

sible. This Division also studies the springs of the State. It has published bulletins on them as well as on stream measurements. Included in its recent work has been the survey and location of adequate water supplies on top of the Blue Ridge in the Shenandoah National Park area.

The results of some of the work of the Division of History and Archaeology are evident along all of our primary highways. It is a relatively small matter, though not an inexpensive one, to have a history marker made and erected. Each of those succinct inscriptions, which brings history forcefully to the motorist as he travels, has required long and patient research to make it accurate. Some 1,200 markers have been placed and other historic spots are yet to be marked. They are the wonder and delight of history-minded tourists and the lead of Virginia in this work has been copied by several other states.

The Division is constantly searching out old records, in the libraries and in the field, in order to catch up numerous priceless threads of Virginia history before they are lost forever. It has been making a photographic survey of the old Colonial houses in the state, that these types of architecture may be preserved for future generations. The State Historian has prepared an outline history of Virginia, for use in schools and by the general public when funds are available for its publication.

Conservation and development of the state's resources would fall far short of its complete objective if we were content only to make surveys and inventories of our forests, mineral deposits, water supplies and historical records and to develop parks for the preservation of selected areas for the use of our own people. As richly as Virginia is endowed with a genial climate, natural resources, scenic beauty, historic traditions, and charming hospitality, all of these would be of relatively little worth unless advertised beyond our borders. Through the Division of Publicity the Commission is

striving to reach the traveling public and to inform it accurately and appropriately of the pleasures and profits that await it in Virginia. Our resources are publicized by means of attractive advertisements in periodicals having national circulation, by publications distributed by all of the divisions of the Commission, and by replies to an almost endless stream of inquiries. The educational value of this work is manifest. The commercial value may be simply expressed by the fact that tourists now annually bring \$75,000,000 to \$100,000,000 to the state and leave it widely distributed through all parts.

Each resident of Virginia is in a sense a participant in the work of the State Commission on Conservation and Development as he is in the state government. Much of the basic information passed on to our rising citizens depends upon the teachers of the state. Many of the impressions of Virginia's beauty and charm and hospitality depend upon what we as individuals do to make those things attractive and imperishable and cause them to linger long in the memories of our passing guests.

WILBUR C. HALL

AN AMATEUR DRAMATIC THEORY

WOULD it be heretical, at a time when, in spite of Little Theatre movements, eager dramatic departments in universities, and post-post-Romantic experimentation in dramatic structure, the living theatre is ailing, to suggest that we are gorged with dramatic theories? Of course we cannot blame Aristotle and Sarcey and Brunetière and Hugo and Gordon Craig and William Archer for the present stagnation of American and British drama, and perhaps the reason that even cultured Americans prefer talking pictures of racketeers and of lovely blondes who go wrong and then join the Salvation Army to Ibsen and Barrie is inherent in our temperaments. Perhaps too we have fo-

cused short-sightedly on the stage and are not merely halting between the Hauptmann-Ibsen-Shaw-O'Neill-Lady Gregory revolt against the Scribe "well-made play" and some indeterminate future school or method which will have its appropriate label. Perhaps the stream-of-consciousness, slice-of-life, and expressionistic plays will have been more significant in the history of the drama than they now appear to be. That the annual record of failures in Broadway productions is well over 70 per cent of all plays presented, and that the highest formal dramatic award of the year should go to a play like Zoë Akins's *The Old Maid* may be superficial indications of the decay of our drama (if we ever had a drama!). In any event, fewer and fewer of us continue to enjoy the theatre. One explanation may be that we spend so much time in analysis of how plays have been and should be written that we neither write noble plays nor observe with pleasure what we do have.

