

ica, and then along the Canadian Pacific to the Rocky Mountains, to Vancouver, and down the Pacific coast to California," he explained.

"Oh—" her face lighted up.

"I want to see Santa Barbara," he went on. "I hear it's a singularly beautiful place. Would you care to go?"

"I should love it!"

"You would love it," he said cynically. "Then we'll do it; but it would be more to the point if you loved me."

"I will—I will—if you will let me."

He looked at her unbelievably for a moment; then the thin man did put his arms round her.

"I will be different," she said. "I will be quite different. I have been a perfect perfect beast!"

He laughed, a happy laugh: it was another strange thing to hear.

"And I have been a perfect perfect fool! So again we are even."

"I am glad of that," she whispered.

His arms tightened. "And we'll sell the cottage, or burn it down—which would you prefer?"

"I think"—she hesitated—"that perhaps we shall want to go there when we come back."

He stooped and kissed her.

"Geoffrey, old duck," Claire said to her husband when he returned, "you must take me out to dinner and the play. I'll get ready at once; for I told the Burndales that we were going to do that, and I don't want to feel that I am a little liar."

IRISH PLAYS AND IRISH PLAYWRIGHTS

By Brander Matthews



IT is one of the many interesting and significant coincidences of history that the more completely a smaller country may be absorbed into a larger nation, the more likely are the inhabitants of the lesser community to cherish their own provincial peculiarities. They seek to keep alive the local traditions and to revive the local customs; and often they strive to reinvigorate the local dialect and to raise it to a loftier level that it may be fitter to express their local patriotism, different from their larger national patriotism, but in no wise antagonistic to it. As a result of this pride in the past, and of this pleasure in the present, there is likely to arise a local literature in the local variation from the standard speech of the nation—the standard speech assiduously taught in the schools which are ever struggling to eradicate in the illiterate every vestige of the dialect that the men of letters are cultivating with careful art. And this deliberate provincialism is not factional or separatist; it indicates no relaxing of loyalty toward the nation.

Indeed, in so far as any political significance is concerned, the outflowing of a dialect literature may be taken as evidence of national solidarity and of the dying down of older sectional animosities.

It was in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, and in the first quarter of the nineteenth, when Scotland had at last accepted the Hanoverian succession, that Burns and Scott, and lesser lyrists of a varying endowment, made use of the broad Scots tongue to sing the sorrows and the joys of the North Briton. It was in the third and fourth quarters of the nineteenth century, after the fierce ardor of the Revolutionary expansion and of the Napoleonic conquests had finally welded France into a self-conscious unity, that Mistral and his fellow bards told again the old legends of Provence, and illumined that fair land with new tales of no less charm, all composed in a modern revision of the soft and gentle speech of the troubadours. And now it is just at the beginning of the twentieth century, after three score years of incessant agitation have removed most of the wrongs of the Irish people, that Yeats and Synge and Lady

Gregory have bidden their fellow countrymen to gaze at themselves in the mirror of the drama, and to listen to their own persuasive brogue.

Surprise has been expressed at the sudden burgeoning forth of this new Irish drama almost at the behest of Lady Gregory. But when due consideration is given to the long list of Irishmen who have held their own in the English theatre there is cause for wonder, rather, that Ireland did not have a drama of its own long ago. In fact, the history of English dramatic literature, and more especially the record of English comedy, would be sadly shrunken if the Hibernian contribution could be cancelled. We can estimate the gap that this operation would make when we recall the names of George Farquhar, Richard Steele, Oliver Goldsmith, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, John O'Keefe, Sheridan Knowles, Samuel Lover, Dion Boucicault, John Brougham, Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, and "George A. Birmingham." There is food for thought as well as for laughter in the saying that "English comedy has either been written by Irishmen or else adapted from the French." A harsh and cynical critic might even go further and add—having Steele in mind for one, and for another Boucicault—that sometimes English comedy has been both written by an Irishman, and adapted from the French.

