

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE DRAMA

By
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To
JANIE
THE DEAREST OF COMPANIONS
AT THE PLAY

PREFACE

The basis of this book is a series of lectures given before various classes and study groups, among others the Century Theater Club of New York and the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences. In conducting such courses I found that an outline survey of the drama of past centuries is a necessary preliminary to a just understanding of any play. Modern drama especially, to be rightly estimated, needs to be aligned beside the drama of other periods. The history of this art is continually presenting to the student the revival of old themes, the resurrection of stock characters, and the recurrence of stock situations; as a consequence what often seems strikingly original to the novice in the art is but the reincarnation of an ancient favorite of the boards.

I have had three main objects in the writing of the book:

1. to offer an easy narrative of the history of the art, giving occasional attention to forms of production and to theories of construction, but in the main trying to tell who the chief playwrights were and what they tried to do;
2. to supply a book which could handily be used as a reference work by critics, teachers, playwrights and students generally;
3. to indicate here and there the effective results gained by criticism, by conscious efforts on the part of reformers, or by the more or less organized revolt against established forms.

So far as has been possible I have read representative plays; and while sometimes bewildered by the difference of opinion among scholars of repute concerning certain plays and movements, I have generally come to the conclusion that my readers would enjoy best having the varied opinions set before them and being allowed to judge for themselves. In the Supplement I have supplied a short reading list of books about the drama;

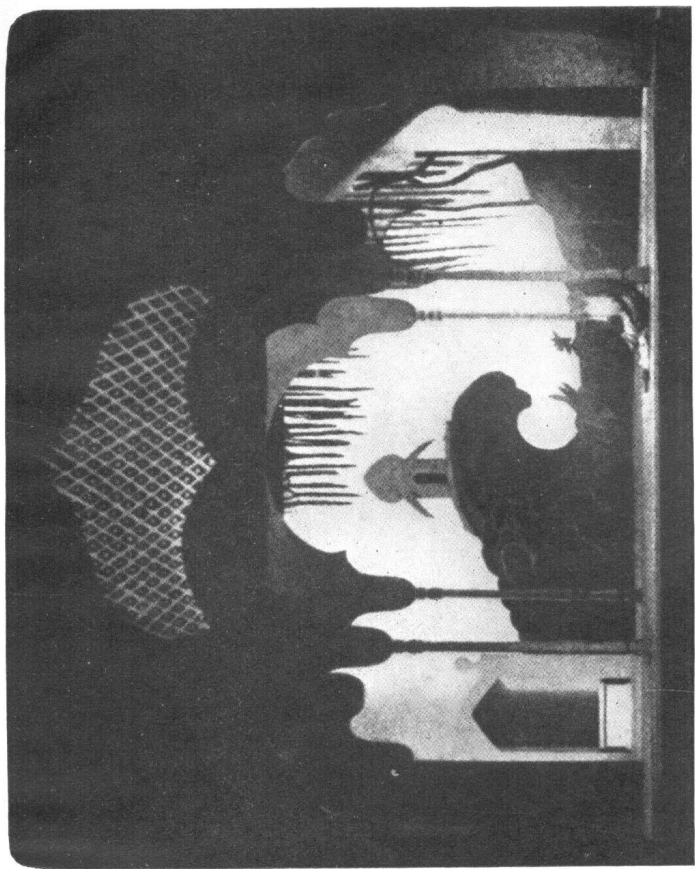
also a chronological list of the chief playwrights of each period with dates and the titles of important plays.

I wish here to thank the many authors whose opinions I have consulted. I wish also to express my acknowledgments to several librarians and their assistants, especially to those of Columbia University, of the University of Chicago, and of the Public Library of New York City, for kindly help and the opportunity of seeing unusual books and pamphlets. My sincere thanks go to a friend and a classical scholar, Henrietta Josephine Meeteer, Ph.D., formerly head of the classical department at Swarthmore College; to Roy C. Flickinger, Ph.D., head of the classical department at Northwestern University, both of whom have made valuable suggestions and corrections; and to my husband, Franz Bellinger, Ph.D., for constant help in the preparation of the manuscript. It is unnecessary to add that no one of these helpers is responsible for whatever opinions or errors may appear.

