

The Drama's Debt to Steele MacKaye's Vitality

It is a great figure indeed who wins from the world of to-day the attention of his dies on his passing anniversary. The writers are more fortunate. If they have merit, a hundred years after their death their books are before us to keep their memories alive. The singer and the play-actor too apt to pass from recollection as the sound of their voices dies in the ear. Eleven days ago we passed without notice the twentieth year since the death of Steele MacKaye. This man brought to the American drama the Frohmans, David Belasco and more than one other notable producer of play. Himself the foremost actor-manager of a time still well within the recollection of the older generation, he has perpetuated a work for the American drama whose importance these successors have enthusiastically acknowledged. As a playwright his influence was almost equally great. In his son, Percy MacKaye, he has established a family dynasty in the drama with the remarkable achievement, between father and son, of a play a year for forty-seven years. The accomplishments of this man must not pass altogether unmentioned. This seems still to be a fitting occasion for a timely tribute. Eight years ago, Percy MacKaye, paying tribute to his father in an issue of "The Drama," thus happily summed up in a figure the career of his father:



Steele MacKaye, himself

"When, in 1805, the flying machine of Professor Langley rose in the air above the Potomac River, hovered an instant before the breathless onlookers, then plunged to wreckage and oblivion in the river, the art of aviation thereby did not suffer failure, though the life-labor and the life of one bold pioneering inventor were crushed by the tragic catastrophe.

"When, in 1893, the vast dome and proscenium arch of the Spectatorium rose above Lake Michigan by the World's Fair grounds at Chicago, towered there with brief prophecy in the light of a few sunrises, then—ruthlessly destroyed—vanished in wreckage of steel and concrete beside the lake, the art of the theatre thereby did not suffer defeat, though one nobly pioneering experiment in that art, and the genius of its dauntless creator, ceased with the framework of Steele MacKaye."

ture and Rousseau. He found time to serve for eighteen months in the Civil War. Invalided out, we next hear of him in Paris as an expert buyer of paintings for American bankers. During this visit to Paris he became interested in photo sculpture, which he afterward introduced to America, but, more important, he met Francois Delsarte and soon became the foremost pupil of that master. After the siege of Paris in 1870 he returned to America bringing with him new principles of Delsarte which he had determined to apply to the dramatic art.

His first lecture on Delsarte was a notable event, delivered at the request of two notable committees including the names of the Mayor of Boston, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Louis Agassiz, James T. Fields and others. In New York he was invited to repeat the lecture by William Cullen Bryant, Henry Ward Beecher, Peter Cooper, Edwin Booth and others. This was the first occasion in our country when leaders of literature, art and the state united in active concern for dramatic art.

Besides lecturing on dramatic art, Steele MacKaye also wrote, and at the age of twenty-nine was recognized by William Winter and other prominent critics as an authority on his subject.

In 1872 we find him applying his principles of art to the theatre as manager, actor, playwright and teacher. Private pupils came to him from all parts of the United States. Actors such as Edwin Forrest, John McCulloch, and Maurice Barrymore, gratefully acknowledged his influence and instruction. Augustus Thomas, the dramatist, has thus written of his work at that time:

"Steele MacKaye was a master of the art of physical expression. No man of his day, or none that I know now, had or has a better knowledge of the purpose and effect of posture, of facial expression, and of the eloquence of restraint. His knowledge of these was practical. He knew exactly what he wished before he directed

it. He had the ability to make his wish understood, and he had the talent to do the thing he asked the actor to do."

As an organizer Steele MacKaye designed and superintended the building of the Madison Square Theatre and the Lyceum Theatre in New York. To these theatres he brought many products of an inventive genius, from the double stage, ventilating devices, a folding chair, two ingenious methods of cooling and purifying the air.

In the chill twilight of an unknown world, and to thrill him with a vague shiver of awe. Mr. MacKaye has real genius."