It is to English comedy that most of these Irishmen contributed rather than to Irish comedy. The admission may be made that one or another of them now and again sketched a fellow countryman or two; but before Lover and Boucicault, no Irish dramatist peopled a play with Irish characters and laid its scene in Ireland. Although they must have known Ireland and the Irish better than they knew England and the English, it is to the portrayal of the latter that they gave their loving attention, neglecting altogether the delineation of the former. For some reason they were not tempted to employ their talents at home and to devote themselves to the delineation of the manners and customs of their own island. Probably the explanation of their refusal to utilize the virgin material that lay ready to their hands is to be found in the fact that to achieve a living wage they

had to write for the London theatres, the audiences of which took little or no interest either in Ireland or in the Irish.

Whatever the reason may be why these brilliant Irish playwrights did not write plays of Irish life, there is no denying that they did not, and that it was left for the contemporary supporters of the Abbey Theatre to plough the fresh fields which their predecessors had refused to cultivate. Even the later English comic dramatists of Irish birth have generally eschewed themes fundamentally Irish, and have rarely introduced Irish characters into their English plays; there is not a single Irish part in all Oscar Wilde's comedies; and there is only one of Mr. Shaw's pieces the scene of which is laid in Ireland. Irish novelists, Maria Edgeworth, Banim, Carleton, Lever, and Lover, won fame by writing Irish stories; but only Lover and Boucicault wrote Irish plays. The Irish dramatists were all of them working for the London market, and they were subdued to what they worked in.

When we consider the closeness of Ireland to England, and the ease of communication, we can only wonder at the infrequency with which Irish characters appear in English plays. There is no Irishman—excepting only the slim profile of Captain MacMorris in "Henry V"—in all Shakespeare's comedies and histories and tragedies, although there are Scotsmen and Welshmen. Apparently the earliest Irish character in the English drama did not step on the stage until after the Restoration, and nearly forty years after Shakespeare's death. This earliest Irish character was a comic servant, called Teague, who appears in Sir Robert Howard's "Committee," a play which Pepys went to see in June, 1663. And apparently the second Irish character was another Teague in Shadwell's "Lancashire Witches and Teague O'Divelly the Irish Priest," a highly colored piece which was produced in 1681. The first Teague was devised to provoke laughter, whereas the second Teague was intended to be detested and despised as an intriguing villain. It seems probable that this portrayal of a Hibernian scoundrel by an English playwright was pleasing to the London playgoers, since Shad-

well brought him forward again a few years later in another play, the "Amorous Bigot," produced in 1690.

Then came the first of the native Irishmen who were to brighten English comedy with their ingenuity and their wit, and their grace and their good humor—the first and perhaps the most gifted of them all, George Farquhar. After trying his wings in public as an actor, an experience which explains the superior briskness and theatrical effectiveness of his plays over those of his immediate predecessors, Congreve, Wycherly, and Vanbrugh, he went over to London and commenced playwright. Yet he did not draw on his knowledge of his own people, and in all his plays we find only two relatively unimportant and absolutely insignificant Irish characters. One of these is another Teague in the more or less successful "Twin Rivals," produced in 1705; and the other is an Irish priest in the triumphantly successful "Beaux Stratagem," produced in 1707.

We cannot even guess what Farquhar might have done if he had survived, and whether or not he would have drawn more richly upon his recollections of his fellow countrymen after his repeated success had given him confidence in himself and authority over the public. His career was cut short by death before he was thirty—about the age when Sheridan abandoned play making for politics. It has been noted that the novelist is likely to flower late, and often not fully to reveal his capacity as a creator of character until he is forty, whereas the dramatist may win his spurs when he is still in the first flush of youth. Play making demands inventive cleverness, first of all, and dexterity of craftsmanship, and these are qualities which a young man may possess in abundance almost as native gifts, even though he may not have had time to reflect deeply upon the spectacle of human folly, which is the prime staple of comedy.