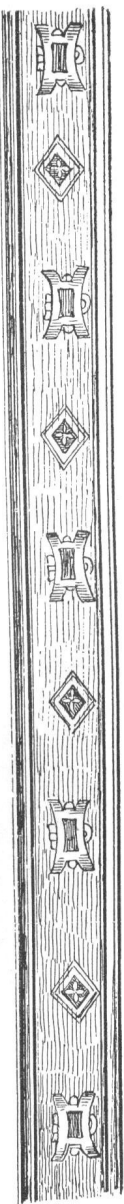
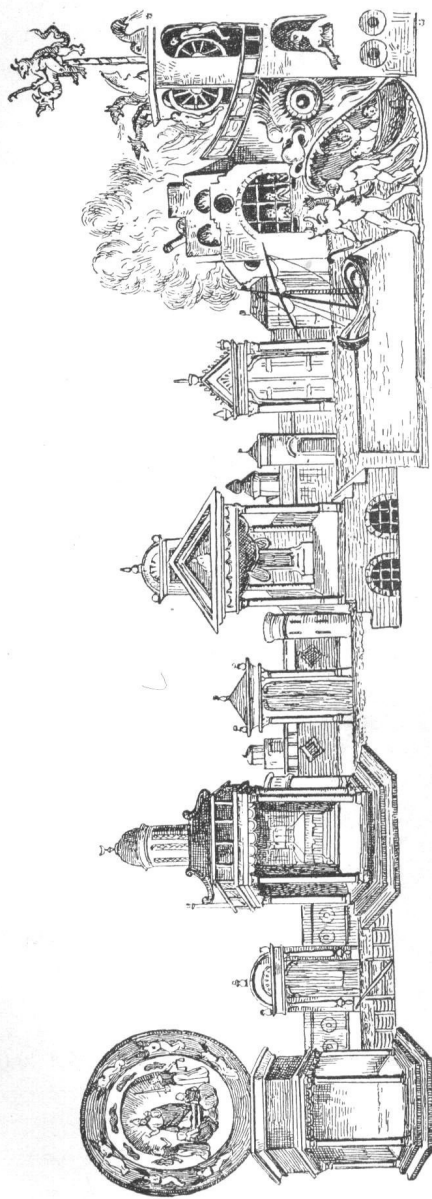
In so brief a history many interesting playwrights must either be omitted or too sketchily considered; but I have tried to present the pageant of play-acting from its human and charming side. My sincere hope is that the story here set forth may enhance the pleasure of going to the play, and may perhaps arouse an appreciation of the rich background which lies behind even the most unpretentious theatrical entertainment.

M. F. B.

Wayne, Maine.
June, 1927.



Setting for the Garden Scene, *The Little Clay Cart*, as produced at the
Neighborhood Playhouse, New York



Mystery-stage in the 16th Century



Official Photograph 1910.

Jesus and the Apostles
From the Oberammergau Passion Play

Copyr. F. Bruckmann Ltd., Munich



Florence Vandamm Studio

Estelle Winwood, as Katharine, and Rollo Peters, as Petruchio, in
The Taming of the Shrew



Mrs. Fiske, as Mrs. Malaprop, in Sheridan's *The Rivals*



Firmin Gemier, as Mephistopheles, in *Faust*

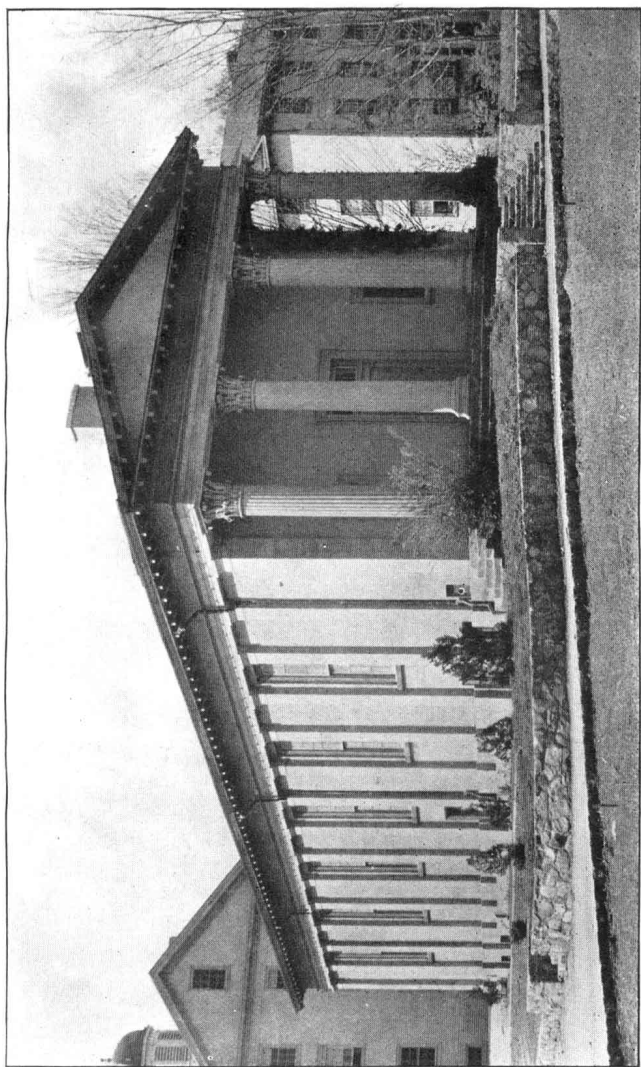


Photograph by Arthur Kales

Interior, by Maurice Macterlinck. Community Theater, Hollywood.



Striking climax of Act II in the "Habima" troupe's production of *The Dybbuk*, Ansky's play of Ghetto life. A synthesis of Hebrew and Russian stage art



This Historic Building, used originally to house the University of North Carolina Library and later the School of Law, has been reconstructed and equipped as a permanent Home for The Carolina Playmakers. This is the first state-owned Theatre to be devoted to its own native Drama

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SECTION ONE
UNCONSCIOUS DRAMA AND PRIMITIVE
LEGENDS