Some plays by Barrie

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I love words that in a moment rise softly, like a child's murmuring voice, from under the droning style.

I love words that just gurgle, like little stifled sobs.

I love the prose that blazes its joy and its rapture like stars above me, that lights glowing suns of love, that carries me over the thin ice of its disdain, through the rough black nights of its hatred, that clangs down upon me the green, copper voice of its irony and its laughter.

If you would please me, then stretch over my head a rainbow of language in which I shall see red anger raging, blue gladness rejoicing and yellow mockery laughing.

Take me up and carry me where you will: I crave for nothing more than to be powerless against the power of your Word.

Strike me with your Word, torture me with your Word and then let your Word fall down upon me like a rain of kisses....."

IX.

Here I wish to make an end for the present. I am fully conscious that the subject is by no means exhausted, and I intend to return to it afterwards. Meanwhile I shall be glad to hear both from those who assent to my main propositions and from 'dissenters'.

WILLEM VAN DOORN.

Some Plays by Barrie.

The Barrie-ettes.

In contradiction to Shakespeare's much-quoted "What's in a name", I think there often is very much in a name indeed. *Barrie-ettes* with its French ending conveys to the mind something elegant, something of airy gracefulness, something that cannot possibly be clumsy, heavy and ponderous. And if there is one thing to be said of Barrie's plays in the very first instance, it is that by their airy grace and sweet fancy, they are something absolutely apart and unique in Modern English stage-literature. Maybe some one will come and say, "but surely you cannot call the Modern Irish play a clumsy and awkward thing. Are not the plays by Synge fanciful and airy?" That is quite true, but then they base so much of their charm on old Irish Mythology and superstitions and fancies that have existed for centuries and centuries among the Irish peasantry, and they bristle with the names of the Old Gods and mythical persons, which if we do not know them tell us nothing at all. Whereas with Barrie it is all his own and springs from his own mind clear and bright and fresh as a mountain-stream and as new and bewitching as a plant that has just budded forth. And what is so curious with Barrie: all he writes seems quite natural and the most ordinary things of life are pervaded with an air of sweetness through his treatment of them.

With Barrie nothing is impossible, but Barrie's impossibility does not irritate us, does not make us cry out: "Oh, but that is absolute nonsense." We feel, as if somehow we have never looked at life in the right way, have only considered things in our matter-of-fact and practical dryness. It is as if Barrie was the first to detect all the glory there is in this life and in this world, in spite of its many horrors and sufferings. It is not as if

he closes his eyes to life's miseries and will not see them, but as if he opens his eyes as wide as he can to the other side of brightness and beauty and sweetness and reveals it to us with astonishing vivacity and clearness.

The title of my little essay may be misleading to the reader, as I shall not discuss all Barrie's plays, but have selected only five of them for treatment viz. *Mary Rose*, *The Admirable Crichton*, and *Quality-Street* to represent the most fanciful ones, and *Alice-sit-by-the-Fire* and *What Every Woman Knows* as the more practical.

Of the first three *Mary Rose* stands out almost quite by itself, as being pervaded by a quaint atmosphere of mystery and unreality, enhanced in the acting by softly-muted music played before the curtain is raised. The opening-scene reveals to us an absolutely bare and empty room, and a slovenly uninviting caretaker discussing with a young Australian soldier who appears to be interested in the house and wants to stay there, in spite of the caretaker's constant remonstrances and warnings. The fact that she does not straightway tell why she should not advise him to stay there, but only looks about her with helpless gestures and a horrified face makes the situation weird from the very beginning. However, the soldier insists and speaks lightly of ghosts and his not being afraid of them, because he gathers from the caretaker's behaviour that the house is haunted. She goes off to make him a cup of tea and he sits down in the darkening light of the room, lost in thought, while a door of which the caretaker was specially afraid, slowly swings open and soft music is heard. The tension is almost unbearable at this moment, when suddenly the scene is changed and we see the same house as it was some thirty years ago, a pretty old-fashioned sitting-room with a pleasant-faced old-world couple, who are receiving their future son-in-law, glowing with love, ardour and youth, as he has just asked their daughter Mary Rose to become his wife. They gladly give their consent, but when the young man goes off to Mary Rose to tell the result of his visit, the faces of the old couple overshadow, they put their dear old heads together and the mother says: "Hadn't we better tell him about it? I think it is more or less our duty" — and then the next time he is alone with them, the expectant listener hears the following curious story:

