

**KINDLING: A
COMEDY DRAMA
IN THREE ACTS**

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Kindling: A Comedy Drama in Three Acts by Charles Kenyon

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CHARLES KENYON

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IN THREE ACTS**



MARGARET ILLINGTON

KINDLING

A Comedy Drama in Three Acts

BY
CHARLES KENYON

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
CLAYTON HAMILTON



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ALBANY

INTRODUCTION TO THE DRAMA LEAGUE
SERIES OF MODERN PLAYS

FIRST VOLUME

THE Officers and Directors of the Drama League of America believe that the full purpose of their organization can be realized only when the general average of audiences in the American theatre shall attain to a degree of intelligence in regard to the drama in some way comparable with that to be found in the theatres of Europe. They believe that one of the most important elements in the product of European audiences has been the opportunity given them, individually and continually, to study the drama in its printed form, both before and after its presentation upon their stage. By this means are they kept acquainted with all important dramas as they are produced, or before they are produced, in the leading theatres of their own or other countries.

The modern French or German play sells in its editions of thirty or forty thousand, at the cost of a franc or a mark the volume (twenty to twenty-five cents). Audiences are accordingly familiar with dramatic literature; they are fitted to appreciate, and intelligently discuss and support important pieces in the theatre. Consequently all standards in the theatre are higher abroad — this applies to plays, criticism, acting, and production, and these higher standards are a natural result of a greater intelligence in the

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audience; is "what the public wants" — in fact, demands — in the European theatre. These continental audiences are composed of people individually able to understand whether author, actor, producer, or scenic artist is responsible for the elements that make for the play's success or failure; and so they can properly allot praise or censure, as well as obtain an intelligent added pleasure in the theatre over and beyond their mere interest in "the telling of the story" on the stage. It is by this means only that, in the European theatre, pieces like Brioux' "Les Avariés" (Englished as "Damaged Goods") and the philosophical and socialistic dramas of Germany, particularly, are successful.

The printed play has also a particular interest to the reader; quite apart from the interest of any story-book or novel. In the drama it is necessary, because of the medium of action by means of which the story is told, that it progresses rapidly, tersely; in vivid picturesque dialogue, eliminating merely the unnecessary and uneventful intervening scenes and characters, as well as the tedious descriptions of scenery and atmosphere that pad out the novel. In the theatre this background is supplied by the stage picture; in reading it is left for the imagination of the reader to supply, — as well as the appearance and motions of the actors; a most unusual opportunity to continue to practice, in mature life, the vivid imaginings of romance too often abandoned *after* childhood! There is hardly a play but will well repay the individual by a close reading of its text. Almost half the wit of Captain Marshall's "His Excellency the Governor," for instance, is so subtle as to evanesce in crossing over the footlights: the whimsical dialogue of Sir James M. Barrie in reading even

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exceeds in wit and point its hearing in the theatre, when quip follows quip so rapidly that even the most alert spectator cannot obtain the fullest amount of pleasure possible, from a single hearing; while the thrill and suspense of Gillette's "Secret Service" or "Sherlock Holmes" hang as heavily around the printed page as in the theatre auditorium.

The printing of worthy drama is a positive necessity to the student of the theatre. Even if he is a resident of one of our largest cities, his opportunity to see any individual play in performance is only during the comparatively short period of its local run. Before or after that time, unless the piece is obtainable in published form, he has no opportunity to enjoy the work or refresh his memory in regard to it for purposes of discussion or study. He possesses in the printed play an important educative element, increasing his interest on both acting and the drama by a comparison of the piece as it reads and as it acts — and no other better means exists for the individual to obtain self-instruction — the most individual and valuable, if not the only, real means of education — in regard to the principles and practices of the drama and the arts of the theatre. In the second place, the drama in its printed form is in a great many cases the *only* means by which those interested in the theatre and its development to-day can keep in touch with the processes of that development — because of their comparative isolation in cities or localities remote from theatrical centres of production. Even the student residing in New York City or Chicago cannot make any adequate study of the drama from the pieces acted on Broadway, or within "the loop" — many as are those plays that are presented, in one lo-

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cality or the other, for his attention! If even a person thus favorably located has to depend upon the printed playbook to obtain any properly proportioned idea of the current drama, it indicates how much more isolated or restricted is the outlook of the person living in any other city — let alone those residing in still more remote localities far from any centre of theatrical interest. Such a person is at present absolutely cut off from all means of participation in or knowledge of the progress of a mighty art — probably the one art possessing the most inherent educational value for the masses of our country — as a whole!

Further than this, the American playgoer — because of the entirely commercial control of the American amusement situation — is peculiarly isolated from all real centres of modern dramatic interest. He has no opportunity whatsoever to become acquainted with the many important dramas of progress produced in the Folk theatres of Russia; the socialized German theatres; the subsidized theatres of France; and even sometimes in the individually directed English theatres, unless he is conversant with the European languages and possesses means of keeping in touch with English and Continental publications of modern drama.

In undertaking the selection of modern dramas for publication in "The Drama League Series of Plays," the purpose of the League is twofold. It first desires to select from the modern plays of importance in the theatre, in America or abroad, those pieces most worthy of reading and study by a person desiring to form or maintain an intelligent basis for the appreciation of modern drama. To this end the books to be selected will come from two groups; one will