
The Gate Theatre production of Shaw's "Heartbreak House" was more satisfactory last night, when it opened on its second week. Growing familiarity with the parts may have been responsible for a speeding-up of action, which was welcomed, and if there was any grievous fault it lay not with the players. Hilton Edwards, as Captain Shotover, is the outstanding player in the cast, and Miss Betty Chancellor was quite good as Ellie Dunn. Raymond Percy, who is a comparative newcomer, made a reasonable success of the part of Mazzini Dunn, and another player, who showed up well was Geraldine Walsh as the nurse. Esmé Biddle, as Lady Utterwood, played a trying part with happy results.

Irish Times Wednesday, August 26, 1931 – Page 4

**“ THE GOVERNMENT
INSPECTOR ”**

AT THE GATE THEATRE.

The Mayor Hilton Edwards
 His Wife Coralie Carmichael
 His Daughter Betty Chancellor
 The School Inspector W. Van Craen
 The Judge R. G. Hennessy
 The Charity Commissioner...William Sherwood
 The Post Master Edward Lexy
 The District Doctor Denis Power
 Two Landowners
 Raymond Percy and Art O'Murnaghan
 A Clerk from Petersburg..Micheal Macliammoir
 His Servant Charles Marford
 And others.

"What are you laughing at? You are laughing at yourselves." It would have been so had the audience been laughing at all, but in actual fact the audience probably saw the point as neatly as the Mayor did. Nikolai Gogol's farcical comedy, "The Government Inspector," which was staged for the first time in Dublin at the Gate Theatre last night, dramatises Russian humanity as it was about a century ago, and as all humanity remains to this day. There is a lavish display of the Seven Deadly Sins, and a no less lavish use of some of the deadening virtues which furnish food for the sins. All the snobbery, cupidity, vanity, gluttony and sloth of a little Russian provincial town is ruthlessly exposed; but there is also the humility, industry, obedience and herd-mind upon which these sins seem to flourish in civilised communities. "The Government Inspector," indeed, is such a farcical comedy as Lady Gregory might have written twenty-five years ago, and is akin to the humours designed by George A. Birmingham to foist upon the inoffensive heads of officials, like his Higganbothom, who chased the Spanish gold with Thomas O'Flaherty Pat.

The plot revolves about the mistaken identity of a young man who was believed to be an Inspector from St. Petersburg, and was, in consequence, treated with all the deference usually accorded officials in the best regulated countries even now. Some people may believe the central idea quite impossible; but to those it may be remarked that there were Koe penicks in Germany not so long ago, and it is not too much to conceive an enterprising

discovered that a young man had been among them for two weeks unknown and unidentified. The young man had been living sparingly on the kindness of the innkeeper, but that mattered little. He was on the point of going to jail as an impostor when the Mayor arrived to conduct him about the village, in the belief that he was the expected Inspector from Petersburg. He went to live with the Mayor, got engaged to marry the Mayor's daughter, collected hundreds of roubles from all and sundry, and finally escaped as the real official from the capital arrived on the scene.

The play, of course, opens somewhat slowly; it was written in days when the art of play-writing had not yet attained the perfection of the Scribe-Ibsen period, and when the "aside" was still a legitimate device of the stage. It is overweighted with details which a later dramatist would have eliminated, but which all go to the adequate portrayal of character and communal psychology. There is in Gogol all the meticulous detail which characterised the late Arnold Bennett, and which is a little wearisome on the stage. When the play gets properly going, as it does in the third of its five acts, there is in it a subtle charm which no later dramatist has excelled. "The Government Inspector," then, is a play to see for itself first, and a play to see because it will compel healthy laughter at ourselves. It made the Tsar Nicholas laugh in 1856, and has kept all the world laughing ever since.

Last night the acting was a trifle uncertain, a fault which will rectify itself in a short time, but otherwise the production was in every respect satisfying. In the principal part of the innocent petty official mistaken for the Inspector, Mr. MacLiammoir gave an exceedingly vivid performance. So cultured, don't y'know! That was what the ladies thought, and that was exactly the impression he made. A fop, who would do anything rather than work; a lazy ornament, whose whole life would be a crime. In the third act he was superb, simulating growing intoxication as it has rarely been done on the

stage. The mayor was beautifully impersonated by Mr. Hilton Edwards, he was the "old grey horse" of his persecutor to the life. Misses Coralie Carmichael and Betty Chancellor made a well-contrasted pair as the mayor's wife and daughter, and the group of village officials were fully equal to their respective parts.

"The Government Inspector" will be repeated every evening this week at 8 o'clock.

" STORM OVER WICKLOW."

NEW PLAY AT THE GATE THEATRE.