When Mary Rose was quite a young child, they went with her to Scotland, where near the coast there was a small island which the father liked to frequent on account of its fisheries. For Mary Rose, young as she was at the time, the island had a strange fascination. She loved to be left alone there with her sketch-book, while her father went out fishing in his little boat. One day he had left her as usual, while he had gone away to fish. When he came back after a few hours, fancy his surprise, when he could not find her anywhere. He looked all over the island, but small as it was, no trace of the child was to be found. In great dismay he went to his wife and they suffered intensely at the loss of their child. Yet his wife somehow could not get away from the place and they stayed and passed many miserable days. One day, when the father went out in his boat and as usual went near the island in the wild hope of finding his child, fancy his shock when he found her sitting exactly in the same spot, where he had left her the last time. But the strangest thing about it was, that when he had got to her and asked her what had happened, the child was absolutely unable to give him any answer, as to her it seemed as if she had only been there a few hours as usual. She could not understand the joy of her parents at seeing her back, and what had happened during her

stay at the island had always remained a mystery to them. They had left the place as soon as possible and never wanted their child to come near it again. She had grown up an ordinary young girl, unspeakably sweet to them, only now and then a very very vague memory would come to her of the strange island. Then she would grow a little sad and restless, but nothing real she could or would say. This strange story is what the parents tell the young man. But he, a typical practical young Englishman, makes light of the story and is only too eager to receive his future wife from the hands of her parents.

The second act shows us the husband and wife some five years after their marriage. A strange longing for the little Scotch island has gradually filled young Mary's mind again. In the beginning her husband resisted, but later on, when he saw nothing strange or abnormal about his wife, he thought it silly not to yield to such a dear wish of hers, and for their holiday they are going to visit the place. They have a little son left in England. We see them landing on the island, a perfectly happy couple. Their boat is rowed ashore by a Scotchman Cameron, and Barrie cannot let the opportunity slip by, but in the ensuing conversation between Cameron and Mary's husband he takes the English to task about their superficial knowledge and education. They are picnicking. Mary's husband wants to make a fire and roast trout. Now Mary after professing the most tender love for her husband grows absent-minded, the eerie music is heard again, a trance comes over her and while her husband is making a fire, Mary is softly drawn away by an irresistible unseen force. When her husband turns round she is gone and the act finishes with his wild and doleful cry of 'Mary Rose!'

The following act takes place 25 years later. Mary Rose has never come back. We find ourselves in the same room, Mary Rose's parents have grown grey, but their sorrow at their daughter's loss is softened by time. The old father is even aware of it and regrets that he no longer feels his sorrow so keenly, and that even days pass when he does not think of his daughter at all. The husband who in his hopeless sorrow went to sea, is expected home that day. He appears grey, old and careworn. All of a sudden a telegram arrives from a certain Mr. Cameron from Scotland, telling that Mary Rose has been found again in the same island and that he is bringing her home; and very soon afterwards she appears in the circle of her bewildered relations. And the weirdness about it is, that she has not changed at all and is just like the rosy young wife of 25 years ago. Yet there is a strange look in her eyes, she cannot understand the anxiety of her relations, and asks where her baby is, absolutely unaware, that he is now a full-grown Australian colonist. It is all utterly sad and strange and the scene ends with this puzzling strangeness.

The last act is like the first. The young man sitting by the fire is Mary Rose's son. She appears as a ghostlike figure, looking for her son, wanting to seek him and to be fondled and protected by him. The young man overwhelmed by her sorrow takes her in his arms, trying to make it clear to her that she is with her son, that he is comforting her; but reality cannot touch her and she remains sad and forlorn, and disappears, leaving her son sitting dejectedly near the fire. Now the caretaker comes back and he says to her that she has been such a long time making him a cup of tea. To which she answers, that she has only been ten minutes. The answer puzzles him in no small degree, as it seems to him that she has been away a lifetime.

