

owners of business property in large cities who will accept outrageous rents.

There is also a new kind of store to be conducted in the larger, incorporated villages or boroughs. But only the man who wants to conform to modern tendencies and conditions should operate one of these stores. This man must be big enough to co-operate with his brother merchants in a serious survey of retail demands in his town. Instead of three merchants offering limited stocks of shoes, men's furnishings, and clothing, one must concentrate on shoes for all ages and nothing else, another must restrict himself to men's furnishings, and the third must throw out everything other than clothing for men and boys. I am merely presenting the necessary move under prevailing conditions, and I recognize that the limited example is loose. He who reads may run. A fair head capable of reasonable thought will not criticise but profit thereby.

The reader who is not in touch with developments in inland retailing and distribution should guard against any impression that the country store has been obliterated. It is still with us, but it has passed from the proud stand of a great American institution of a former day. With a little further development in good roads and the nearer arrival of the saturation-point in the automobile industry, with increased rapidity of exchange and falling prices and wages, the stores at the

crossroads and in the smallest hamlets may dry up and blow away; but that will not happen for another decade at least. Meanwhile, in front of all of them is a gasoline pump unconsciously advertising the cruel irony of this retail age; power to get to the city stores.

The dominant country merchants of 1896 have fulfilled their missions in the building of this great nation and have left the stage. The populace is not calling them back. What has become of them? I know one who has given new life to a dying national bank in a larger city and is climbing to the summit in his field. Another is a road contractor and is demanding his share of the profits of progress. Thousands of the American stalwarts who built the big country stores of another day are pressing progress, and therein is the one answer to the lament of the small-town merchant of to-day. To the true American this is something satisfying and reassuring.

Two years following our removal from the country merchandising business, the "second largest store in the county" burned to the ground. The great barns went with it. A few days ago I visited the community and stood out in the middle of the road, dodging automobiles, and thought my thoughts. As I looked, a giant rat crawled out of the one-time mysterious cellar and took to the open lots near by. Such is abandonment.

## On Jack's Remembrance of Me

BY GEORGE MEASON WHICHER

IN those far days, which I shall never see,  
 When you are struggling with the outward tide,  
 What portion of your heart will turn to me,  
 To me, my love, my longing, and my pride?  
 Ah! nestle closer. I can hold you now;  
 But I shall perish with the passing years.  
 My sheltering arm, my kiss upon your brow,  
 You will forget with childhood's toys and tears.  
 Forget! Forget! Creation's chorus rang;  
 Each age forgets; each has its load to bear.  
 You will forget; but you will feel my pang  
 When children's children tug your snowy hair.  
 No more I ask you, then, of love and grief  
 Than April knows for wan November's leaf.

# Eugene O'Neill, Poet and Mystic

BY ARTHUR HOBSON QUINN

ILLUSTRATION (FRONTISPIECE) FROM THE BUST BY EDMOND QUINN



It is perhaps inevitable that when an original creative artist arises, a myth should speedily develop concerning him. It is even more inevitable when, as in the case of

Eugene O'Neill, his influence extends beyond the limits of his own country and he becomes an international figure. When a playwright's work is produced in New York and Tokio, in Copenhagen and Bombay, in Prague and in Manila, mistaken judgments naturally arise, caused in some cases by inability of the foreign producer to understand the meaning of the play. Perhaps the director of the Berlin production of "Anna Christie" may be pardoned some day for making Anna shoot herself. Gémier, who produced "The Emperor Jones" at the Odéon in Paris, cheerfully sent a number of negroes across the stage between the scenes, to represent the chase after the Emperor. He was apparently unaware that one of the tragic elements in that play comes from the fact that the rhythmic "tom-tom" lures the Emperor back to the very spot at which he enters the forest, while the negroes simply wait for him to come.

It is perhaps unfair to expect foreign productions of an American dramatist to rival those in his own country, but surely his native land also has much to answer for, in the growth of that "O'Neill myth" which obscures the real significance of his work. This myth is one result of the utter confusion of our standards of dramatic criticism, which speak of him one day as a "sordid Realist," a "grim primitive Naturalist" the next, a "lying Moral Romanticist" a little later, and an "immoral violent Expressionist" in the following chapter, and so on without apparently considering the possibility of his varying at times in his methods and with-

out thoroughly understanding the basic meaning of his art.

A writer is not always the best exponent of his own artistic purpose, but in a letter recently sent to me, O'Neill puts the matter so forcibly that, with his permission, I am quoting a portion of it:

"But where I feel myself most neglected is just where I set most store by myself—as a bit of a poet who has labored with the spoken word to evolve original rhythms of beauty where beauty apparently isn't—'Jones,' 'Ape,' 'God's Chillun,' 'Desire,' etc.—and to see the transfiguring nobility of tragedy, in as near the Greek sense as one can grasp it, in seemingly the most ignoble, debased lives. And just here is where I am a most confirmed mystic, too, for I'm always, always trying to interpret Life in terms of lives, never just lives in terms of character. I'm always acutely conscious of the Force behind—(Fate, God, our biological past creating our present, whatever one calls it—Mystery, certainly)—and of the one eternal tragedy of Man in his glorious, self-destructive struggle to make the Force express him instead of being, as an animal is, an infinitesimal incident in its expression. And my profound conviction is that this is the only subject worth writing about and that it is possible—or can be—to develop a tragic expression in terms of transfigured modern values and symbols in the theatre which may to some degree bring home to members of a modern audience their ennobling identity with the tragic figures on the stage. Of course, this is very much of a dream, but where the theatre is concerned, one must have a dream, and the Greek dream in tragedy is the noblest ever!"

If Eugene O'Neill is primarily a poet, he is a playwright, too, but he is a great dramatist because he is more than a dramatist. His own most distinct successes in the theatre, like "Anna Chris-