I quite realize that I am airing an extravagant notion which is induced by two things: one, the presence in my mind of a number of more or less conflicting theories of drama, and the other an honest conception of my actual behavior during a play. I know that the drama progresses steadily, though at a somewhat crazy pace with many pauses and leaps. I know that one generation of playwrights profits by the errors and excellences of the preceding generation, and that dramatic criticism with its inevitable theories sets up necessary standards. I know too that though at various times dramatists have been enslaved by rules evolved by scholars and that Aristotle has done just about as much harm as good to the drama, in their leisurely time come Congreves and Victor Hugos and Ibsens who create technique of their own. I should like, nevertheless, to take a shot or two at modern dramatic theory from my secure amateur and personal position as a member of audiences. Since, as Sarcey long ago admitted, an audience is essential to any play, I am

not taking too serious a liberty if I make my judgments as a fairly typical spectator.

When I was an undergraduate, I read Aristotle's *Poetics* and the essay on the Sublime attributed to Longinus. At that time my knowledge of drama was a very rudimentary one. I had seen Walter Hampden in *The Merchant of Venice* and thrilled to a spectacular dramatization of *Ben Hur*; I had written themes on the character of Lady Macbeth and memorized Mark Antony's funeral speech in *Julius Cæsar*. When I had gone to the theatre, I had always naively lost myself in the action and became, as the occasion demanded, a Roman mechanic or one of Oberon's fairies or a bloodhound pursuing Eliza. Once I had taken a very minor part in a civic production of a Passion Play, and from behind my high-priest's beard I had been what I then thought was the perfect kind of onlooker, one who surrendered himself to the spectacle, taking part without interfering with or influencing the action. Aristotle quickly showed me how wrong and adolescent my method had been. Henceforth I must be more critical, studying the effect upon myself of pity and fear or, as Lane Cooper proved a parallel catharsis for comedy, of anger and hatred, and making sure that the play had a beginning, a middle, and an end. I must watch for the sublime quality in the hero who must be good, but not too good. In my conscientious awareness of *ethos* and *dianoia* and *hamartia* I did not have much enjoyment at the theatre for many months.

My acquaintance with the drama began to broaden, mostly through my reading, though an occasional Shakespearean company wandered through my city or a stock company established itself during the summer months. As I read Horace and Pope and J. Q. Adams and William Archer, I realized that the days of pleasant passive appreciation were forever lost. I must examine exposition in a play and be prepared to scorn an artificial introductory narration of past events, as in the plays of Euripides;

I must watch for the climax, always in Act III, and be able to diagram the rising and falling action; I must see whether the conflict has proper motivation and whether it is internal or external struggle. I learned that the plays of Webster and Ford and Fletcher and those of the Restoration comedy-writers, though demonstrating social decadence, were magnificently constructed. Then Archer showed me that the modern drama is better than the old drama. I tried unsuccessfully to test the theory by my still Aristotelian rules-of-thumb, and plunging to the edges of my chaotic opinions found myself bewildered by the rushing down upon me of a host of plays, *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, Plautus's *Self-Tormentor*, Brieux's *Red Robe*, O'Neill's *Lazarus Laughed*, Shaw's *Man and Superman*, Wilde's *Salome*, Chekov's *Cherry Orchard*, and dozens of others, which I could not catalogue according to any theory.

Meanwhile I saw *Macbeth* in the Gordon Craig settings and liked nothing but the skinny witches, the glint of helmets in the dim light, and the drunken porter. My critical perception, which should have been looking out for pity and fear, was upset by my proximity to elderly women in audible raptures and by the fact that I was seeing the performance from an oblique remoteness in a cheap seat. *Hamlet* I saw twice. The first time, I was so busy remembering what I should remember, the hypothesis of melancholia, the inexorable motivation, the great lines, that I missed most of the action and came away with the vague impression that *Hamlet* played by an amateur company can sound like melodramatic rant. During the second presentation, quite a respectable one, I felt, blasphemously, that five acts are terribly long and that though I like blank verse when I read it, I am rather bored with it on the stage. One thing I realized as I saw plays during this time was that, however good a play might seem on paper, the impression it made on an audience depended chiefly on the merits of the actors

