CHAPTER IX

MISCELLANEOUS
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This chapter has a variety of sections without, however, any thematic interrelationship among them. Propaganda, psychology the "detective motive" the sensational, the heroic and the historical elements have supplied the basis of the divisions. "Women at War" and "Progress" both aim at propaganda against war. The former against a seventeenth century background, the latter against that of the present century. "The Goldfish" is a psychological play. It is a view of love undergoing a frustrating experience yet showing a resilience in the power of recovery for which a bowl of goldfish seems to act as a symbol. "The Home of Vision" is seen as lying a little beyond the grasp, thus becoming a cause of disappointment. "Tea with a Legend" is the account of a visit paid to a famous writer. His background is misunderstood but the old writer can still evoke admiration. Among the detective plays "Shall we join the Ladies"? has elements of suspense, but its sudden end does not fulfill expectation. Some of the other plays of this group are a dramatization of Conan Doyle fiction. They seem to lose rather than gain by this transformation. The scope of short-play is not, apparently, adequate to the needs of detective drama. The "sensational plays" and those emphasizing the "heroic elements" do not call for any
special comment; Rupert Brooke's "Lithuania" is said to be based upon a real incident. Of the four plays concerned with history three have seventeenth century background, the remaining one deals with Britain under Roman occupation. This is a brief but highly interesting account of the Roman civilization which captured the imagination of the Celts and Brythons. A sense of order and organization and a love of the Latin language seem to have been the immediate results of the occupation.

1. Edward Percy in "Women at War" lays the scene of the play on the 17th of June, 1645. Several women work together to make garments for soldiers and also bandages for the wounded. They supply requirements to both camps, the cavaliers and the supporters of Cromwell. Their impartiality maintains an atmosphere of peace, yet voices are heard protesting against one or the other party. News comes of the King's victory but he is in truth completely defeated. The victory fell to the other side but there are deaths which meant deprivation and serious loss to several of the women, who burst out crying in deep misery. The play is not critical of war which it regards more or less as inevitable in the situation. What it does is to promote a feeling of mercy for the stricken and readiness to alleviate suffering by rising above narrow partisanship. We see with the writer how blows descend unexpectedly crushing

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the most cherished hopes and desolating homes. The picture of human suffering in war emphasizes the fact that peace is the highest value for any organized society.

2. The element of propaganda is very much in evidence in St. John Ervine's "Progress". A passionate plea for peace is made. But the scene in which it is made is highly melodramatic; a bereaved mother who had her son killed in the war stabs her brother because he had just discovered a formula for a destructive weapon of great power and refused to withhold it from the knowledge of his Government. The sister unable to persuade him, stabs him to death. Yet the play does not seem to possess much propaganda value. For the cause of peace cannot be established by violence and bloodshed. The woman's behaviour is hysterical; the murder is a crime and not an argument which convinces. The thought-content is poor in quality. The action is stupid and the characters stand for a conflict of temperament rather than of temporal interest. But the dialogue is not without its effectiveness; it has moments of tension which might have produced better results if the constructive sense had been more adequate.

3. "The Goldfish" by Isobel Andrews. The play opens with

a reception to a famous New Zealand novelist at a club of which a certain Madge Stevens is secretary. While the preparations were going ahead, one of the members came to her and said that he was asked to join a firm on a larger remuneration than what he enjoyed from his own business. To Madge his proposal was that she should marry him. He might then work for his own firm without going elsewhere to earn more. There was a jar of goldfish in the corner of the room. It gives the title to the play. They are bright creatures but very far from ordinary life. They are like ideals which may inspire but which seem mostly out of reach. The play illustrates this fact. Madge does not accept the offer of marriage. She said she had a disappointment which still caused her some pain. The young man would know her answer the same evening on the phone. Longstaffe, the famous author arrived punctually and was lionized. He spoke to Madge using language which others thought witty but was merely allusive. He and Madge were in love some years ago. Madge constantly helped him in his literary work. He was then an idealist but idealism did not pay. Accordingly, he left Madge and abjured his ideals. Attaining popularity as author he married a baron's daughter. At the club there was a rush for his autograph and a member came hastily to Madge asking her to take a glass of water to the author's wife. She indifferently
remarked that the lady could get it herself while she dialled the young man's number to tell him that she would marry him. The jar of goldfish was still in the room. The ways of men did not change their colour. Even when the ideal is abandoned it could still continue to be itself and beautiful.

4. "The Home of Vision" by Constance Holme. Christopher Sill, an old man is sumptuously entertained at his own house, renovated and modernized for his reception by his younger son and his wife. They were both eager to give him the best comfort because he was coming from an older son with whom his stay was far from agreeable. Old Sill comes in silently, and misses all the old things to which he was accustomed. He did not find the chair comfortable, though it was better than the old one, and could not play upon the fiddle he loved because of the changes which had come between him and the home of vision. At the house of the older son the tune which he sang ran in his head although he had never tried it to the accompaniment of a fiddle. Now it had completely vanished from his mind. He felt that nobody could do the things his wife could do and the house which demolished his dreams could be no home for him. It was better for him to go to his older son and put up with the unfriendly behaviour of his wife than to stay at a place where

he would be continually haunted by the memory of the past and by the fact how that memory had been relentlessly sacrificed so as to provide comfort for the present. The daughter-in-law weeps and opposes his desire to go. The parting scene in dialect is expressive of the anguish that the loss of old things may cause. "Thomas (relenting and moving aside). Nay, Dad, don't take on. You shall gang if you want.