Miss Isabella Lillywhite	Mary Manning
Mr. Charles Coogan	George Norton
Mr. Wilkinson	Raymond Percy
Mrs. Wilkinson	May Carey
Miss Jenny Lillywhite	Florence Lynch
Miss Betty Vance	Hazel Ellis

In "Youth's the Season," Miss Mary Manning seemed to be hampered by a weakness in construction, and "Storm Over Wicklow," last night, at the Gate Theatre may owe its success partly to the fact that the need for dramatic construction does not arise at all. Miss Manning has no plot in this play; she just takes a hotel in the Wicklow Mountains, supplies it with visitors, provides it with a rainy day and lets the characters talk the matter out. The results are hilarious; as in "Drama at Inish," a few weeks ago, you can sit back in your seat and succumb to laughter.

Miss Manning's irony is never bitter, but she slates everyone mercilessly and impartially, and Rathmines comes in for it quite as much as Bloomsbury does. There are so many absurdly comic things in this play that it would be impossible to recount them, but we might mention the interviews of the English tourists with "Æ" and Lennox Robinson (who both advised them to "seek some place in the mountains—as far away from Dublin as possible"), and Miss Lillywhite's ridiculous efforts with her camera. It is enough to say that "Storm Over Wicklow" is one of the most amusing one-act farces that we have seen for some time. It has a Lonsdalean quickness of wit that is quite new to the Irish stage, and we hope to see some more of it before long. Miss Manning herself

gave one of the best performances, and other outstanding members of the cast were George Norton, Raymond Percy, Hazel Ellis and May Carey.

Before seeing it on the stage, we had decided that "St. Patrick's Day" was one of the worst of Sheridan's plays, and that Michael MacLiammoir, of all people, was least fitted to take the central part. But it was played with such *abandon* and staged so exactly as it should be staged that we quite lost our hearts to it, and retracted our first opinions. There is no doubt that the Gate company know how to get the best out of a play, and every performance tends to increase our admiration for their manner of production. Mr. MacLiammoir, Raymond Percy, Esmé Biddle, Edward Levy and Betty Chancellor were all good in this farce.

The programme was completed by a delightfully formal Chinese drama, played by Micheal MacLiammoir and Betty Chancellor. A mixed grill, certainly, but a very palatable one.

WEATHER FORECAST.

MR. JOHNSTON'S NEW PLAY.

“A BRIDE FOR THE
UNICORN.”

EXPRESSIONISM AT THE GATE.

John Phosphorus	Hilton Edwards
A Drunk Swell	Micheal MacLiammhoir
The Girl with the Ring	Shelah Richards
Leonard the Learned	Art O'muraighan
Albert the Acquisitive	Edward Lexy
Bernard the Brave	Lionel Dymoke

THIS new play of Mr. Denis Johnston's (or must we still call him E. W. Ucher?) opened last night at the Gate Theatre, Dublin, and is a very odd affair, indeed. The action starts with Mr. Micheal MacLiammhoir, and several others, deciding to have a play. What sort of play are they to have? They solve the question to their own satisfaction.

The curtain rises again to show us the interior of So and So's emporium, with Mr. Hilton Edwards as a shop assistant, and Mr. MacLiammhoir a dummy figure in the window. He comes to life, introduces Mr. Edwards to the Girl in the Mask, and Mr. Edwards decides to follow her. At the hotel to which he goes, the Old Boys' Dinner is in progress; he meets his old school companions (Percy the Prosperous, Lewis the Loving, and others), and in the twinkling of an eye they are changed to schoolboys again, with caps

on their heads.

He loses the Girl in the Mask, and becomes Jason with his seven companions, seeking the Golden Fleece. To supply funds, they float "Hercules Limited" on the Stock Exchange, while what appears to be one of the Four Marx Brothers sits with his legs over the stage and dangles a fishing rod into the auditorium. The funds are needed to supply drink to the tailor's dummy, so that he may tell them where the girl is to be found. So the search goes on, madder and madder, through married life, public-houses, war, the law courts, peace conferences. He finds the girl at last, persuades her to remove her mask, and finds beneath the grinning features of Death.

What is one to make of it all? One feels like Browning's musician when confronted with Master Hugues of Saxe Gotha: the man presumably means something, but what? Like him, one is inclined to exclaim: "Not a glimpse of the far land gets through your comments and glosses." Mr. Johnston has something to say. One gets glimpses of it here and there, especially towards the end of the play, but never more than a glimpse. Within each scene he is often simple enough to follow, and his satire is delightful and

vigorous on various aspects of life; but, however brilliantly informative these scenes are, they are not fused into a whole, and seem to be more in the nature of isolated sketches than part of a play. The connection between them all probably exists clearly enough in Mr. Johnston's own mind, but it is a playwright's business to make it clear to his audience as well, and the playgoer of average intelligence may be excused if he leaves the theatre in rather a dazed condition.