This curious mixture of wildest fancy and reality is the real Barrie product. What writer would dare to bring a prosaic telegram, for instance, into a piece like this, where everything tends to the mysterious and the unreal and the ghostlike? It is as if on purpose he gives some tangible touches to balance the ungraspable, the unexplainable. Such are the figure of the clergyman, the friend of Mary Rose's father, who is always mildly quarrelling with his friend about the authenticity of old prints. Such is Cameron the Scot, the poor University student with his great learning, who reads Euripides in his boat and earns his living in the holidays by rowing tourists about. Such is Mary Rose's practical husband and her son who does not believe in ghosts, nor in learning, only in the realities of life. For the rest all is fantastical. The girl is always mentioned as Mary Rose, never as Mrs. So and So. Her parents are a sweet old-fashioned couple dreaming away their days in happiness. From the moment she appears up to the very end of the play, she is the same youthful dreamy girl.

The play has puzzled the English public not a little, and the strangest explanations have been given of it. Some call the Island, that likes to be visited, the Spirit World, the Land of the Unknown, that lures the thoughts and fancies of all of us. Some people even think it a warning against modern Spiritualism. We should not try to wish our departed back from the happy world where they have gone and where they do not change; where the young are always young and the old grow no older. To show how much the English mind is occupied by this play, the following cutting from the *Manchester Guardian* may serve as a proof.

Mary Rose.

A Warning to Parents.

(From our London Staff).

Poor "Mary Rose", who was rapt away by the fairies as a child, and then as a young mother enticed by them again for a sojourn of twenty-five years in fairyland, was subjected the other day to a careful psychological analysis, from which she emerged in woeful condition. The lecture was given by Dr. Constance Longmaid, of the Lady Chichester Hospital for Nervous Diseases.

Sir James Barrie's drama, said the lecturer, provided a study of the highest value of one of the most fundamental human problems. It was a story of the unconscious bondage to parents and family resulting in the stabilisation of the infantile personality. The mother of Mary Rose was one of those women who mothered the members of their circle so persistently that they imposed a certain childishness on them. In studying cases of adult childishness it was often found that the mother's influence was very strong. It often produced incompetence and timidity. It was the duty of parents to help the mental development of the child. The parents of Mary Rose refused to do this. They refused to liberate the infant personality, and so they betrayed her to her death. Mary Rose was one of those children who did not wish to grow up. She dreaded the idea of individuality and responsibility.

Barrie had fixed the times of her withdrawal from the world of reality, first, when she was approaching girlhood, and again when her child was growing beyond the period when she could keep it as a plaything. Her parents were in love with Mary Rose and tended to

keep her dependent and undeveloped and she, being in love with them, was lured on the one side by the tenderness of the mother and on the other side by day-dreams and phantasies. The law of life demanded that psychic development should keep pace with physical growth; otherwise there was failure of adaptation, which might manifest itself in neurosis, dissociation of the personality, or complete alienation.

Mary Rose returned from her two absences of 30 days and of 25 years as she might have returned to the world from an asylum. In Maeterlinck's play "The Betrothal" Tytyl followed fantasies having a prospective meaning leading to the expansion of life, while Mary Rose's phantasies were retrospective and retrogressive and led to contraction of the personality and death.

The lecturer concluded by contrasting Mary Rose with her son Harry. She had fled into the unconscious at the age of 12. At the same age he ran away to sea into the concrete world of reality. She became ethericalised and dissipated into the unconscious. He became a man alert and vital. In his dealing with his mother's ghost he discovered of what he was made. He showed intuition, tact, and judgment, and by his treatment of her he had satisfied her restlessness and laid the ghost.

1921.3.137.147. But I think we must not try and explain that which comes forth from Barrie's fantastic mind, but just accept it as it is, strange, weird, unreal, often sad, just as in life many things cannot be explained and will always remain strange and fantastic and make us sadly wonder at life.

My readers must excuse any irregularities in the story of Mary Rose, as I have not seen the play in print, and write from memory as I saw it acted year ago.

The Admirable Crichton is another Barrie play. It is the romance of a butler, and of a fairy-like metamorphosis brought about by most wonderful circumstances. And it is all so natural and so logical.

Crichton is the most perfect type of the ideal butler in the house of Lord Loam. Lord Loam with his nonsensical ideas about an unpractical equality allowed only once a month, bores and inconveniences both his staff of servants and his three ultra-aristocratic daughters, who are almost too refined to think or to breathe. In the first act Barrie subtly caricatures the English aristocracy and gets some fine fun out of them. The whole party, father, three daughters, the Hon. Ernest Woolley their wit, and Treherne the clergyman, together with Crichton and Tweeney a scullery maid, the only one of the female staff who would go as single maid with the three ladies, are wrecked when out yachting and cast on a desert island, probably for the rest of their lives.