Chris. I can gang to Marget?

Thomas: Ay, if you're that set."  

5. "The Conspiracy" by Robert Barr and Sidney Ransom. The King of Polavia has aroused ill-will against himself among his officers and advisers who plot to murder him. Finally, because of a split in the party they decide to leave the matter to the chances of a game of chess. The King comes there, unexpectedly and the Baron explains what the game is about without attempt at concealment. The King watches it to the end and declares that not the King's life but those of the losing gamesters should depend upon the result. At the end, however, the men thus doomed show panic and nervousness in facing death. The King comes out with a story which takes every one by surprise. He has been dethroned, he said, and that Polavia has passed into the hands of the rebels. The

5. Ibid., p.58.

conspirators are now transformed into determined royalists and promise to fight for his restoration. The idea the King represents is that of a leader with an instinctive power to command. He imposes his authority upon disaffected men and is able to rouse enthusiasm in them so that they determine to take up his cause and restore him. What is noticeable in the play is that characters are all Germans and their readiness to bow to a leader in absolute obedience seems the characteristic of a people who have periodically submitted to dictatorships. At the same time they are opposed to democratic attitude; their main charge against the King is that he had played to the gallery by giving a larger freedom to the people for the sake of popularity. The play is, in fact, a study in personality and the power it has over human beings.

6. "Tea With A Legend" by Norman Holland. The play gives an account of an old poet Lord Bernard, visited by some students of psychology. They speculate about him and try to find explanation for his career, in such terms as schizophrenic or paranoiac or attribute mother-fixation to him. The poet is now very old,—fifty years ago he was handsome. Ever now he maintains his erect carriage and has a head well filled with white hair: Spokesbye acted as a kind of impresario and got people to see the poet extracting money

from them on various pretexts. The poet had told her that only two people wrote sonnets in English — Shakespeare and himself. He had overheard the student-visitors analysing him and trying to find in him tendencies towards passion and coldness, implying an unbalanced character. He came into their presence telling them good humouredly that he had heard their comments which did not upset him because they were not true. A pretty girl in the company absorbed his attention. He was her fan, a poet she had always loved. A poem was now read out of the volume she was carrying. It seemed to contain allusion to his elopement with a married lady. The students asked about the affair and were inclined to put the blame upon him for her subsequent misfortunes. But he said that she was reunited with her husband whom she afterwards deserted for another man two months later. Reference was made to the poem he liked, and tea was drunk in company — the poet asking the pretty girl using words, which in their politeness recalled the starched style of etiquette among the Victorians. The girl later came back to him to have her book autographed, and kissed him warmly. He also responded with equal ardour. When all had left he sat down listening to the clock tick away. He was criticized by Spokesbye for having ruined some women; he answered only as a poet could, or perhaps an Oscar Wilde might that those he had technically ruined found the few
moments with him actually the happiest moments in their lives.

A poet at home is not a convincing figure. That outside his poetry he is like any other person is a fact which goes against an established convention. He must be something of a Puck or an Ariel with some elements of roguery to bring him into line with a view generally favoured. This poet has all these qualities of eccentricity and attraction which please. The only thing he lacks is common humanity and by doing so he remains remote and deficient in the quality of his appeal.

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The "Detective" element in the short play is not very strongly represented. In fiction its pioneer was Wilkie Collins with *The Moonstone* as the principal attempt in the field. In spite of this recognized position enjoyed by Collins, the honour may well go to Defoe in *Robinson Crusoe*. The scene in which Crusoe discovers the footprint on the sand thrills him with horror and suspense and he addresses himself to the task of unveiling the mystery. Horror, and mystery and the attempt to solve it characterize the detective story. Again, in *The Moonstone* one of the characters frequently quotes

Robinson Crusoe as if it had been a kind of prophetic book. From this it may be justifiable to infer that Collins himself borrowed significant hints from Defoe. The claim to be first in the field should go to Defoe rather than to Collins.

Michael and Mollie Hardwick have written four short plays on the basis of Sherlock Holmes's stories and in a foreword they write: "each story translates itself quite naturally into stage form, without mechanical difficulties, with compactness of setting and movement, retaining those qualities of compulsion, drama, humour and wisdom which have made them the most famous detective story classics." This is a view which the reading of the renderings does not always confirm.

7. The discovery, for example, of Dr. Roylott of having engineered a murder by means of a venomous snake is not accompanied by suspense which the original story contains in a liberal measure. The unfortunate girl whose property Roylott coveted and who has had alarming sounds disturbing her sleep at night was to be the second victim. Holmes puts himself in her bedroom keeping watch through the night and as the serpent appears through the ventilator, strikes at it hard; it goes back and stings its master who

dies immediately after. The play has bright dialogue and the manner is that of polished society where rudeness of any kind seems very much unexpected. This refinement of manner robs the tale of some of the rude strength which formed part of its backbone.