This play is quite as daring in its technique as the "Old Lady." Mr. Johnston allows his characters the full run of the stage, including the box reserved for the orchestra. He runs one scene into the next by the clever use of curtains, and his effects are in great part due also to the superb staging. The Gate has certainly kept up its reputation in the

setting of this drama, both in the actual construction of the sets, and in the lighting and grouping. Possibly the best effect was in the "sailing of the Argonauts," in which the figures, arranged grotesquely in the form of a boat with its rowers, are silhouetted against a pale sky.

Mr. Hilton Edwards, as the central character, gave us a fine performance, somewhat reminiscent of his acting in "Peer Gynt" (to which, it may be said, this play bears a certain affinity). Micheal Mac Liammhoir was the Drunk Swell, *alias* the drunk Tailor's Dummy, *alias* the Ultimate Observer, and seemed to be quite at home with it all.

The other characters were very evenly divided. Art O Murnaghan possibly attracted one's interest the most, but Shelah Richards, Betty Chancellor, Coralie Carmichael, Edward Laxy, Raymond Percy, Florence Lynch, and, indeed, several others, all had some very good moments.

This play certainly will create a "sensation" in Dublin, and there is no doubt that it is a courageous experiment, even if it cannot be considered an altogether successful one. Mr. Johnston has cut clean away from the old "realistic" stage tradition. He is not the first to do so in drama, but he is the first to do so in Irish drama, and deserves all the credit which a man should get who introduces a new outlook and a new method of expression. His play will strike the normal man as incoherent, but it will make him think.

FINE PRODUCTION AT THE GATE

Michael Forsyth Ransom Micheal MacLiammoir
 Sir James Ransom (his twin brother) Emerton Court
 Lady Isabel Welwyn Toska Bissing
 General Dellaby-Couch Tyrrell Pine
 Lord Stagmantle Michael Golden
 David Gunn Roy Irving
 Ian Shawcross Lea Hollinshead
 Edward Lamp Wilfrid Brambell
 Doctor Thomas Williams Milton Edwards
 Mrs. Ransom (mother of Michael and James) Merial Moore
 The Abbot Christopher Cason
 Mr. A. Raymond Percy
 Mrs. A. Coralie Carmichael
 Newspaper Boys Seumas McDonnell, Maurice Selwyn
 Monks: Pierre Alibert, James Devoy, Edward
 Hickey, Seamus McDonnell, Mahmoud El
 Sabaa, Brendan Touhy, Sean Keeley, Maurice
 Selwyn.

MR. HILTON EDWARDS has excelled himself in his truly magnificent production of this play. Handicapped by his authors, his triumph with, and in a sense over, them, is a larger matter to the audience than the hero's ascent of F6. One felt somehow, at the end, that it was he the audience applauded so enthusiastically, rather than what had come over to them of Messrs. Auden and Isherwood.

The bones of the play are compounded of simple, one might almost say immature, matter; for what is really said has only the slight substance of a boy's story. But there are trimmings, and thereby hangs what might appear to many a larger tale. These are made up of expressionism, modern poetry, mother-complex, and that kind of satire which is embodied in the pathetic figure of the little man in the political cartoon.

The simple materials for another story of British heroism in the face of fearful odds begin the play, and to a large extent continue what action it maintains. Michael Forsyth Ransom is a mountain-climber of high purpose and notable achievement. There is a formidable peak in a remote region of the earth, which it has long been one of his cherished ambitions to climb. This is F6, something comparable only with Everest, and, indeed, more and more like it as the play proceeds.

The hero is well projected at this start in some of the best verse the play achieves, but

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the preparations for his great expedition do not long remain as the decent preliminaries of such an effort of man's unconquerable will. The game of politics begins to surround them; to lessen and degrade them, and soon what might have been a simple, moving story, becomes, as the programme tells us, "a conflict between purity of purpose and mere material achievement."

A SATIRE

It was as well that we were told that at starting, for we might have missed it in the higher reaches of the concluding scenes. What we really see afterwards is a satire on modern civilisation, with a champion battling to liberate us from certain dragons of our own creation. These are political jobbery, social smugness and newspaper racketeering. They are projected for us in certain types which again might be out of any newspaper cartoon, and in the chorus which is effected by a radio station and the little man and his wife.

In the homely verse of Mr. and Mrs. A, the edge of the satire is intended to be keen, but it is blunted a little because we have to lean on them for the lighter and best meaning of the play.