It is possibly because he is an Irishman that Farquhar's morality is not ignoble, like Congreve's and Wycherly's. He is not to be classed with the rest of the Restoration dramatists, as is usually done. Farquhar may offend our latter-day propriety, now and again, by his plain-spoken speech, but he is never foul in his

plotting, as are Wycherly and Congreve, whom he surpasses also in the adroitness of this plotting. His dialogue can be cleansed by excision, whereas their dirt lies deeper and cannot be overcome by all the perfumes of Araby. It is upon Farquhar that Sheridan modelled himself, and not upon Congreve, as has often been assumed. The "School for Scandal" may reveal an attempt to echo the wit of the "Way of the World," but its solid structure and its skilful articulation of incident disclose a close study of the "Inconstant," the "Recruiting Officer," and the "Beaux Stratagem," all of them frequently acted when Sheridan was serving his apprenticeship as a playwright.

In crediting Farquhar with a finer moral sense than Congreve or Wycherly, it must in fairness be noted that they composed their more important comedies before Jeremy Collier had attacked the rampant indecency which characterized the English comic drama at the end of the seventeenth century, and that Farquhar came forward as a playwright after the non-conformist divine had cleared the air by his bugle-blast. The dramatist who took Collier's remarks most to heart was Farquhar's contemporary and fellow Irishman, Steele. But unlike Farquhar, Steele decided to be deliberately didactic. He declared that in his comedy, the "Funeral," produced in 1701, although it was "full of incidents that move laughter," nevertheless "virtue and vice appear just as they ought to do." Steele was even more ostentatiously moral in the "Lying Lover," produced in 1704 and withdrawn after only a few performances, its author asserting sadly that the play had been "damned for its piety." Yet in neither of these early comedies nor later in the "Conscious Lovers" does Steele introduce any Irish character.

And we do not discover any Irish character in either of the comedies of Oliver Goldsmith, the "Good-Natured Man," produced in 1768, and "She Stoops to Conquer," produced in 1773. A year after this second comedy had established itself as a favorite on the stage, where it is still seen with pleasure after seven score years, Goldsmith died, at the comparatively early age of forty-six. Here again, it is idle to speculate on what he might

have achieved as a dramatist after the stage doors had swung wide to welcome him. If he had survived, it is possible that he might have been tempted to take a theme from his native island and to treat it with all his genial insight into human nature, never likely to be keener or more caressing than in dealing with his own countrymen.

Two years after Goldsmith had brought out "She Stoops to Conquer," Sheridan brought out the "Rivals," to be followed in swift succession and with equal success by the "Duenna," the "School for Scandal," and the "Critic." Then he forsook the theatre for the more tempting stage offered to him by politics.

In only one of these varied masterpieces of comedy is there an Irish character. This single specimen is Sir Lucius O'Trigger in the "Rivals," easily the best Irish part that had yet appeared in any comedy, and surpassed by scarcely any Irish character in any later play, English or Irish. Sir Lucius is an Irish gentleman; he is essentially a gentleman and he is intensely Irish. Here was a novelty, since most of the few Irish characters already introduced into English comedy had been servants, first of all, and secondly only superficially Irish. Oddly enough, the bad acting of the original impersonator of Sir Lucius, a performer named Lee, almost caused the failure of the "Rivals" at the first and second performances. The comedy was then withdrawn for repairs and for the rehearsal of another actor, Clinch, as Sir Lucius. In gratitude to Clinch for the rescue of the "Rivals" from the doom that impended, Sheridan improvised for his benefit a two-act farce called "St. Patrick's Day, or the Scheming Lieutenant," a lively little play of no importance, in which Clinch appeared as the scheming lieutenant, an Irishman only superficially Hibernian.