8. "Charles Augustus Milverton" by the same author is concerned with the detection of a blackmailer who is shot dead by a stranger-woman in the presence of Holmes and Dr. Watson. The two famous men had raided the house secretly, recovering bundles of letters from the iron chest when their operations were interrupted by the blackmailer's arrival and his murder by a veiled woman. She turned and fled and the detective and his friend also took to their heels. Next day the police came to seek Holmes's help. This gave rise to a humorous situation, the detective asking if one of the alleged assassins did not look like Dr. Watson! Holmes found the real culprit, a model at a photographer's establishment but did not give her up to the police on the ground that she had acted on just grievance. Short staccato sentences make a sharp impact giving the dialogue both brightness and clarity. Again, one does not quite enjoy the version as one does the original story. Something is lost in the process of dramatization and this something seems to be mainly a sense of the tale's exciting progress.

11. "Charles Augustus Milverton", Four Sherlock Holmes Plays
9. "The Mazarin Stone"\textsuperscript{12} is in one scene. It describes the way Holmes helped the recovery of a precious stone. It was stolen by a certain count Sylvius who also visited the detective to ensure that he did not take up the enquiry. Holmes had calculated that there was rough weather in front and had set up a wax image in his room as like himself, as it could be, and with its help he finally discovered the secret about the missing jewel and recovered it. The thief had "a punch-drunk boxer" to assist him and was ready to use the pistol. Holmes coolly pointed out that the police being at the door, resort to violence was perfectly useless. Here, too, the deficiency is seen in the lowering of the tension and the dilution in the element of suspense.

10. "The Blue Carbuncle"\textsuperscript{13} is also about the loss of a precious stone and its recovery. The ingenious thief had made a fowl swallow the stone for concealing it and for escaping from police enquiry. But the thief got confused about the fowl, which was one of a crowd, and in trying to trace it, betrayed his crime to the detective. The unsatisfactory nature of the "Detective" play as entertainment probably accounts for the comparative rarity of the fare on the stage. The detective story involves complications and requires considerable length for their disposal in a proper

\textsuperscript{12} "The Mazarin Stone", \textit{Four Sherlock Holmes Plays}.
\textsuperscript{13} "The Blue Carbuncle", \textit{Four Sherlock Holmes Plays}. 
manner. On the stage, because of the difference of the technique and presentation, the same method of analysis cannot be followed. This circumstance explains why such plays are so limited in number and their inadequacy when produced.

11. "Trifles" by Susan Glaspell. This is a detective play. The explanation of a murder is found by means of a trifle. The name of the play reflects upon the tremendous importance of trifles as an aid to important discoveries. Several people including the sheriff of a city and an attorney visit the farmhouse of John Wright, lying murdered in his room, strangled to death. Some ladies are also on a visit. They search sewing-boxes and notice with surprise that a quilt having normal stitches suddenly passes on to knots and that within the sewing box, there is an interior box containing a dead bird, strangled by a knot. This discovery led to the explanation by whom and how the man was killed.


15. See Sergeant Cuff's comment in describing the significance of trifles: He made a private enquiry last week. At one end of the enquiry there was a murder, and at the other there was a spot of ink on a table cloth that nobody could account for. In all his experience along the dirtiest ways of the dirty little world, he has never met with such a thing as a trifle yet. Wilkie Collins's The Moonstone.
Mrs. Wright was beautiful and accomplished. All her worth and talent had gone in vain. In taking her revenge on her husband she caught his head in a noose and strangled him. The actual discovery owed to the ladies who, however, did not want to expose the poor woman. But the men overheard their excited comments and thus the cat was out of the bag. By this method the women are made to preserve their known softness of heart while the men have the benefit of the discovery from their equally known garrulity combined with a habit of speaking loudly from excitement.

12. James Matthew Barrie's "Shall We Join the Ladies"? is not a social comedy, strictly speaking. It is concerned with the incidents closing the week-end at the hospitable Mr. Sam Smith's house where a dozen guests were invited. The guests were very happy and expressed their affection and approval for the host whom they were inclined to regard as a pocket edition of Mr. Pickwick. But Smith told them that everybody has a secret drawer inside him with a lock to it. He then proceeded to explain what made him ask the ladies and gentlemen to spend a week with him. The only person he ever loved, he explained, was his brother, many years his junior, who died in a foreign land, apparently, from natural causes but his own suspicion was that he was poisoned.

16. James Matthew Barrie's "Shall we Join the Ladies"? A Book of Short Plays XV-XX Centuries (O.U.P., 1940)
Those whom he had invited were the persons he had suspected of the murder. They enquired in horror if their trunks and letters had been opened. He told them that he had, of course, done this and had sent them to play games in the field to get the opportunity for his investigation. Even their finger-prints were taken and sent to Scotland Yard. One of the women Miss Isit broke the wineglass which slipped from her hand on to the floor. Another went off into a fainting fit and Miss Isit on looking at a photograph blurted out that it was not that of the murdered person. This showed that she had known him. They went into the butler's room reluctantly because they were ordered to do so. The host said that the guilty person would be discovered there. As he asked the gentlemen to join the ladies a scream is heard from that quarter with which alarming noise the play abruptly comes to an end. We are left to think that the scream followed the identification. For the butler, Dolphin, had served the murdered man and was useful in making identifications.