who gave it. No book of criticism had ever told me this, possibly because it was too obvious a fact. It was new to me, though, rather shockingly. I noticed that, safely removed from Aristotle, I fell back into old habits and lost myself in the plays: *Journey's End*, *Strange Interlude*, *Street Scene*, *The Green Pastures*, *Hedda Gabler*. Afterwards, a little shamefacedly, I'd try to think about exposition and climax. Always, however, my interest was in the characters as people. Even in fairly poor plays, such as St. John Ervine's *First Mrs. Fraser* and Belasco's *It's a Wise Child*, where the characters were amusing, my critical contempt was suspended.

Then, in a formal graduate course, I discovered how much I did not know about dramatic theory. Professor A. C. Bradley, for instance, says that great Shakespearean tragedy produces in the spectator the consciousness "of a world travailing for perfection, but bringing to birth, together with glorious good, an evil which it is able to overcome only by self-torture and self-waste."¹ He says elsewhere that a cynic ceases to be a cynic as he reads this perfect tragedy. Professor Allardyce Nicoll, on the other hand, speaks of tragedy as "the form of dramatic art in which the serious and miserable side of life is emphasized. All men vaguely, and the wise men consciously, realize the utter vanity of living, and in tragedy we are given prime representation of the worthlessness of all things."² This definite opposition of opinion is illustrative of the general critical method: each scholar believing thoroughly in his idea dogmatically states it as a theory. Even though both writers adduce convenient evidence to prove their cases, however, I have not been convinced that I either rejoice in the ultimate goodness of the world or accept life as

¹A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*. Macmillan and Company, Limited, London, 1908. p. 39.

²Allardyce Nicoll, *The Theory of Drama*, George G. Harrap and Company, Limited, London, 1931. p. 133.

empty vanity, when I see a tragedy played. In fact, I don't believe that I think about these things at all.

Professor Nicoll, in his book on *The Theory of Drama*, has postulated many emotional and intellectual reactions that he considers the proper effects of tragedy and comedy. He declares that we must discard our archaic idea of pity as one of the emotions produced by tragedy. We are impressed, he says, by the hardness of the great tragic dramatists, Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Alfieri, Ibsen. Must I then be ashamed of being sorry for Cassandra in the *Agamemnon*; for Macbeth in his sere and yellow, bitterly lamenting that life is a tale told by an idiot; for the Oreste in Alfieri's play; for Oswald Alving and Rebecca West? I confess that I wept bitterly when I saw *Journey's End*, and that I felt some emotion gentler than admiration for hardness in the dramatist at the grief of the doctor lover of Nina in *Strange Interlude*.

Nicoll makes much of Universality in great drama, the intangible quality that imparts power and dignity to a play grandly conceived. Yet when I read a play or watch a play, I do not say to myself, "This is life itself. This goes beyond mere individuals and is symbolic of all mankind." I see Lear and Othello and Oedipus and Stockman as men, greater than any I know, but always as men whom I proudly know, just as I might have known Matthew Arnold, Thoreau, Cavour, or Andrew Jackson. Why should I, as dramatic theory requires, merge the mighty one in the ignoble many? We do not need external or internal symbols to know that a character of fiction is tremendous. When a Becky Sharp or a Joseph Andrews or a Jolyon Forsyte is created, the writer does not have to make him eternal by explicit mystic linkings with the Oversoul. Neither does Ibsen have to prove by mechanical devices like sub-plots and tragic irony and pathetic fallacies that Nora in the *Doll's House* is emblematic of all womanhood.

In truly understanding drama, Professor Nicoll goes on to assert, we ought to have a well-indexed filing box for the different kinds of plays. In the tragedy we must distinguish between the hero whose tragic flaw is revealed in conscious error and the hero whose flaw is impotence and ambition. We really should call what we know as the Jonsonian comedy of humours something else and call the Shakespearean comedy the comedy of humor, being careful to designate our humor, intelligent laughs as humorous, our satirical smiles as witty, and our guffaws as farcical. We must keep separate eleven different categories of plays, ranging from pure tragedy through tragic-comedy and the *drame* to the pure comedy.