"To estimate his powers as an actor," says his son, Percy MacKaye, "is difficult, since—after Hamlet—he gave no progressive study to his own impersonations. My own memory of him, in his later plays, is of a magnetic presence, distinguished in bearing, emotional yet subtle in gesture, gracious in repose, intellectual in quiet sugges-

may be judged by some of the actors and actresses who gained distinction under his stimulating management. Here are only a few of them: Lawrence Barrett, Sidney Drew, George Fawcett, John Gilbert, Nat Goodwin, Robert Hilliard, E. M. Holland, De Wolf Hopper, Thomas Jefferson, Wilton Lackaye, Robert B. Mantell, Richard Mansfield, John Mason, Henry Miller, James O'Neill, Stuart Robson, Lester Wallack, Viola Allen, Kate Claxton, Rose Coghlan,



The famous and fated Spectatorium, Chicago World's Fair

Indeed his inventions from 1879 to 1894 number upward of seventy. After building these two theatres, he proceeded to manage them, and for them wrote plays, considered to be the models of their time. Not content with all this, he also attained high rank as an actor in his own plays and in the plays of others. In America, in New York and on tour, he enacted the parts of Othello, Hamlet, Cassius, Antonio (Merchant of Venice), Monaldi (in the play "Monaldi," by himself), Peter Hayes (from the play "Arkwright's Wife," by Tom Taylor and himself), and leading or prominent parts in such other plays by him as "Won at Last," "Hazel Kirke," "A Fool's Errand," "Paul Kavar," "Money Mad," and others.

Acting however, though he devoted years to it, was never primarily his profession. The part of Hamlet nevertheless he did impersonate for its own sake. He first acted the part as a lad of twenty, at Baltimore in 1862, when in camp with the 7th Regiment of New York in the Civil War. When he played the part in London in 1873, to the Orpheum of Miss Marion Terry, "The London Spectator" said of it:

"Mr. MacKaye's Hamlet is by far the best Hamlet of our own time. His highest points are his reveries. Nothing can be finer than the dreamy, ghostly voice in which he says to himself:

"The dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country, from whose bourne
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
"His imagination seems to be losing itself

tion, fiery, often explosive, in action; at his best imaginatively thrilling, but differing widely from night to night, according to his moods and health, tending, when tired, to anti-climax and over-emphasis. The record of contemporaneous criticism in the press is as mutually contradictory as such criticism to-day, ranging from extravagant praise to ridicule."

What was Steele MacKaye's influence upon American acting, apart from his own art.

Mrs. Edward L. Davenport, Effie Ellsler, May Irwin, Minnie Maddern (Fiske), Sadie Martinot, Blanche Ring, Annie Russell and Odette Tyley.

In their "Life of Charles Frohman" Daniel Frohman and Isaac F. Marcossan thus acknowledge the part of Steele MacKaye in supplying dynamic motive force to the drama of the '80s:

"When Charles Frohman went to the Madison Square Theatre, in 1881, the three



From an old poster of "Hazel Kirke"



MacKaye as "Hamlet"

Frohman brothers were literally installed for the first time under the same managerial roof. From this hour on the affairs of Charles were bound up in large theatrical conduct.

"The little Madison Square Theatre, located back of the old Fifth Avenue Hotel, in Twenty-fourth Street, near Broadway, was established at a time when a new force seemed to be needed for the New York stage. This playhouse, destined to figure so prominently in the fortunes of all the Frohmans, and especially Charles, grew out of the somewhat radical convictions of Steele MacKaye, one of the most brilliant characters of his time.

"Steele MacKaye was the first director and launched his career. 'A wholesome place for wholesome amusement' became the slogan. Contracts for plays were made only with American authors. Here were produced the earlier triumphs of Steele MacKaye, Bronson Howard, William Gillette, H. H. Boyesen and Mrs. Burnett. In this house, in 'May Blossom,' De Wolf Hopper first appeared in stock company. Among the actors seen on its boards during the Frohman régime were Agnes Booth, Viola Allen, Effie Ellsler, Georgia Cayvan, Mrs. Whiffen, Marie Burroughs, Annie Russell, George Clarke, Jeffreys Lewis, C. W. Coughlin, Thomas Whiffen, Dominick Murray and Eben Plympton. Rose Coghlan also was a member of the company, but had no opportunity of playing."