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13. "The King of Barvender"\textsuperscript{17} by Allan Monkhouse. Written in crisp prose which is both witty and vivacious the play has a rich literary flavour. The account of a defeat and

\textsuperscript{17} Allan Monkhouse's "The King of Barvender" - One-Act Plays of To-day, Fifth Series, (George G. Harrap & Co.Ltd., 1947).
its successful concealment from the aged and the dying king form the central theme. The victorious general demands a legal surrender with the king's signature. But at the sight of the old man on the verge of death he relents and stages a make-belief defeat for himself handing over his sword as a mark of submission. This very awkward situation arose partly from the desire to spare a dying man and partly also from a perfectly human weakness, however, concealed, of pleasing the beautiful princess, the king's grand daughter. As a concession an hour of respite is granted for obtaining the king's signature to the document containing the terms of surrender. According to the physician the king may still live for a few days longer. The chancellor thought that it would be more humane to save him from the shame of a defeat than to preserve his life. The play closes with the proclamation of the king's death and the chancellor's entry with a dagger into the sick room. Although a melodrama this last act of mercy-killing takes place off the stage. Among the characters the princess appears firm and resolute and the presence of a victorious enemy-General does not shake her resolution. She gets the concession on which she insists. There is also a little love scene between her and the page on which the chancellor commented with more truth than irony: "How strangely life shapes itself! A kingdom falls, a lover rises."18

18. Ibid., p.146
The dialogue has clever turns which show the wit of the playwright. Immediately after the chancellor's observation the general remarked: "You cunning old fox! You would seduce me to-to. Chancellor. To humanity. Yes. After all this blood and iron, don't you feel some need of it yourself?"\textsuperscript{19}

Barvender is an imaginary country. Its choice as the site of the play is explained by something that the author had heard from his children and he places it in the same class as Mr. Wells' Magic Shop which could be found "only when you had luck". As a play the excitement and the turns of the situation create a sense of suspense which endows it with considerable value as entertainment.

14. "The Death Trap"\textsuperscript{20} by Saki. The drama describes a conspiracy to murder the reigning Prince of Kedaria. He apprehends the danger but is unable to do anything to ward it off. Visited by a doctor, he explains the situation. There is obviously nothing that he can do to help. The doctor, however, tells the guards that there is no point in taking the Prince's life, for being very ill he will die in less than a week. The Prince thought this to be a ruse to preserve his life. The doctor, however, said it was God's own truth and lest there should be an earlier

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., pp.146-147
\textsuperscript{20} Saki's "The Death-Trap", Modern Short Plays, First Series, (University of London Press Ltd., 1931).
attempt at murdering him, the Prince provided himself with poison, and invited the conspirators to drink in honour of his successor, mixing poison with the drink he offered for the toast. They all die and he also dies saying that he never thought "death . . . . could be . . . so amusing." 21

The play is full of sensationalism; there is also surprise from a sense of unexpected bafflement. The Prince's death by poisoning could have been tragic; in reality, however, the violences and the conspiracies seem alike trivial so that the tragic feeling does not seem to have any scope. Capable of exciting an audience, it has hardly any value as drama because of its emphasis on the element of melodrama to the exclusion of any serious view of life.

15. "The Grand Cham's Diamond" 22 by Allan Monkhouse. A family bored by want of novelty is suddenly involved in the most sensational affair of the day. The grand cham's diamond, the loss of which was the most talked-of incident, smashes into the room, breaking a pane of glass. It is recognized, picked up and placed in a clock for safety. Immediately after, a robber concerned with the affair enters the room and demands it at the point of the pistol.

The wily mother resorts to subterfuges and refuses to let him have it. Finally, the would-be-son-in-law of the family appears at the height of the crisis and gets the

21. Ibid., p.103
diamond on behalf of Scotland Yard which he served without letting his betrothed know anything about this association. The mother was not at all prepared to surrender the diamond and even planned an immediate flight to South America to ensure profit and possession. Later this illegal design was brought forward as a charge against her. She, however, held to the view that in the circumstances she had acted as everybody else would have done. The plot is exciting and is certainly novel. The dialogue shows a level of excellence which is shared by many others but is, nevertheless, worthy of praise. Yet the play is not a work of art, nor is meant to be one.

16. "Shivering Shocks or the Hiding Place" by Clemence Dane. The play's title is borrowed from the verses spoken by Bottom in A Midsummer Night's Dream, implying the usual style of a blood-and-thunder tragedy. Its purpose here is to suggest the nature of the action that follows. A crippled ex-service man is living alone with a servant in a rural area in England. An old friend of his college days enters his house by the window and declares that he is being pursued and threatened by secret agents of different countries. They want from him the formula of a terrible weapon he has invented. This would ensure the peace of the world. Strangely enough, he entrusted it to the care of the cripple. Scarcely has he...

done this when two other men come in and fire at him. The men re-enter and introduce themselves as coming from Scotland Yard. The retired captain, cripple though he is, does not part with the formula, for he was told not to do so until the password was given, which was "flowers". Next, a drunken cabman enters singing a song about flowers secretly declaring himself to be a detective from Scotland Yard. The formula is now given to him. He then leaves, promising to return, taking with him one of these crooks, who came earlier to steal the formula. The other crook threatens and even starts torturing the captain. The latter holds his assailant at bay until the police officer returns and rescues him.

