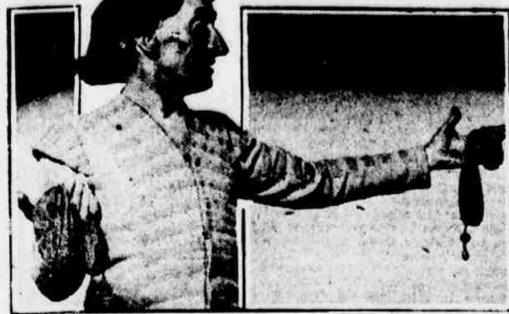


THE LITTLE TEACHER'S REAL TEARS



Jacques Copeau, Theatre du Vieux Colombier

THE Little Teacher—why? The Teacher, or something else?

Why, because there is that ineffable association of sweetness, tenderness and beauty about the word. One's best self should be a militant suffragist in Broadways, is always little. The amazon of the divorce court, the sympathetic reporters tell us is little. The word means much more than size.

Thus, far from intimating that he thought of it when he chose the name for this play of country joys and sorrows in which Mary Ryan is carrying off such honors at the Playhouse, Harry James Smith has, even with his title, touched a string of the playgoer's heart, which, it seems at times, fits his well laid purpose to play. She is the little teacher—sweet and tender and all that is beautiful.

The cynical Broadwayite and the mad and to be pitted analyst may call it all "hokum," but they are like an amateur botanist who might go meandering over those same hills of Godden Hollow seen rolling away to the sky horizon through the window of the Little Teacher's schoolroom—the botanist who finds a Vermont sunflower and calls it Helianthus angustifolius.

The cynical Broadwayite and the mad and to be pitted analyst see, in the first act, *Paul* from Jersey City (the tall, broad shouldered, pleasantly smiling Curtis Cookes) come carrying into the schoolroom the unconscious form of *Battise*, the stocky little foreigner. *Battise*, somewhere just outside the schoolhouse, had been knocked out by *Paul*.

Why had he been knocked out? Think that *Paul* is in love with *The Little Teacher*, and think of the most ideal provocation a hero might have for such an act, and the play's situation has the ideal answer. *Battise* had said, not so very harshly, at that, that *Paul* was so beautiful, which *Paul*, with his impetuous fighting nature, rightly resented. They say that is "hokum."

Again, *Emily West* loves all her pupils, and, of course, they all love her. They like to "stay in after school," and they want to build her fires in the stove. Two of them, a little boy and girl, have drunken parents, and when the drunken father comes and when the drunken father comes and when the drunken father comes and when they run crying to "teacher" for protection, she takes them under her wing.

Would it be ideal for those children to go back to those drunken parents? Would it be even worth while to take a chance on reforming the parents?

So *Emily West* takes them home with her to her country boarding house. The hard hearted landlady—or do they call them landladies in the country?—has not wanted the children under her roof and is ready to turn them out in the snow. *Emily West's* pleading breaks her strong resolution, and for the first time in thirty years the hard old woman weeps and softens, and the children stay.

Paul makes a call that very evening and is there when the drunken father, without warning, slips into the room without even rattling the latch and snags for *Emily West*, who, her back turned, is playing the organ for *Paul's* edification and enjoyment.

Would it be ideal for *The Little Teacher* to even to hear that drunken man enter the room?

Paul, who has been seated deep in a chair in a far corner, spies him striding toward *Miss West* with menacing outstretched hands. *Paul* jumps up and utters after him. Without a sentence, without outcry, *Paul* grasps the drunkard by the nape of the neck and clatters him out, softly shutting the door after him. And *Emily West* never knew her danger.

In the next act *Emily West* is confronted by the "selectman" and a "committee," who are there to take the case of the parents, sitting in judgment against *The Little Teacher*.

There is something wrong about those parents, *Emily West* pleads; they cannot be the genuine parents of those two lovely children. Do they remember ever having seen any one who resembled them with loving care? Yes, the little boy remembers, or perhaps it was in a dream—he remembers "an angel." Then *Emily West's* im-

portunate pleading with the gypsy woman who has called herself the mother of the children softens that woman's heart.

And who is the real mother? Should she be any other than an ideal mother?

She is a kind and wealthy woman of New York city—the little boy's "angel."

And what in these times of war should happen to a hero and heroine? In this play "The Little Teacher" happens. *Paul* and his friend, *Battise*, appear in the last act dressed in khaki and *The Little Teacher* is doing work for the Red Cross.

So it is that Mr. Smith has squeezed all the sordid things out and left the ideal things. He has seen that modern tolerance sorrows and the sadness of death only in opera and he has some them several better by giving them happiness, goodness and tenderness. But, like his choice of a name for the play, with no objective con-

sciousness of a tender touch in the word "little," it very likely is that he wrote the play out of his heart and with no manufacturing of situations deliberately to touch the emotions of his audience.