"The name of Frohman was associated with this theatre from the very start, because its first manager, appointed by Steele MacKaye, was Daniel Frohman. It opened February 4, 1880, with Steele MacKaye's play 'Hazel Kirke' which was an instan-

aneous success. The little theatre, with its novel stage, intimate atmosphere, admirable company and a policy that was definite and original, became one of the most popular in America. 'Hazel Kirke' ran 486 nights in New York City without interruption, which was a record run up to that time."

The dreams and projects of Steele MacKaye came to a culmination which was characteristically dramatic at the World's Fair, in Chicago, in 1893. Commissioned to launch what the press described as a "Great Show for the Fair," he organized a spectacle of pantomime and music about the life story of Columbus, to be called "The World Finder." For this performance Victor Herbert wrote incidental music and Dvorak wrote much of his "New World Symphony." Anton Seidl was engaged as orchestra conductor. For this vast performance a great theatre to be called the Spectatorium was constructed on designs furnished by Steele MacKaye. This was nothing less than a structure intended to house such huge productions as the later outdoor community masques of Percy MacKaye. The stages rose in tiers almost like the seats in the audience. This was to be the greatest of Steele MacKaye's daring adventures in dramatic innovation.

The great misfortune was that owing to a panic in Wall Street the theatre was completed two months too late for the exposition. At such a time it could not



Another posy from "Hazel Kirke"

possibly justify the huge cost of its promotion. The great strain broke the health of its creator. Steele MacKaye lived, however, to vindicate his project and intentions in a large model called the Spectatorium, concerning which the critic of "The Chicago Times" wrote February 6, 1894, "The triumph of Steele MacKaye as an inventor of extraordinary genius is assured." Three weeks later MacKaye was dead, at the age of fifty-two. There is this striking compensation at the curtain of his life drama: In "The World Finder," Steele MacKaye's last play, his son, Percy, made his first venture as a playwright in collaboration with his father. Since then Percy MacKaye has carried on what his father had made a family tradition, the contribution to the American drama of at least one dramatic work a year.



Scene from "Hazel Kirke"

man and a lawyer, of considerable wealth. Steele MacKaye began at the age of fourteen his career of intellectual adventure. At that age he ran away from school to study art under William Hunt at Newport. Later he went to the Beaux Arts and later still he came under Gérôme, Troyon, Cou-

The Need of Concord in French and American Opinion

By André Cheradame

New York Tribune
Special Cable Service
(Copyright, 1919, New York Tribune Inc.)

PARIS, March 8.—It is clear that efforts are being made to embroil the French and Americans in a controversy. In recent days a French newspaper, which does not enjoy full confidence, quite wrongly accused the American correspondents here of carrying out an anti-French campaign.

A similar propaganda is going on in the United States, for I have received American newspaper clippings in which I am taken to task. One declares I am working "to block Mr. Wilson's peace proposals." Another affirms "André Cheradame urges a committee to confer with representative leaders here." This is due to the fact that I have pleaded, for reasons which I have later developed, that notable Americans without distinction of party should come to Europe to judge for themselves the gravity of the situation.

Enemy of Group With Imperialism Tendencies

Yet another paper declares: "The followers of Napoleonic ambitions in France have a strong spokesman in André Cheradame," although I have been an open enemy of that very small group of Frenchmen of imperialistic tendencies. On February 4 I tried to show the high lights of the American point of view in an article published in "La Démocratie Nouvelle." I wrote:

"As regards the conditions of peace, the Americans wish us to remain true to the directing principle of our policy; that is to say, not to let ourselves be drawn into annexations imperialistic in character. This hope I entirely share, and I hope soon to show the reasons

why annexations of an imperialistic character would be contrary to the moral and material interests of France. Yet, this question of imperialism once assured, the Americans not only understand that we should demand but ask us to demand all imaginable guarantees against the rebirth of the German peril."