This is the plot and its only characteristic is a series of unexpected incidents and violence, actual or threatened.

Melodrama, Eliot says, is a necessary element in a drama but without other qualities to give it due balance, the element of melodrama can ruin a drama's success either on the stage or for the readers. This play does not seem to have much in it except an attempt at providing sensation. What is curious about it is that the formula is put into the hands of a cripple who cannot move without help, far

24. "... the frontier of drama and melodrama is vague; the difference is largely a matter of emphasis; perhaps no drama has ever been greatly and permanently successful without a large melodramatic element." T.S.Eliot's "Wilkie Collins and Dickens", Selected Essays (Faber and Faber London, 1951), p.467.
less defend himself against an assailant. The idea seems to be to provide a modern equivalent of the Tudor "shivering shocks" which Bottom's rhetorical speech partly suggests.

17. "Lithuania" by Rupert Brooke dramatizes the tale of a sister's murdering her own brother. The young man appears as a stranger with a good deal of money and desires to spend a night as a lodger with the members of his own family without immediately telling them who he is. The sister not suspecting his identity kills him for the money. The members of the family soon discover to their horror who the stranger was and what they had done for the sake of his money. The play, although written by a poet does not show any special dramatic power or literary grace and could easily have its provenance in a criminal court.

The father of the boy with the mother and the sister had plotted to take the stranger's life. At the last moment the old man shrank back from the task and went out to have a glass of beer. At the pub he behaved as if he had no self-control and was sick. So the owner of the pub brought him back and told the family that their son had returned a rich man, and that he was going to celebrate the occasion the next day. The terror-stricken expression on the faces

25. Rupert Brooke's "Lithuania", Thirty Famous One-Act Plays (A Modern Library Giant, 1943). In April 1912 Rupert Brooke was in Germany and with reference to the play he wrote: "I read Elizabethans for 2-3 hours a day, quite happily", he wrote to his Mother. "Other work I haven't tried much. I started a short play, and worked at it for two or three hours. I paid the penalty by not getting to sleep till 5 next morning." The Collected Poems of Rupert Brooke, with a Memoir by Edward Marsh (London, Sidgwick and Jackson Ltd., 1918), p.lxxiv.
of the mother and sister told the story of the murder even without the help of words. The father's non-participation is supposed to indicate a kind of revulsion. Apparently, instinct held him back from participation.

Albert Camus exploits the theme of Rupert Brooke's "Lithuania" in his "Cross Purpose", giving it a marked existentialist bias. Mother and sister of Jan, drag him to the middle of an icy stream after drugging him with a cup of tea and thus kill him. They discover the next morning from his passport his identity. The son came back after twenty years with money to help his mother. She did not recognize him. After the event she becomes "dried up within, sterile, with nothing left to live for" (p.154) and her decision is expressed with a finality immediately confirmed by her act. "Now I can go and join, at the bottom of the river, where already the weeds have covered up his face." (p.152) Martha, the sister, is an existentialist, not believing in the power of passion.26 "But remember", she says, "you are in a house where the heart isn't catered for" (p.124). At the end we have what Heidegger means by abandonment 27 in the final exchanges between Maria, the recent

26. "The existentialist does not believe in the power of passion. He will never regard a grand passion as a destructive torrent upon which a man is swept into certain actions as by fate, and which, therefore, is an excuse for them. He thinks that man is responsible for his passion." Jean-Paul Sartre's Existentialism and Humanism (Methuen : London, 1963), p.34
widow and the old Manservant: Maria. "Be kind and say that you will help me. The old Manservant (in the same tone) No."

Albert Camus. Caligula And Cross Purpose. Translated by Stuart Gilbert (Hamish Hamilton, London, n.d.). Camus's play because of the infusion of the existentialist element renders the situation in more sombre colours. Although a crime is committed it is a case of cross purposes. What one aims at, the other baffles. Part of this is alleged to be the result of the ineffectiveness of words as this colloquy between Martha and Maria (Jan's widow) makes plain:

"Martha. Again, you are using language I cannot understand. Words like love and joy and grief are meaningless to me. Maria ... Listen, Martha - that's your name, isn't it? Let's stop this game, if game it is, of cross-purposes. Let's have done with useless words." (pp. 162-163).

18. "Something to Talk About" by Eden Phillpotts is an interesting drama. The play has a rapid movement from the very outset. "Wolf" the famous burglar enters into the library of a Tudor Manor: Redchester. He lays down his tools and a lamp connected with wire to the electric switch. He has also an automatic revolver by his side and starts opening an iron safe containing valuables. At this stage Hon. Guy Sydney enters the room. The burglar introduces himself as the "Wolf" and warns him not to raise alarm lest he should "plug" him. The Hon. Guy, however, welcomes the thief observing that nothing adventurous has ever happened
in their family: "People always say we're the oldest and dullest family in the country. Nothing ever happens to the Sydney. We never run away with other men's wives, or their money, or anything. We never shine and we never go out - just glimmer century after century. We never get into newspapers, we never even have accidents out hunting. And no burglars, no fires; nothing but weddings and funerals. But now all's changed!" 28 But before the burglar begins his work Guy interrupts him saying that his sister Lettice will simply love to see him work at the safe. He describes her as a topping girl - a Communist and an Anarchist and a Bolshie at heart. She's beautiful too and only twenty one. The "Wolf" admits that he never can say "no" to a beauty.