This was indicated by Mary Ryan the other evening during a long conversation about the play and Mr. Smith.

"He is just like a big boy," said Miss Ryan. "He is very sincere and he has been especially interested in this play, because of its sincerity. He wanted to make it simple and sincere, and what I am trying to do now is to get as much simplicity into the role of the little teacher as I can. It is a role, I think, that should be played with the utmost simplicity."

The simplicity with which Miss Ryan plays the role now is one of the strong assets of the play. In this, it might be indicated, as it has been announced, that the playwright wrote the play especially for her. That she genuinely feels the sincerity of it was shown when she appeared in her dressing room after the final curtain had fallen on *Battise*, in khaki, sitting happily in a chair and singing "Over There." There were tears in her eyes.

There had been tears in the eyes of many in the audience.

"It often brings the tears," she said, in that gentleness of tone that is a delight in her acting, "when I hear that song, 'Over There,' and think of what really is going on 'over there.' We can't help but be affected—there are so many of our own suffering and dying in this war."

"I thought," said her interviewer, "when I saw the tears in your eyes that you had been touched by the play as many in the audience were. There were many weeping."

"Well, it is the play too, but they are happy tears the play brings. I think she is a dear little girl—the little teacher. I love that last act, especially where the mother comes for those children and the little teacher gives them up. I think of the pathos of the kidnapping by those gypsies; it reminds me of that case a few years ago, where that child was kidnapped—and at that time I felt the mother's tragedy."

"You say you love the little teacher; do you mean that in playing the role you regard her as a personality out of yourself?" the interviewer asked.

"Oh, yes," she said, "she is entirely another person. I love her because she tries to do the right thing all the time. I love the way she loves those children and cares for them. Don't you think it is a good thing to have characters like her on the stage and play that bring out the good things? In these times we want things that are good. I think it is a thing, especially for young girls, to see plays like this. I like to think I am helping the 18-year-old girl. The girl of the

city sees this play and it will make her want the sweeter things of life."

"Do you like books, too—books that emphasize being good and doing good, like 'Pollyanna'?"

"I haven't read 'Pollyanna,' but there is another something like that I like—'Just David.' I think books like that help us."

Miss Ryan's dressing room showed plainly her sincerity in these views. A table in a corner was literally covered with trinkets and toys that the children in her cast had brought her. It seems that even off stage they regard her as the little teacher. They are genuine children too. The little negro boy, who rolls his eyes and shows his teeth in a broad smile that catches the entire audience when he is on the other night, between the acts, sliding down a balustrade back stage.

"I love these children," said Miss Ryan. "And the little colored boy as much as the rest. They are all good actors, too, don't you think? They come to me with their questions and bring me these things—oh, I have a lot of fun with them off the stage as well as on."

There could be no doubt that Miss Ryan does. Her voice and her actions off stage are marked by that same tenderness she has in the play. Besides the toys the children had given her, indicating this in her character, she had on the wall above the table that Psalm which ends: "Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

CUTTING PRICES.
By RICHARD WALTON TILLY.

In these days of nervousness in the theatre suggestions are rampant as to ways and means of bettering affairs, especially financial. Numerous people have declared that the price of theatre tickets is too high and that the gross intake would be greater if the prices were generally lower. I doubt if this would prove to be the case.

The standard \$2 scale as applied in practically all New York theatres has been a proved success through a long term of years. Again and again the public have shown a proved disposition to pay for their tickets accordingly when the fare set before them has been tempting. Now that days of financial stress have come upon us, I believe that the public are quite as willing as ever to pay regulation prices for amusement, especially since they are paying inflated prices for all the commodities of life. At this time when the theatre manager is facing increased expenses in nearly every department of his business, to

cutting of prices during the first part of the week has been worked successfully in the so-called week stands of the country. But not in New York, where plays are booked for runs, where the public want to see a play, and where the holding methods of ticket speculators, and where plays the public does not want to see can no longer tempt even dead-head audiences. It all comes down to a basis of economics. If the play is one the public wants, crowds will come and pay the \$2 scale just as willingly as the \$1.50, but if the play is not one that finds favor, profitable business cannot be expected by reducing prices to \$1.50 or to \$1. And the average New Yorker who would like to attend the theatre on say Friday evening is hardly going to postpone his evening's amusement to attend the same attraction the following Tuesday evening because his ticket will cost him fifty cents less. And granting that a few

patrons might deliberately choose an evening in the first part of the week because of the "bargain rate" offered, there is no way of proving that the very same patron, seized with sufficient desire to see the play in question, would not gladly have paid the customary \$2 had no bargain been offered him, or have sat in the cheaper seats in the balcony.