American Peace Ideas Unknown to French Opinion

It is impossible to make an anti-imperialistic declaration any clearer, more spontaneous and more closely conforming to what we know to be the American ideal—an ideal, moreover, which I share. But these accusations of imperialism are directed not only against me, but against the French leaders. Many indications of the same character prove that a campaign aiming to play the German game by making Franco-American relations difficult is going on on both sides of the Atlantic.

This campaign is rendered possible because French opinion knows almost nothing of dominant American ideas of peace. The conditions under which the American general elections on November 6 took place and the significance attaching thereto are still unknown to the mass of the French people. Similarly at the present moment the comment in the great American newspapers and the speeches in the Senate at Washington on important events cannot secure free publicity in the French press. At best, very occasional and very short dispatches telling of the speeches in the Senate are allowed to appear here.

The "Echo de Paris," commenting in regard to naval appropriations February 14, found nearly the entire editorial censored. The same paper, on February

19, explained this extraordinary censorship, saying: "Any detailed attempt to explain the policy of the Washington government or the movement of American public opinion is placed on the index expurgatorius by our censorship, to which has been added the vigilance of American experts in France. Thus we are led to think that the policy of Mr. Wilson is that of all America."

I have sought to discover why two American experts have been added to the French censorship in Paris. Various authorities who should certainly be well informed told me that this American censorship on news to be printed in Paris and coming from the United States was the result of suggestions of very highly placed Americans. Can such an enormity be permitted at a time when secret diplomacy is proscribed?

Opinions of Americans Conceded by Censorship

The French public cannot know what the Americans and their representatives in Washington are thinking, and this ignorance has naturally convinced them that Mr. Wilson's proposals at the peace conference are the exact reflection of the will of the American people.

In order that I may show loyally how this belief does not conform to facts and demonstrate its regrettable results, I must make known to you the astonishment with which the French people have received the chief proposals of Mr. Wilson at the conference. It is certain that the critical attitude toward the French people is possible for the reason that while Americans sometimes criticize their President they do not like foreigners to do so. But, truly, this is an exceptional case.

In coming to Europe, Mr. Wilson has

shown himself successively as three persons.

First, he came as the President of the United States, and thus was assured the unquestioned and absolute respect of the French people.

Second, as the President of the United States, he had occasion to make known to the French people the will of the American nation—in which case, if, by hypothesis, the American desires did not seem to the French the same as their own, the French would have the right, through cordial and frank discussion, to point out the points of divergence. This situation has, however, never left the realm of hypothesis.

Third, Mr. Wilson was just plain Mr. Wilson, with ideas on peace strictly personal; that is to say, which may be neither those of the American people nor of the French.

In this case, if the personal concepts of Mr. Wilson regarding European affairs—on which the French have incontestably a right to have an opinion—are, moreover, of a nature to allow the evaporation of the victory which the French gained at the cost of enormous sacrifices, even the proudest American cannot deny the right of the French to discuss these personal ideas. I know American loyalty too well to doubt that in such a case the Americans would not only recognize the French right to criticize, but will admit that such criticism is an imperative duty.

As a matter of fact, only the personal ideas of Mr. Wilson surprised, pained and disquieted a great majority of the Frenchmen, who after so much suffering during the war thought they had arrived at the end of their trials.

French Can't Understand Recognition of Bolsheviks

Mr. Wilson's proposal to treat with the Bolsheviks was not understood by the French, because the immense majority of the French people are convinced that the Bolsheviks are criminals and German agents. These Frenchmen cannot under-

stand how Mr. Wilson, coming to Europe to effect a just peace, could talk with admitted criminals. What is more, it was known that to treat with the Bolsheviks would increase their power and enable them to unleash their propaganda in France. After the Trinkino proposal, our Bolsheviks, borrowing the authority of Mr. Wilson's name, engaged in a fierce propaganda against Premier Clemenceau, who has recently been the object of an attempted assassination.