The drama's action is interrupted by the entrance of Lord Redchester and Preston, the butler. All the members except the Bishop (Uncle Charles) and Preston are eager to watch the burglar's operations. The Bishop wants to bring about a change in the burglar's character and so asks him to attend the Church service. But Preston like any other faithful servant, resents his activity. The father, the mother, the son and the daughter are over-enthusiastic about the burglary but in the end the mother and daughter are grieved to part with their jewelleries which are their Christmas gifts.

The Bishop offers an amusing solution. Lord Wallaby, the Australian multi-millionaire will dine with him on Christmas night. The burglar can easily rob him and get money enough to satisfy him. But if the "Wolf" took the valuables belonging to Lord Redchester, the Australian multi-millionaire will know of this and the robber will thus miss the chance of obtaining a treasure likely to be far more valuable.

This persuasion has had the desired effect; the robber retired without taking anything. The conclusion is, of course, most unexpected. The comedy is the outcome of a reversal of the normal behavior in an outlaw no less than in those he seeks to victimize. The dialogue has many surprising turns but they are so well managed as to make the absurd situation live before the eye.

"A King's Hard Bargain" by Lt.-Col. W.P. Drury.

The three scenes in which the play is divided introduce the theme of the sailors' life and the dangers which belong to it. There is a lot of talk, often verified as true, about the sailor's life being a happy one and his meeting a wife

at every port. In the play three sailors go down, in the watertight compartment of a sinking ship. A friend has a vision of the scene and he gives details of what happens. The three sailors in their death trap refuse to invoke God. One of them carried poison. He gives it to his two friends and has none left for himself. He stoically prepares to die in the terrible confinement with all the horrors of suffocation. His friend above the water reverentially salutes the hero and his friends and from the words "A King's Hard Bargain" he draws the sense of supreme courage and self-sacrifice in the service of king and country. This attitude of reverence is confirmed by the hymn "Eternal Father" which the organ rolls out as the curtain slowly drops. The play has a tragical end and seeks to defend the sailors against the slander on their reputation and thus vindicates the honour of the navy whose prestige, however, does not need any support, being great without it.

20. "The Pen of My Aunt" is an account by Gordon Daviot. The Germans during the last World War pick up a suspicious-looking man from the woods. He claims to be the nephew of a very well-known and rich French family, apparently, cooperating with the Germans. The lady recognizes him as a worker for the freedom movement and protects him as her

nephew whose identity card was alleged to have been sent in a coat-pocket to the laundry by mistake. The maid and the mistress both spoke to convince the Germans. An odd situation arose when the maid said to another servant that she did not know this nephew. The mistress found something to say even after this to allay suspicion. The German corporal took him to the place where he wanted to go at the request of the aunt. Later the aunt exhibited a pen which on unfolding showed a mechanical device containing concealed directions about the different freedom-posts and the men working there. The play has no great value. Its only significance is in the form of a picture representing France secretly fighting for freedom. As a drama the interest centres in the way the Germans are outwitted and the workers for freedom continue to carry on their underground movement.

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21. Historical plays are not among the favourites on the English stage. The Everyman Library Anthology contains only one historical play "Count Albany" by Donald Carswell. Its subject is the death of the Pretender and the succession to his claims by his son Count Albany. The scene opens on the 1st January, 1766 in Rome and Count Albany arrives in

a coach at the Palace of his brother Cardinal York, bringing with him his mistress Clementina but he has no money to pay the fare. It is paid and there is now a lively scene between the two brothers which brings out the characters of the two princes. They are almost brutally frank in their exchanges and the Cardinal is arrogant and cynical in his comments on what he regards as the Count's immoral and unprincipled behaviour. They plunge into memories of the past, of acts and omissions which had ruined chances and destroyed hopes of a return to the throne. The Prince had qualities of leadership along with a power to inspire masses of men with an intense devotion to himself. The Cardinal called him a fool but the Prince pointed out that no calculating man could move the heart as he had done. The Cardinal made money but his own triumph was over the human heart. He enlisted in his cause thousands who laid down their lives to serve him. This was his glory and amidst all the hard blows of fortune, this kept his spirits up. The news of the old Pretender's (James Francis Edward Stuart, 1688-1766) death came in, the messenger hailed him as successor but Charles Edward Stuart, still drunk, tried to speak the words he had learnt, so as to play the role expected of him, but now he could no longer recall them and sank back into the chair, weeping at his helplessness.
There are comical passages, for example, the behaviour of Clementina with the Cardinal and the addiction to drink on the part of Mackintosh, the Cardinal's Secretary, which was contrary to his position and the dignity of the Church. The play does not lend itself to the division into a beginning, a middle and an end. For here we have a clear beginning and an end also which is indisputable but no definable middle. Somewhere in the course of the discussion about the valour and the self sacrifice of the prince's supporters we have a glimpse into the generous heart which won so much devotion and love from ordinary men and this should be the middle of the action. The climax is reached with the announcement of the royal death, exposing the Prince to a bitter sense of failure that he could not rise to the occasion. The historical material is supplied by the date of the event and the conflicting characters of the two men. The rest is an imaginary reconstruction. The playwright has brought out the difference between the shrewdness of the Cardinal and the magnanimity of the Prince. The austere facade of the Prelate is only the whitened sepulchre which wins no confidence; the depravity of the Prince, on the other hand, is merely an exterior, beneath which there still burns a soul full of ancient nobility. The play introduces an historical incident and gives it a contemporary garb.
We have here a contrast of characters which makes us aware of the true secret of human worth and also of the selfishness parading itself as virtue; we abhor selfishness because it exploits ignorance for its own advantage and is, therefore, opposed to the interest of Church and state alike.

