of the morning, writing with a quill at an ancient lectern.

An axe would make a good deal of mess. I am sure Glaive would greatly relish the poignant delicacy of a poigniard. . . .

So,—ah, how one loves one's friends! I shan't go on. I do not wish to become maudlin about them. Some of them are energetic and optimists; some of them are sardonic and pessimists; some of them talk idealistically and wax didactic; some of them talk chiefly of other's sentimentalities and then proceed expansively to display their own; some of them see through every one's motives; and some of them croon of magnificent motives that were never there. Some of them—some of them—some of them—but now I am just spluttering.

And what a poltroon I am! I have not really dared to pillory a single actual friend. The above are merely synthetic dummies; even though parts of them somewhat resemble—. Which leads immediately to the disquieting thought that parts of them rather resemble—me. Thus the dark night of the soul completely descends upon me. Yet even at such a juncture, the voice of the late James Thomson (B.V.) is crooning mockingly in my ear:

Once in a saintly passion  
I cried with desperate grief,  
"O Lord, my heart is black with guile,  
Of sinners I am chief."  
Then stooped my guardian angel  
And whispered from behind,  
"Vanity, my little man,  
"You're nothing of the kind."

. . . So what satisfaction is there!

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT.

(To be continued)

## Finger and His Songbook

FRONTIER BALLADS: Songs from Lawless Lands. By CHARLES J. FINGER. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co. 1927. \$3.50.

By CARL SANDBURG

Author of "The American Songbag"

ONCE there was a railroad receiver in Ohio, having high and influential connections with banking and transportation magnates of the Buckeye state. And he was on the way to being a magnate. Then one day while on a strictly business errand down in Arkansas, he came to a valley where he said, "This reminds me of the Berkshires only I like it better—it's cheaper." So he turned his back on Columbus, Cincinnati, Cleveland, spoke the words, "Good by, proud world," put his family of guaranteed black-eyed children on the steam cars, rode to Arkansas, and set up for himself as a cross between a dirt farmer and a country squire.

The name of our hero is Charles J. Finger and he is out now with a statement that he does not choose to run for Governor of Arkansas inasmuch as he would have no platform to run on because he believes nothing is wrong or whatever may be he couldn't do anything about it.

However, instead of a declaration of principles as to where he stands on the issues of the day he offers the American, Mexican, and Australian peoples a songbook which is titled, "Frontier Ballads: Songs from Lawless Lands." The book is a good deal like a long, pleasant, stubborn, bittersweet love letter to the human race at large. He is personal on every page, sets forth a good number of original contributions, and follows a writing style that mixes the blunt manners of the bad man with Addisonian periodic sentences that have the ease of a healthy axman.

The book begins with an introduction, whereupon the author slams home "A Somewhat Discursive Note on Outlaws, Murderers, Pirates, Hard-Cases, Rapscallions, and Similar Radiant Figures." A