It is strange that the popularity of Sir Lucius and his appeal to the public did not lure the later English comic dramatists of Irish nativity to invite other characters over from the island of their own birth. But we do not recall any Irish part in any of the many plays of John O'Keefe, only one of whose comedies, "Wild Oats," is ever seen on the stage of to-day, and then only at intervals which

are constantly lengthening. Nor can we recall any Irish part in any of the top-lofty comedies of Sheridan Knowles, composed partly in turgid prose and partly in very blank verse; devoid, all of them, of the wit and the gayety and the liveliness which we believe we have a right to expect from an Irish dramatist.

Very Irish, however, are the pieces made out of the "Handy Andy" and the "Rory O'More" of Samuel Lover; and most characteristically Hibernian is the light-hearted hero of Lover's farcical little fantasy called the "Happy Man." That these slight plays of Lover's represent almost the only attempts to deal with Irish character on the English stage in the earlier half of the nineteenth century is the more surprising since Miss Edgeworth had long since disclosed the richness of the material proffering itself to any keen observer intimate with Irish conditions. Walter Scott, at least, had seen the value of "Castle Rackrent" and of the "Absentee," and he is on record as confessing that one of the motives which urged him to the composition of "Waverley" and of its immediate successors was the desire to do for the Scottish peasant what Miss Edgeworth had done for the Irish peasant. It is to be regretted that the most popular of the Irish followers of Scott in the writing of tales of adventure was Charles Lever, whose earlier and more rollicking romances are happy-go-lucky in their plotting, and never disclose any desire for significant character delineation. Lever's scampering stories were so loose-jointed that they were almost impossible to dramatize, and even when they were turned into plays they did not demand critical consideration.

Then, toward the end of the first half of the nineteenth century, appeared the most prolific of all native Irish playwrights, Dion Boucicault. But it was long after he had become the most expert purveyor of theatrical wares for the theatres of London and New York that Boucicault turned to his native island for a theme. His first play is "London Assurance," a five-act comedy, with its scene laid in England and with a single Irish character. There is a green-room tradition that the play had been put together by another young and aspiring Irishman,

John Brougham, that its original title was "Irish Assurance," and that the part now called Dazzle had originally borne an Irish name, having been intended by the ambitious Brougham for his own acting. Nearly forty years ago when I ventured to ask Brougham as to this tradition, and as to his share in the composition of the play, he laughed a little sadly and then gave me this enigmatic answer: "Well, I've been paid not to claim it!"

Whatever may have been Brougham's share in the beginning, there can be no dispute as to Boucicault's share at the end. "London Assurance" is not like "Playing with Fire," or any other of Brougham's later plays; and it is exactly like "Old Heads and Young Hearts" and half a dozen of Boucicault's succeeding comedies, the work, all of them, of an old heart and a young head—hard, glittering, insincere, and theatrically effective. In these pieces Boucicault was compounding five-act comedies in accord with the traditional formula of the English stage inherited from Sheridan and Congreve, and becoming at every remove more remote from reality and more frequently artificial. Although one of this early group of Boucicault's comedies was called the "Irish Heiress," they were all English plays with only a rare Irish character. A few years later, after Boucicault had become an actor himself, he wrote for his own acting a series of pleasantly sentimental Irish melodramas stuffed with sensational scenery: "Arrah-na-Pogue," with its sinking wall; the "Shaughran," with its turning tower; and the "Colleen Bawn," with the spectacular dive of its hero into the pool where its heroine is drowning. The theatrical effectiveness of these pieces was undeniable, and it was rewarded by long-continued popular approval; but no one of them had any validity as a study of life and character in Ireland. They were very clever indeed, but they were only clever; and they but skimmed the surface of life, never cutting beneath it to lay bare unexpected aspects of human nature. It is characteristic that two of the later pieces in which Boucicault appeared as an Irishman were adaptations from the French, "Daddy O'Dowd" (from "Les Crochets du Père Martin") and "Kerry" (from "La Joie

fait. Peur"). That he could so twist these French plots with their foreign motives as to make them masquerade as Irish plays is testimony to his incessant cleverness; but it is evidence also that the Irish veneer was so thin as to be almost transparent.