22. "The Seventeenth Highwayman"\textsuperscript{32} by Eric Forbes-Boyd. A play in prose may be regarded as an attempt at an historical presentation of an aspect of social life in the eighteenth century. That much of the talk about the highwayman's tradition is merely a piece of exciting concoction what emerges from the account. An inn-keeper claims to be sixteenth in descent from highwaymen ancestors. Unless his daughter is given away in marriage to one belonging to the same profession, the superstitious belief is that the family will lose its money and will have to beg for a living. There is, evidently, a candidate for the girl's hand but he does not satisfy the essential qualification. However, Jem, a young man declares that he will prove his mettle by robbing a marquis expected at the inn the same evening. Jem leaves in a spirit of bravado, comes back equipped with arms and engages in a scuffle with the marquis who has already arrived. It turns out that Jem himself is the marquis and the other man is his attendant, disguised in the master's clothes. But the

\textsuperscript{32} Eric Forbes-Boyd's "The Seventeenth Highwayman", Five New One Act Plays (Harrap's Junior Modern English Series, 1956)
highwayman will not give his daughter in marriage to him in spite of his wealth and social position. A policeman who comes there, apparently attracted by the noise reveals dramatically that the supposed highwayman is, in fact, a law-abiding citizen. The occasional stores of gold he produces do not represent any lawless act and are, in fact, the sale proceeds of some hand-writing of distinguished nobleman entertained at the inn. Thus the valorous tradition is smashed by the policeman's exposure. The marquis wins his Sylvia telling the landlord of the inn ironically that if he marries the girl his proud claim to highwayman ancestry need not suffer: "'Tis the only way to keep your secret - (with a meaning wink) - I feel it in me bones." The landlord agrees with the words: "Me good name or me daughter, eh? (With a gleeful shout) Why, take her, man! Ye're a highwayman after all!"  

It will be noticed that the older spelling of marquis is here adopted. There are a number of archaisms but no sustained endeavour to reproduce the speech-habits of the period. The allusion to the time represented by the author lacks the precision of a direct reference. The following words are an evidence of this: "... but dates never were anything but a nuisance, and all that matters is that we are back in the days of wigs and lace cravats, of snuff and

33. Ibid., p.33  
34. Ibid.
swordplay." The debunking of the innkeeper's heroic ancestry is made amusing and the comic purpose is well served by the various surprising turns in the situation.

23. "The Centurion's Billet at Swacking Bulphen" by A. J. Talbot. The scene of the play is laid during the Roman occupation of Britain (A.D. 61). The exact period is that of Suetonius Paulinus who is described by the Centurion as "faithful trustee to Queen Boadicea." What we see at the opening of the play is a primitive room with bare mud walls. But near the fireplace is a touch of higher civilization in the shape of a chair of Roman workmanship. The characters are mainly: Balbus, a bearded Roman soldier, the Centurion, young and clean shaven. Along with these there are a few men and women of Celtic origin, Astel of the Trinobante tribe, captured by the Iceni is employed as a maid of all work and there are Cadwol, the headman and his family consisting of his wife and daughters. The scene is an interesting study of the exchanges between a civilization with very high standards and another still mainly primitive in character. But the Celts who are forced to play the host to the Roman Centurion do not give any indication of a defeated people. They are apt to learn Latin, and their speech is interspersed with words borrowed from the language of the

35. Ibid., p.10
conquerors, because they find Latin so "catchy" (what is depicted in the play) is not intended to give a map of the cultural intercourse. But it seems, nevertheless, to be a good indication of the closeness of the contact and its enlivening effect. The Celts alone did not play the role of learners. The Centurion himself was as eager to master the language of the people he lived with, noting every new word and translating it into its Latin equivalent. The rising which took place at the end of the play is a sign that the social intercourse between the two communities was not popular among the Celts. The fire of patriotism smouldered among the population. It flared up to assert the sovereign power of their Queen, held in custody by the Romans. Of the characters in the play, Cadwol alone was hostile to the infiltration of Roman words into Celtic speech and regarded the Druid hymns as superior to anything the Romans could produce to their credit. It was a case of blind fidelity to local custom and the traditional life of the Celts. To this attitude neither the daughters nor the wife subscribed and he showed determination when he told his wife, "that sooner or later we mean to cast off the Roman yoke." When Julius Caesar came the Celts were defeated "because we failed to act together. But next time there will be no mistake. Next time that beacon burns the whole country will be rising like one man."}