It has not been understood why Mr. Wilson is so deeply interested in feeding Germany and sends American soldiers to Berlin to assure the distribution of food, while the Czechs, the Jugo-Slavs and the Rumanians, who have done so much for the Entente victory, are in a much more precarious situation than the Boches, and are not fed so quickly.

Wonder Why Wilson Didn't Visit Ruins

It has not been understood in France why Mr. Wilson, who has come to make a just peace, thought it useless to estimate the refinement of German barbarism by a visit to the invaded regions. I cannot understand why Mr. Wilson hesitates to declare for the total disarmament of Germany—the disarmament which the French desire in order to be freed from the fear of new aggression and in order to disarm themselves.

They also cannot understand in France why Mr. Wilson opposes the immediate delimitation of the Polish state, including the Polish region of Danzig, without which the new Polish state is impossible. Delay in this delimitation increases the chance of Germany making junction with the Bolsheviks over the dead body of Poland, from which eventuality we would have as an immediate consequence the reconstitution of pan-Germany.

Lastly, the French people cannot understand why Mr. Wilson causes his delegates at the peace conference to maintain that Germany should only repair the damage caused in the invaded regions, without taking into account the gigantic war costs of her aggression im-

posed on France and the Allies. Yet the situation is clear.

The war costs of France and Germany have been published, and the amount in round figures is 3,000 francs for each German and 4,800 for each French citizen. Thus the French must bear as war costs not only a financial burden two-fifths greater than the Germans, but also the immense and lamentable economic consequences of the slowness of reparation for the invaded north (where the losses amount to 75,000,000,000 francs, in addition to war costs), while the Germans benefit from the inestimable advantage gained in not having been invaded, and thus are immediately able to resume economic activity.

French Bear Burden Of Greater War Cost

Yet the German people are entirely and clearly responsible for the war. They had been trained for the war for twenty-five years, as published documents have shown. A fac-simile map from the Pan-German atlas shows that since 1900 the German people had been taught to consider the Bagdad railway German, for it has clearly printed on it "Deutsch, Bagdad Eisenbahn."

At the opening of the war even German reserve officers knew perfectly well their business was to conquer all Europe—which in large measure was carried out, which in large measure was carried out. The German people never protested against this propaganda, but allowed themselves willingly to be drawn on by it for twenty years, because it corresponded to their instincts.

Justice, therefore, demands that the German people must repair, as far as possible, the wrong they have done. Yet Mr. Wilson's theory on war damages would allow the existence of a difference in war costs to the detriment of France, a difference so enormous that it alone is sufficient to bring about the ruin of France, an economic explosion and her final servitude to Germany.

All this is well understood by the French people, but above all the last part of Mr. Wilson's programme, rela-

tive to reparations, touches them deeply, for they know that if the problem of reparations is unsolved it means the certain death of France.

Reason for Reserve In Attitude of French

This is why, as Mr. Wilson has developed before the peace conference his various proposals, the attitude toward him of the great majority of the French has become more reserved. I ask my loyal American to place himself in the position of a Frenchman—would he be more moderate in his attitude toward the Wilson proposals than the French have been?

The conclusion of all this is that it is impossible that the French should any longer be left in ignorance of American opinion. I know that what I have said may seem exaggerated to my American readers—notwithstanding the confidence they show in me and for which I am grateful. Yet I do not believe I exaggerate. The Pan-German-Bolshevik plan of which I warned my readers two months ago is working out. In the spring—that is, in a few weeks—the Bolshevik government hopes to provoke a revolt in Bohemia and Hungary, and thus make an offensive against Poland with the powerful forces now being organized in Russia.

What is more, the financial situation of France is such that if the conference does not settle the problem of reparations quickly the country will be brought economically to the point of a prompt explosion. If France goes, Italy and England will go also, and the effect will be felt across the Atlantic. All this is of immense gravity, and this is why I hope that qualified Americans, representing public opinion, Congress, whether Republican or Democratic, and the great propaganda societies, such as the American Defence Society, will as soon as possible send delegates to Europe to take into account the danger while there is yet time to avert it. In saying "Come and judge for yourselves" I believe I am giving counsel that is to the best advantage of America.