Its heroic side might not have puzzled us if two things had not happened to the mountaineer. The first was his encounter, before the ascent, with a philosophic Abbot, who did no real service to the play. The second was his meeting, after all the hardships of the ascent, not with the demon who was supposed to guard the summit of F. 6, but with his own mother in the higher reaches of psycho-analysis.

It took all Mr. Christopher Carson's ability as an actor to keep the first of these scenes from heavy boredom, and all Mr. Edwards's

skill as a producer to keep the second from appearing more than a trifle silly. The climb was a hard one for the members of the expedition, but the metaphysics at the very end were harder for the audience.

Nevertheless, the play was, on the whole, a most exciting production. In its best moments it has fine qualities, and, apart altogether from the verse, which may have its special appeal, it has the admirable virtue of keeping expectation suspended almost to the very end.

THE PLAYERS

As the explorer, Mr. MacLiammoir had a part that perfectly suited him in its prose as well as in its verse; Messrs. Emerton Court, Tyrrell Pine, Michael Golden, and Miss Toska Bissing realised completely the four satirised types from the newspapers. Mr. Raymond Percy and Miss Coralie Carmichael were perfectly at home as Mr. and Mrs. A. Of the mountain climbers, Messrs. Roy Irving and Lea Hollinshead were the two who best helped Mr. MacLiammoir to give reality to the ascent. Miss Meriel Moore had a small, though difficult, part as the mother of the hero. She held it well in its dangerous last moments.

“THE ASCENT OF F 6”

The fine presentation by Hilton Edwards and Micheal MacLiammoir of Auden and Isherwood's play, “The Ascent of F 6,” has been drawing big “houses” at the Gate Theatre during the week, and last night, when the play was again produced, there was no falling-off, either in attendance or appreciation.

Micheal MacLiammoir continued to give of his best in representing, as Michael Forsyth Ransom, “the conflict between purity of purpose and mere material achievement” and the “champion battling to liberate us from those dragons of our own creations.” Hilton Edwards was again brilliant as Doctor Thomas Williams.

The four satirised types of people were played by Messrs. Emerton Court, Tyrrell Pine, Michael Gordon, and Miss Toska Bissing. Raymond Percy and Miss Coralie Carmichael were Mr. and Mrs. A.

Roy Irving and Frank MacDara were David Gunn and Ian Shawcross, and Miss Meriel Moore was Mrs. Ransom.

Changes at the Gate

Hilton Edwards and Michael Mac Liammoir will open their 1940 season at the Gaiety Theatre following Jimmy O'Dea's engagement there, and after a short season at the Gaiety the company will return to its old home at the Gate.

The list of plays for the new season is already settled, but Mr Edwards is holding up its publication in the hope of getting the rights to some plays which, I am told, would make this season's programme even more interesting than usual.

Despite the war, all of last year's company, with only one exception, are back again. The business personnel of the organisation, however, has been considerably changed. Mr Raymond Percy, business manager, has left to join the Services and has been replaced by Mr Desmond Mur-

phy, business manager of several Dublin cinemas. Miss Toska Bissing, publicity manager, has gone to America to "contact" possibilities for an American tour when the war ends. Her place has been taken by Miss Lucy Glazebrook, who comes after several years working in the New York Theatre.

The company has also acquired the services of Mr Patrick Perrott as associate dress designer. Mr Perrott has for many years worked with the leading dress designers in Paris, and it is only the war which makes it possible for him to be with us in Dublin. His original gowns were seen last season in the Gate's modern dress "Hamlet" and in Mr Maciammoir's own play, "Where Stars Walk".

The Irish Times,
August 15th, 1940.

Theatre Council meets Taoiseach

Suggestions on how the Arts Council could develop the art of the theatre in Dublin and the provinces were discussed between the Taoiseach and members of the Irish Theatre Council yesterday.

The Council has prepared a memorandum setting out ideas which could be considered by the Director of the Arts Council when he is appointed. The memorandum was the basis of the discussion with Mr. de Valera.

On the deputation were: Mr. Hilton Edwards, Mr. Raymond Percy, Mr. Leo McCabe, Mr. Stanley Illsley, Dr. Lennox Robinson, Mr. Dermot K. Doolan and Mr. Louis V. Nolan.



A scene from "The Love of Four Colonels," at the Gaiety Theatre, Dublin. From left are : Raymond Percy (as Colonel Rinder-Sparrow), Reginald Jarman (as Colonel Ikonenko), Hilton Edwards (as a visitor), Leo Layden (as Colonel Frappot) and Denis Brennan (as Colonel Breitenspiegel).