The thing that will breed prosperity for the theatre is not bargain prices, but worthy attractions. When the thirty theatres in New York can offer playgoers thirty good plays there will be no talk of theatrical hard times. One name play produced in a slipshod manner and indifferently acted can

keep more people from attending other theatres than can ever be attracted to the theatregoing habit through the flouting of reduced prices.

LEO PONDERS AGAIN.
Mr. Dittichstein Opens the Secrets of His Heart to the Press Agent.

"The world is full of actors. Every branch of business, profession, trade, occupation possesses actors, and the better the actor the more successful the man or woman," said Leo Dittichstein the other evening while in his dressing room between acts of "The King." The remark was made in confidence to his press agent. "But the stage actor must be born, not made. There is a metaphysical law that is in evidence in the demonstration of every

actor, and yet in apparent sincerity with tremulous voice and tear bedimmed eye argues his plea for acquittal with such intensity and feeling that the jury returns a verdict of 'Not guilty' is an actor."

"The commercial traveller who by that undefinable something called personality, individuality or art succeeds in distancing his competitors in the race for trade is an actor."

"The physician who contends that you are getting along splendidly when he knows that you are slowly choking to the beyond across the great divide is an actor."

"The undertaker who with solemn visage and funeral mein enters the house of mourning and consoles the bereaved in pathetic whispers, escorts the cortege with reverential air to the last resting place and then goes to his club to crack a ribald joke is an actor."

"The politician who meets you for the first time and with apparently the acquaintance of long standing slaps you upon the back and says 'Why, Bill, you haven't aged a day since I saw you last' and then gingerly fishes around to ascertain your name, residence, occupation and political creed is an actor."

"The bartender, the hotel clerk, the stenographer, the manicurist, barber, &c., are all actors. We live in an age of acting, and the greater the success in life the better the actor. But the stage actor must be born, not made, and in reflecting life, but nature must sustain the reality in exposition."

"Book education will never make a successful player any more than it would make a successful painter, sculptor, poet; all the education you will ever make him or her a successful player unless they possess individuality, personality, a natural aptitude, ambition, and above all brains."

"The Book of Job" is announced as a dramatic production by Harry Walker for the special Lenten matinee to be given on Thursday, March 7, and on Thursday, March 14, at the Booth Theatre. The Bible story is mostly in the form of dialogue—it is

acted by a trinity of events: first, the inception; second, the materialization, and third, the realization.

"The actor must be born, then developed and then exploited, but unless the God given gift is already created all the development or exploitation in the world will never be of any substantial profit, for if the soil is barren how can the vegetation blossom?"

"The bartender, for example, who stands before a jury thoroughly cognizant of the fact that his client is guilty

and yet in apparent sincerity with tremulous voice and tear bedimmed eye argues his plea for acquittal with such intensity and feeling that the jury returns a verdict of 'Not guilty' is an actor."

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HELEN HOLMES in SUCCESS

In reality a dramatic poem, considered by many critics to be the greatest in all literature. The divine contest with Satan, Job's suffering and final triumph through faith, form a stirring story of poetic beauty and power.

David Blipham has been especially engaged to represent the *Book of Job* at the Whitehall and Walter Hampden will represent the young man *Elihu*. George Gaud will be *Job* and Margaret Mower and Judith Lowry will be the *Two Narrators*. Job's three friends will be shown by Edgar Steinhilber, Eugene Stockdale and Henry Buckler.

Special music is being arranged by Elliott Schenck and Frank Zimmerman has designed the costumes and setting. Mr. Walker has devised the lighting effects.

In speaking of these special matinees Mr. Walker (whose Portman Theatre productions of the *Dunston* and other plays at the Princess

PLAYS THAT LAST.

Astor, "Why Marry?"; Belasco, "Polly With a Past"; Bijou, "Girl of Mine"; Booth, "Seventeen"; Broadhurst, "The Madonna of the Future"; Casino, "Oh, Boy"; Century, "Chu Chin Chow"; Cohan, "The King"; Cort, "Flo-Flo"; Cohan & Harris, "A Tailor Made Man"; Comedy, "Youth"; Criterion, "Happiness"; Eltinge, "Business Before Pleasure"; Empire, "The Off Chance"; Forty-eighth, "The Love Mill"; Forty-fourth, "Maytime"; Fulton, "Billeted"; Harris, "Success"; Hippodrome, "Cheer Up!"; Hudson, "The Master"; Gaiety, "Sick-a-Bed"; Globe, "Jack of Lantern"; Greenwich Village Theatre, "Karen"; Liberty, "Going Up"; Longacre, "Yes or No?"; Lyceum, "Tiger Rose"; Maxine Elliott, "Eyes of Youth"; Morosco, "Lombardi, Ltd."; New Amsterdam, "The Cohan Revue, 1918"; Norwath, "Under Pressure"; Park, "Seven Days' Leave"; Playhouse, "The Little Teacher"; Princess, "The Gipsy Trail"; Princess, "Oh, Lady! Lady!"; Republic, "Parlor, Bedroom and Bath"; Curables, "A Cure for Curables"; and Winter Garden, "Sinbad."