Indeed, what have we, in attending the theatre, to do with classification of plays? Does it matter whether *The Wild Duck* is a tragedy or a *drame*? If Hedda knows or doesn't know why she is a loathsome reptile of a woman, do we have to put her in a special compartment? If we laugh at Engstrom in *Ghosts* or at Falstaff in *Henry IV*, do we have to consult Bergson to know why?

These are not vastly important criticisms of dramatic theory. I am fully aware as I write that in scholarly analysis classification and dogmatism, even tempered by "perhaps" and "in general" and "probably", are essential. I see the value of ideas like those of "waste" in Shakespearean tragedy and "universality" in all high drama. My objections are delivered pettishly from an orchestra seat, where I like to sit between the acts hating Hedda or musing about Candida or sympathizing with the Emperor Jones instead of wondering whether or not the exposition is skilfully handled or whether the play is a true comedy of manners or a satire or whether the heroic grandeur of the protagonist is sufficient to allow me to classify the play as pure tragedy. I do not mean to deprecate the definitions that are useful in any contemplation of drama as a form of art that may be dissected and

studied, but speaking as an amateur, I'd rather see a play as a part of life, more intense than life, beyond my control. The analysis, if there must be one, is academic and remote. It cuts open a dead body. It may be that the technical examination and the emotional appreciation can coexist, and that the one may strengthen the other. Not yet, however, have I felt that this is true. When I read Mr. Nicoll's dictum that "tragedy has for its aim not the arousing of pity, but the conjuring up of a feeling of

awe allied to lofty grandeur,"³ and that for the pain and tragedy there must be some high-minded relief, I ask myself why we cannot stop all this putting of tears under the microscope and measuring laughter with a foot-rule. Speaking again as an amateur, I feel that the pleasure of tragedy or any drama is simply detachment from self in a concentrated absorption in life, that, but for the grace of God, might have been ours.

ARGUS TRESIDDER

³*Op. cit.*, p. 122.

THE TEACHERS' JOE MILLER

ANOTHER GAME

Customer: "Good morning! Have you Dickens' *Cricket on the Hearth*?"

Shopman: "No, madam; but I can show you a very good ping-pong set."—*Whitley Seaside Chronicle*.

—
"The nerve of that woman offering me only \$8 a week," raved Tillie the maid. "What does she think I am, a college graduate?"

—
SH—SH—SH!

Ball: "What is silence?"

Hall: "The college yell of the school of experience."

—
Small Boy: "Father, what's a committee?"

Father: "A committee is a body that keeps minutes and wastes hours!"

HOLDING

"What is a holding compan-ee?"

Said little Robert Reed.

"The answer isn't hard to see,"

Said teacher, "No, indeed!

As we with care proceed, my son,

Investigations show,

A holding company is one

That never will let go."

—*Washington Star*.

ANOTHER RADISH

A Topeka woman was having lunch in a restaurant and just as the waitress was removing the plate, the Topeka woman spied what she took to be another radish and made a hurried grab for it. To her amazement she found herself clutching the bright red thumb of the waitress.—*Kansas City Journal-Post*.

HIS DIFFICULTY

A teacher was telling the class about the conquests of Alexander the Great.

"When Alexander had conquered India," she said, "what do you think he did? Do you think he gave a great feast to celebrate his triumph? No, he sat down and wept."

The pupils seemed disappointed at this childish display on the part of the hero, so the teacher hastened to explain. "Now why do you think Alexander wept?" she asked.

Up shot a hand.

"Please, miss," said Freddie, "perhaps he didn't know the way back."—*Answers*.

PROGRESS

"A telegram from George, dear."

"Well, did he pass the examination this time?"

"No, but he is almost at the top of the list of those who failed."