And now comes the wonderful thing. Here amidst the resources of nature only, far away from the hampering influence of human society, the characters can develop freely. And the cringing, fawning, faultless butler proves to be a man full of natural sagacity and practical sense. Here his talents can develop and he is the man who with the simplest means constructs the most ingenuous apparatus. To him they turn in any difficulty and he always finds a way out for them. And of course gradually they look up to him as their superior man, their master. But the curious thing is not that they look up to him and fear him as their master, but that he behaves as such absolutely and treats them as his abject slaves, who have to attend his every whim. He has to be waited upon like a true-born aristocrat, he

is the man in their home, for whom the *bonnes bouches* are kept, for whom the girls make up and dress in the only skirt they have. One smile or an appreciation for one of the girls makes them frightfully jealous of each other, and Mary, the eldest and a fine type of woman, is happy beyond bounds, when he asks her to be his wife. It is her and his crowning moment. He has come to his fullest development and she to her noblest. But it is at the same time the hour of their doom, of their return to ordinary circumstances, as a ship comes to the island and takes them back to England, Crichton to his butlerdom and her to her slavery of an aristocratic lady, who is destined to marry a more or less inane fool of an aristocratic husband. The look in Crichton's eyes, the attitude of his body suddenly changes and he falls back to his habit of holding his hands together in that peculiar butler way. He falls back so absolutely to butlerdom, that we can no longer find out whether he feels happy or miserable. He has lost all human attributes, is only a butler again, whose face never betrays any feeling, whose eyes never reflect any inward emotion, whose whole being is bent upon servility, upon waiting on his master, being polite, always agreeing with what is said and never possessing an opinion of his own.

The play might almost be a plea for the liberation of the domestic servant, not by the unpractical way of phantastic democracy, of treating them as equals in a surrounding of unequalities, but by giving them B.'s phantastic chance of growing anew, as it were, in fresh and healthy surroundings, where they can freely move and develop and expand in every direction. Where even the nearness of their former masters does not hamper them, as these are shown in a new light and display themselves as they really are, the stupid stupid, the awkward awkward, the clever clever, and no longer as the haughty soulless masters they were before. The play is typically English too, as nowhere else do we find feudal relations existing between masters and servants such as among English aristocrats.

To show Barrie's many-sidedness I will pass on to *Quality Street*, the third play under discussion. Though the subject is widely different from *Mary Rose* and *The Admirable Crichton*, it has many things in common with them and just as in *The Admirable Crichton* its theme is a transformation scene. Barrie seems to have taken the plot almost entirely from his novel *Sentimental Tommy*, where Miss Ailie and Miss Kittie had a blue-and-white drawing-room, lost their capital, set up a school which was almost too much for their poor brains, and where last not least Captain Ivie McLean was in love with Miss Kittie, who unfortunately died before his return after an absence of 10 years. Then we get the pathetic story of how in the end he asked Miss Ailie to become his wife. The play is as sweet as the story in *Sentimental Tommy*, but Barry makes a few changes and a happier ending. We do not recognize it as a dramatized story. When we see it acted it is a play born and made for the stage.

On reading the play it struck me from the very first that there was an atmosphere in it, reminding one strongly of *Cranford*. Maybe that the drawings by Hugh Thomson, who also illustrated *Cranford*, more easily suggested the likeness. But the sweetness of the two old-fashioned ladies is very similar to that of the *Cranford* ladies. And the return of the man after an absence of many years, in the one case a beloved brother and in the other an intended husband, makes the books read very much like each other. Only in *Cranford* there is a clinging sadness, as Miss Matty has suffered so much through her loss of fortune and her frail health, that she cannot enjoy life to the full any more. And now here comes the difference again. In *Cranford* everything passes in a natural and ordinary way, and the turning

up of the *deus ex machina*, the rich brother, when it is almost too late, is wonderful, but not necessarily untrue to life. So Mrs. Gaskell is justified in bringing him in and her story does not lose its verisimilitude. But B. takes resource to his wildest fancies and makes anything possible in his world of fantasy.