Yet however artificial and superficial might be these Irish pieces of Boucicault's, at least they were more or less Irish in that they pretended to deal with Irish life in Ireland itself. This is what no one of the earlier Irishmen writing plays for the London stage had ventured to attempt; and it was what the wittiest Irish dramatist of the generation following Boucicault's never did. Oscar Wilde was an Irishman who never touched an Irish theme or sketched an Irish character. He never put into his plays any of the haunting sadness, the humorous melancholy of Ireland. He was not quite as free-handed as Boucicault in levying on the private property of his contemporaries, yet he was willing enough to take his own wherever he found it. His dramatic methods are derivative, to put it mildly. Although he composed a "Duchess of Padua" more or less in imitation of Victor Hugo, and a "Salome" more or less in imitation of Flaubert, the most popular of his plays are comedies of modern London life more or less in imitation of Sardou. "Lady Windemere's Fan" is in accord with the latest Parisian fashion of the season in which it was originally produced; and even the young girl's trick of uttering only the same two words—"Yes, mamma"—in answer to all questions is an echo of Gondinet's—"Oh, Monsieur." The more farcical comedy, called the "Importance of Being Earnest," is a striking example of Wilde's imitative method, the first act and half of the second act having a closely knit comic imbroglio such as we find in Labiche's "Plus Heureux des Trois" or "Célimare le Bien-Aimé," and the rest of the piece being loosely put together in the whimsical manner of W. S. Gilbert's "Engaged."

There is nothing in any of Oscar Wilde's plays to reveal his Irish birth—unless we may credit to his nativity his abundant cleverness and his ready wit, the coruscating fireworks of which were sometimes

exploded by an ill-concealed slow-match. It is almost as though the apostle of aestheticism recoiled from his native island and deliberately refused to be interested in his fellow countrymen. And almost the same remark might be made about a later and far more richly gifted English dramatist of Irish birth, Mr. George Bernard Shaw. Of all his score or more plays, only one, "John Bull's Other Island," is Irish in its subject; and this sole exception, so the author himself tells us, was due to the urgent request of Yeats, who begged Shaw to come to the aid of the struggling Abbey Theatre in Dublin. As it happens, "John Bull's Other Island" was never produced at the playhouse for which it was composed, because, as Shaw confesses: "It was uncongenial to the whole spirit of the neo-Galic movement, which is bent on creating a new Ireland after its own ideal."

In the United States, with our scattered Irish contingent, Boucicault's Irish pieces were as successful as they were in Great Britain. John Brougham, following in Boucicault's footsteps, wrote plays to order for Barney Williams and William J. Florence, cutting his cloth close to the figure of the special performer he was fitting. In the American variety shows a host of Irish impersonators of both sexes presented broad caricatures of Irish character, often rooted in reality. And here in New York there was developed out of these variety-show caricatures a special type of robust Irish comedy, more veracious than Boucicault's sentimental melodramas. Edward Harrigan began with a mere sketch, the "Mulligan Guards," peopled with half a dozen species of Irishmen acclimated in America; and as he was encouraged by immediate appreciation on the part of our cosmopolitan and hospitable public, he went on, feeling his way and refining his method, until he attained the summit of his reach in the delightful "Squatter Sovereignty," with its beautifully differentiated groups of the clan Murphy and the clan Macintyre. It need not be denied that there were wilful extravagances in this series of studies of

the New York Irishman, and that to the very end there were traces of the variety show out of which this type of play had been developed; but no native Irishman had a more realistic humor than Harrigan or a keener insight into certain aspects of human nature.