37. Ibid., p.245
38. Ibid., p.245.
The headman saw everything in terms of its political implications. But the members of the family were more concerned to admire and be admired by the Roman soldiers whom they entertained with considerable pleasure. Balbus drank wine of Celtic brew and, evidently, had a marked partiality for Astel and the Centurion admired the golden hair of Clauden, Auricoma in Latin. When they all left because of the signal of the rebellion which appeared as a series of fires in the hill tops, Clauden picked up a coloured square of mosaic from the floor and put it in the bosom of her dress. This was the token of a mutual admiration which might have crystallized into more permanent form, had circumstances favoured.

Of the customs of the Romans to which particular attention is drawn their habit of bathing seemed to be most characteristic. Balbus is continually engaged in carrying buckets of water for the Centurion who sings amidst splashing of water as he bathes. Cadwol does not see that in this respect or in any other the Romans enjoy superiority. Whatever the Celts did they cared very little for washing and the claim made by the headman makes it quite plain that baths were resorted to for ritual purposes only. "We have baths too. It is part of our religion. Every good Druid amongst the Iceni has a bath on May Day, when the sun enters Taurus."
But there is a great difference between bathing as a religious observance and making a foolish habit of it, like these Romans. Astel also comments on the practice disapprovingly with a regional tang which seems very pleasant. "It doesn't seem right to me for fighting men to wash so much. But you Roman milites seem wonderful set on baths." The explanation of this insistence on bath being unnecessary may be found in our time in the satirical reference to it in "Arms and the Man" made by Bernard Shaw.

The Romans are friendly to the Celts but their own sense of superiority remained. Clauden, for example, had learnt from the Centurion "civilitas successit barbarum" ("Civilization replaces barbarism"). The Latin words and phrases in this play are those which have entered into English vocabulary as familiar modes of expression. They are not chosen with any intention to isolate and emphasize the gifts of the Roman civilization but are ways of speech which have entered the English language because they represent ideas and principles to which their ancestors, the original inhabitants of the island, had responded.

39. Ibid., pp.243-244
40. Ibid., p.238
41. Ibid., p.254

* Major Petkoff tells Catherine "Look at my father! he never had a bath in his life; and he lived to be ninety-eight, the healthiest man in Bulgaria." Bernard Shaw's Arms and the Man (Orient Longmans, 1959), pp.28-29.
The theme is of course historical. But history and literature can never be the same thing. Like other material history too must pass through the sieve of imagination before it becomes a work of literature. Here history is used to build up an atmosphere. The successors of the Romans in the Imperialistic tradition were the British but the latter never made any secret of the fact that they thought themselves superior to those they had conquered. Their method was a form of imposition in which force played a decisive factor rather than the spirit of conciliation. They have, therefore, something to learn from the Romans who did not, in the view of the author of the play, try to use force and left a good deal to free choice. How far this is the commonly accepted conclusion as regards Roman conquest lies outside the sphere of our enquiry.

The girls Astel and Clauden are short sketches but seem, nevertheless, alive and interesting. There are no long comments, no lengthy conversation to reveal what they thought and felt. But the little that is said brings out their natures and makes them appear to us as intensely interested in the Roman world and very much alive. No chapter of history could give this authentic vision of the impact of the two civilizations centuries ago.
"Wanted - Mr Stuart" by Arthur Watkyn. This is an historical play and the scene is laid at an inn on September 10, 1651. The characters are Sir Edgar Harcourt and Philip Maunsell with three others including Charles Stuart himself, disguised as a servant. The two men mentioned above by name speculate as to whether Prince Charles is alive or dead. They even make a bet. Philip has already formed his notion about where to look for the Prince but he speaks only in general terms, being no doubt a staunch supporter of the Stuarts. A police sergeant comes in and declares that he is authorised to search the town for he has information that the Prince is concealing himself somewhere in the neighbourhood. Sir Edgar and Philip express displeasure at the search order but they allow the sergeant to do this duty without interference. Philip tells his friend that the physical appearance may be effectively concealed but no one can help betraying himself by certain ways which are his mannerisms. As they go out he stops for a moment to have a word with Robert, the inn's servant. He asks him if he has read Shakespeare and himself quoted the words of Ophelia describing Hamlet and said: "Could you betray ... such a one?" Robert replied he could. Maunsell then went on to say that when Robert met the king he should tell him that

43. Ibid., p.181.
there was one man who would not betray him for even six thousand pounds. Robert said sceptically, "I'm afraid, sir, you would have to prove it.

Maunsell. It has been my privilege. (He pauses, his hand on the door, facing Robert (To Robert) Good night ... your Majesty." 44

Thus the play ends revealing that Robert is Charles Stuart. This disclosure is unexpected and its delayed impact shows that the author handles the element of suspense with unusual skill and effectiveness.

44. Ibid., p. 182.