In *Quality Street* we have a bevy of sweet old-fashioned ladies, very particular, very prude, very lovable. The story centres round Miss Susan, a middle-aged lady, and her young and pretty sister Miss Phoebe, Miss Phoebe of the ringlets, who expects at any moment an offer of marriage from Captain Valentine Brown. However, instead of declaring his love, dashing Captain Brown tells her, he has enlisted to go and fight in Corsica. As they have just lost their fortune, the marriage would have come in very handy. Captain Brown who had invested their money for them, believes them well off, they never betray their secret and he takes his farewell, leaving a very disappointed Miss Susan and an almost broken-hearted Miss Phoebe. They bear up bravely under their misfortune, set up a genteel school and have to struggle with the greatest difficulties, as both their constitutions and their brains are not fit for the lives of clever and hard-worked school-mistresses. A comical episode occurs, when the father of one of the bigger girl-pupils insists on his daughter learning algebra. Both Miss Phoebe and Miss Susan are non-plussed by the difficulties of this branch of science. Miss Susan asks. "What is Algebra exactly, is it these three-cornered things?" Whereupon Miss Phoebe answers: "It is x minus y equals z plus x and things like that. And all the time you are saying, they are equal, you feel in your heart why should they be." Amusing and pathetic at the same time is Miss Phoebe trying to cane one of the boys, who has fought another boy in the street for the honour of the school, as that boy said, that when she caned, she didn't draw blood. She wants to let the boy off, but he bursts out crying, employing her to give him the promised caning. When she does give it him in an unprofessional manner he corrects her, but she is too soft-hearted to follow his instructions and will never learn it. And when she almost cries with despair he says: "If any boy says you can't cane I will blood him".

But the worst of their keeping school is that Phoebe has quickly lost her good looks and is growing into a careworn old girl. After an absence of ten years Captain V. Brown comes back and on paying a visit to his former friends, he is shocked at the change in Miss Phoebe's appearance. All her pretty curls are hidden under a cap, her brilliant complexion is gone, she is a sedate old lady. He never thought he would find things changed so much and has even come with cards for a ball that is going to be given. But she refuses, thinking herself too old. She is thirty. And now B. steps in and takes a risky step and makes it all go off like a shot. And the curious thing about it is, that though we almost know for certain that such things cannot happen, we accept it from him and read on and on, fascinated, and eager to know how it all will end. There is another great transformation scene. Miss Phoebe all of a sudden has enough of her sedateness and her demureness, and is advised and instigated by their faithful servant Patty. She rejuvenates herself, letting her curls down and dressing young again, and becomes so dashing and defying in her appearance that she passes for a young niece of hers, Miss Livvy. She goes to the ball and sets up audacious flirtations with all the young and old men and of course with Captain Brown himself. She expects Captain Brown will go down on his knees before her, but he only sees in her the niece of Miss

Phoebe, and thinks it a pity that she is such a heartless flirt. He tells her so and informs her at the same time that he dearly loves Phoebe, old and careworn and unattractive though she has grown. Now Phoebe is in a nice quandary and thinks she has spoiled it all. But everything comes all right. Miss Livvy the niece is supposed to be ill and in the end bundled out of the house by Brown himself. Barrie juggles and tricks us with his language, as he loves to do, so that in the end we do not know whether he did not mean Miss Livvy as a fictitious, symbolical person, representing heartless youth and whether Captain Brown did not understand and see through the trick from the very beginning.

There remain to be discussed *Alice-sit-by-the-Fire* and *What Every Woman Knows*. In the former, Alice, the mother of two almost grown up children and one baby is, together with her daughter, the pivot of the play. She has lived with her husband in India for some time and they are expected back when the play opens. Their two elder children, Amy, a rather exalted young thing of about seventeen, and Cosmo her brother, aged thirteen, dressed in naval uniform, are speculating about their parents whom they have not seen for several years. What Cosmo dreads above all things is a sentimental father who will try to kiss him, whilst Amy is in doubts about what sort of a mother hers will be. They both wonder how their baby sister of two will behave, whether she will prefer her nurse who has had her since she was two months old to her mother. The parents and especially the mother, are just as much fluttered about what kind of a girl their Amy will be. Alice is a pretty woman of forty, with a heart as fresh and young as if it were her daughter's. Her great anxiety is that her daughter may not like her, for she is hungry for the love of her children whom she has missed so many years.