Then we come to the beginning of the twentieth century and to the founding of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, to the movement led by Lady Gregory and adorned by the very different talents of Yeats and Synge. Here was at last a new departure of the Irish drama in Ireland itself. Here were plays of very varying value and of many different kinds, alike only in this, that they eschewed manufactured bulls; that they did not rely on a varnish of paraded brogue; that they did not deal in boisterous fun-making for its own sake, their fun depending rather upon a subtler humor tinged with melancholy; and that they were no longer contented with an external indication of superficial Irish characteristics, but sought an internal and intimate expression of the essential. These new Irish plays were not Irish by accident; they were Irish by intention, Irish in character and in action, Irish in motive and in sentiment, Irish through and through, immitigably Irish.

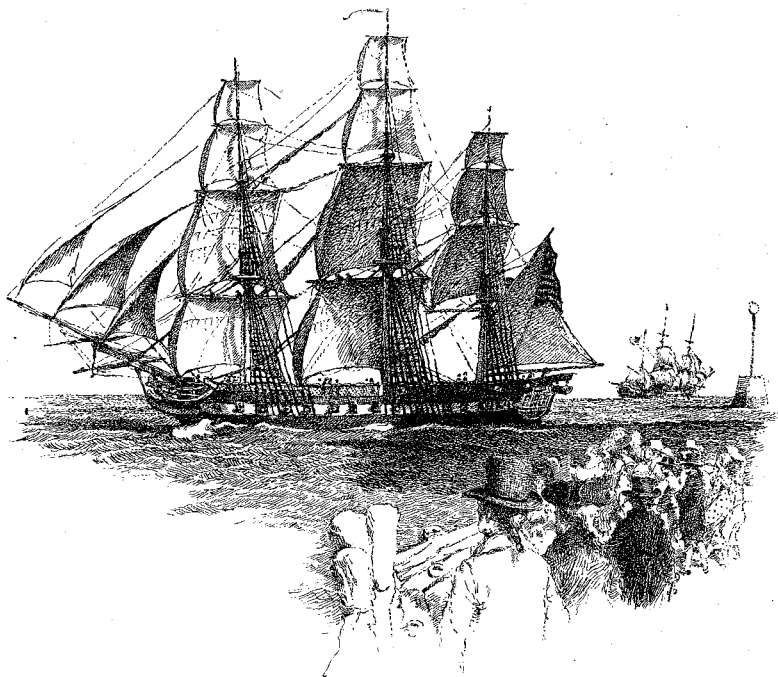
The late Laurence Hutton once defined an American play as a play written by an American, on an American theme, and carried on solely by American characters; but he had to confess the fallacy of this definition when it was pointed out to him that so rigid a demand would exclude from the French drama the "Cid" of Corneille, the "Don Juan" of Molière, the "Phèdre" of Racine, and the "Ruy Blas" of Hugo, while it would also rule out of the English drama the "Romeo and Juliet," the "Hamlet," and the "Julius Caesar" of Shakespeare. Yet there is significance in the suggestion, nevertheless; and these new Irish plays of Lady Gregory, of Yeats, and of Synge, are all the more Irish because they were written by Irishmen on Irish themes and peopled exclusively by Irish characters.

The YARN of the ESSEX

by

DON C. SEITZ

with drawings by JOHN WOLCOTT ADAMS



OLD SALEM—"peaceful" in the Hebrew tongue—
Belied its name when Salem old was young.
Her seamen knew the Buccaneers
And manned the waspish privateers;
Sought strange cargoes, ventured far
Carrying spices and rare attar.
Setting their sails for the Isle of France
Fighting and trading as fell the chance,
Working their way with Yankee loads
To Go-Downs in the Canton Roads.
Scornful of ease, eager for fight
Certain always their cause was right!
Prayed on the land, fought on sea,
Jealous warders of Liberty!
No wind so ill but blew them fair
No deed too bold for them to share!
In the year Ninety-eight John Crapaud
Treated himself to an embargo
Barring the sea to the English race,
Shutting the door in Salem's face,
Without as much as *s'il vous plait*
The Frenchmen get in Salem's way:
Frog-eating sons of *parlez-vous*,
Who d'ye think's afraid of you!