Theatre are well remembered) said: "I have for several years wanted to do 'The Book of Job' in the theatre. I want to present the book dramatically, but not theatrically, and have talked with a number of leading choruses of all denominations, whose approval and support I have in the undertaking. No attempt will be made to delve into the accuracy of Hebrew scene, costume and custom nor will the Greek or any other set method of presentation be followed. I merely want to tell its great human story in a simple and reverent way to assist the legitimate aide of the theatre to express its message of faith and patience. Job, it seems to me, is a man of all times. His words and those of his friends are our words and our thoughts in those war-scarred days, and I hope to strike in our production the wonderful note of courage and final triumph over world suffering that the Bible story so splendidly tells."



BEATRICE MAUDE in SEVENTEEN

Why had he been knocked out? Think that *Paul* is in love with *The Little Teacher*, and think of the most ideal provocation a hero might have for such an act, and the play's situation has the ideal answer. *Battise* had said, not so very harshly, at that, that *Paul* was so beautiful, which *Paul*, with his impetuous fighting nature, rightly resented. They say that is "hokum."

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JUNE CONGRE in WHERE ROGUES FALL OUT?

say nothing of the handicap of increased taxes, playgoers will scarcely quibble at doing their share. If managers give the public plays they want to see there will be no grumbling at paying regular prices.

Of course, attractions for which desirable tickets are never kept at the box office, the public being obliged to pay all sorts of fancy prices from agencies to procure suitable locations, come under an entirely different heading. The public is getting tired of being thus gouged, and with the inflation of prices to such unreasonable extents I have absolutely no sympathy. It hurts business for everybody and in the end will react most strongly against those who have shared in the extortion.

On the other hand, though, I can see no sound reason why regular theatre prices should be cut. When the Government imposed a tax of 10 per cent, upon theatre tickets there was a great hue and cry as to whether or not it would hurt business. After the first few nights I cannot see that it did. The public soon became accustomed to the comparatively small additional charge, which after all was not large enough to work hardships upon any theatregoers. Several theatres immediately announced that they would pay the war tax for their patrons; that is, deduct 10 per cent, for the Government from the regular purchase price of tickets. The altruistic purport of this policy is scarcely apparent, and I have noticed that one of the attractions that was paying the war tax for its patrons has reverted to the system of having the purchaser pay the tax, which was exactly what the Government intended in the first place. In other words the bait of a small discount of 10 per cent, failed to lure sufficient additional patronage to offset the loss of revenue to the theatre.

Now more recently another theatre has lowered its prices on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, charging on those nights \$1.50 and \$1 for orchestra seats instead of \$2, which regular scale prevails during the last half of the week. I cannot see where this will work out to any permanent advantage. Several years ago one enterprising manager tried the experi-

ment of presenting a new play with a formidable cast at a Broadway theatre with the best tickets for any performance priced at \$1. Two or three weeks, I believe, was the length of the engagement. The public found the play not to its liking, and when a play is not liked people in any considerable numbers are not going to see it simply because they can buy tickets for half what it would cost them to see some other play that they really want to witness. And if the play had been a real success, the theatre could have filled just as readily at the \$2 scale as at the \$1.

Indeed this whole idea of lowering prices during the first part of the week is not a new one, but an old one, and was worked at least a dozen years ago on the Pacific coast. But as I will endeavor to show later, the scheme has opportunities to succeed in week stands that are not possessed in New York.

At the present time the cutting of prices will have no material effect. Doubtless there will be a few persons attracted by the saving of 50 cents during the first half of the week, but very few, and even so, it is difficult to determine how many of these few patrons wouldn't go to the play without the cheaper prices. When the wife at the dinner table suggests to her husband that she would like to see such and such a play that evening the husband is going to have a hard time getting her to see a play not of her choice simply because they can secure orchestra seats for 50 cents apiece less. And besides, in nearly every theatre in New York good first balcony seats can be obtained for any performance at \$1.50 and \$1—seats that are good enough for anybody to sit in. Hence of what avail to lower the orchestra scale during the first half of the week?

In fact this very reduction in scale has for a long time prevailed for matinees in practically all New York theatres. The seat seats at the Wednesday matinees are nearly always \$1.50, while at the Saturday matinees the \$2 scale prevails. Yet any manager will tell you that the receipts at the Saturday matinees average at least double what they do on Wednesdays. If people prefer to attend matinees on Saturdays they are not going to forego this preference for the saving of 50 cents.



GRACE LA RUE in THE PALACE THEATRE

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