The meeting between the parents and the children comes off in a rather strained way, even with the baby. They have all of them been out of practice for such a long time. Only baby seems to have taken to the Colonel. It is all very painful, both to parents and children, but we really pity Mrs. Grey Alice most of all. She is doing her best so much and her children's and her own apparent coldness cuts her to the heart, as it is really called forth by her fear of being too demonstrative and the children's ignorance of their mother. The result of their meeting is that she smacks Cosmo's face, because she thinks he insults her and shakes Amy when Amy drives her to desperation by pretending she has a friend whom her mother may not know about. Then Stephen Rollo, their old friend, is ushered in and Alice receives him in her warm and friendly way and chaffs with him and promises to visit him with her husband. But to the silly sentimental eyes and ears of Amy and her inseparable friend Ginevra who have just had their first week of sensational plays, the innocent meeting appeared like a guilty rendez-vous and the poor girls are miserable and heartbroken and do not know what to do to save the honour of Amy's mother. In their dear stupid romantic little heads a plan ripens. Amy in order to save her mother follows up the advice of old-fashioned stage romance, and in her best dress goes all alone to Stephen Rollo's rooms at night. There Barrie revels in a most delightful denouement of sweetness, naughtiness and misunderstanding mixed, so that in the end we do not know whether Alice knew that Amy knew or Stephen knew that Alice knew, or whether anybody knew that anybody else knew, but the only thing we do know is that Alice is the sweetest little mother existing, that every one who sees her must love her and that Barrie has described her as he only can. Her last speech typifies her. Her daughter is engaged.

Alice: "It's summer done, autumn begun. Farewell summer, we don't know you any more. My girl and I are like the little figures in the weather-house; when Amy comes out, Alice goes in. Alice Sit-by-the-Fire henceforth. The moon is full to-night, Robert, but isn't looking for me any more. Taxis farewell — advance four-wheelers. I had a beautiful husband once, black as the raven was his hair — Pretty Robert, farewell. Farewell Alice that was; it's all over my dear. I always had a weakness for you; but now you must really go; make way there for the old lady!"

"What Every Woman Knows!" How practical it sounds and prosaic and matter-of-fact. It almost reads like an advertisement of a much praised and much needed article of food or dress. And the play begins with stern matter of factness of the strictest rigidity. A typical Scotch family of hard workers who have grown rich, Alick the father, with his two bachelor sons David and James and their sister Maggie. Maggie is not good-looking and not so very young any more, she has a soft Scotch voice and a more resolute manner than is perhaps fitting to her plainness, Barrie says of her. But she is loved by her father and brothers with a love that is touching and though very matter-of-fact and prosaic, romantic again in its deep tenderness. The minister on whom she had set her heart does not ask her and the brothers understanding her disappointment try to make up for it in their stupid but well-meant way by buying her a muff and a gold watch, as if it could make her forget her neglected love. Their one anxiety is, that Maggie will be an old-maid. Now Barrie brings in an eligible young man for her in a most wonderful way. There comes a burglar to the house, who steals in at nights, only in order to read their books. As they are rich, they have a book-case full of them, and none of them ever reads a single one. The poor young man, a penniless student, who is a railway-porter in the day-time, hungers for knowledge. When he is caught in the act of reading on the sly, he explains his case and in their practical Scotch heads an excellent plan ripens. They make a compact with him. They are to give him money in order to finish his studies and when he is ready, he is to marry their sister. He accepts in his eagerness to study, and Maggie accepts, probably, because she loves the young man, from the moment she has set eyes upon him. The compact is binding for John Shand, the young man, but leaves Maggie free to accept or refuse him at the end of his study.

The following act brings us in the midst of election scenes. John, risen on the social ladder, is making electioneering speeches at Glasgow and is on the point of being chosen. Maggie is his right hand, that is to say, she is clever, helps him with his speeches, puts the finishing touches to them and makes his work stand out from the rest of his fellow-workers, adds the special touch of genius, which he misses. He only possesses the brains. But she helps him in such a way, that he is not aware of it and thinks himself the inspired fellow he is not. He has accepted Maggie as a matter of course, as the result of his bargain. Maggie in her nobleness of mind had given him an extra year of freedom to prepare for his parliamentary career and even at the end of that year she had wanted to give him his freedom, should he have desired so. But he had accepted her, though he had never been in love with her. Now that he is becoming the great man, he comes in contact with society ladies, who flatter him and make much of him. He succumbs to the temptation and thinks himself in love with one of them, Lady Sybil Tenderden, whom he met with her aunt the Comtesse de la Brière. The latter, a witty Frenchwoman, at once sees through John and Maggie and grows very fond of her Scotchby or

Miss Pin, as she likes to call Maggie. Maggie has seen all this love-making coming on and very painful situations ensue, e. g. when the brothers come on the second anniversary of John and Maggie's marriage and John has forgotten all about it and bought a present for his lady-love. But Maggie who by chance has got to know it, protects and scourges John at the same time, by saying he bought a pendant for her; only she cannot find it at present, must have mislaid it somewhere. Lady Sybil grasping the horribly painful situation, hands her the pendant unseen. But the atmosphere grows too tense and John and Sybil confess their love. The brothers are horrified, want to save him for their Maggie, but Maggie implores them to leave the situation in her hands, as she knows how to deal with it.

And she does know how to deal with it. She sends her brothers off and talks with John and Sybil as if it were the most natural thing in the world and quite a matter-of-fact affair. Only she tells Lady Sybil that it is awkward for her to go away at once, that she should like to wait till the laundry has come home and to John she says it would be a pity to make it public, before his speech at Leeds has come off, as that will probably procure him a seat in the cabinet. So she makes the Comtesse de la Brière invite him and Lady Sybil. Then he has time to prepare his speech and gets to know Lady Sybil better. And clever little trickster that she is, she saw from the very beginning that Lady Sybil would never make him a good wife, that she is only a pretty doll, but lacks the fine humour and cannot give the inspiration John unconsciously wants for his work, which is only brainy and nothing more. So when the speech he and Lady Sybil prepared together is finished it is disapproved of by Mr. Senables, a member of the Cabinet who is interested in John and wants to promote him. The speech is wanting in the indefinable little somethings, the Shandyisms, as they have been called, which used to make his speeches stand out from among those of others.

Now Maggie appears upon the scene, to make the final arrangements between John, Lady Sybil and herself. She has heard of the speech, and has brought one with her, full of her own sparkling wit, which she wants to pass off as a revised speech of John's. John is non-plussed at first; Lady Sybil is in despair, but Maggie's matter-of-fact way brings her to the confession that after having been together with S. for a whole month, she is utterly bored by him. She has found out that she did not really love him. And then Maggie sweetly and modestly comes to take up her place by John's side, by the husband she adores, whose weak points she knows, but can forgive because of her great love for him. She describes their relation so well when saying: "Every man who is high up loves to think that he has done it all himself, and the wife smiles and lets it go at that. It is our only joke. Every woman knows that". And then she implores John to laugh at her sweet joke. John, who is quite broken and humiliated by such true and splendid love, fortunately for Maggie, breaks into a bright laugh. And here the play ends.

In *What Every Woman Knows* we have Barrie at his best. Delightful is the way in which he gets at the weaknesses and the curious characteristics of the Scotch, without the slightest admixture of malice. It took a Scotchman to describe them with so much loving insight. Maggie and her relations and John Shand are touched off to the life in their remarkable blend of matter-of-factness and honest, deep sentiment. Maggie is the pivot of the play; all the men at home adore her, and wish her happy and honoured in marriage. Then John is thrust into her life, with his practical ambition,

and his hard fight for advancement in his career; who had, as Maggie put it, missed the prettiest thing in the world, romance, the fun with the lasses, the Saturdays of life — and who never, until the crowning moment of the play, knows with how great love Maggie has encircled him.

Taking together the five plays here sketched in bare outline, they have, each of them, some great truth to reveal that is of supreme value in life. However, when reading or seeing them, we are hardly aware of their seriousness, but are fascinated most by their sparkling wit. They provoke an occasional tear, but oftenest their effect is laughter — not the silly guffaw at horseplay — but the healthy laugh or the quiet smile that is born from the enjoyment of the good and noble things of Earth.

L. SNITSLAAR.

Notes and News.

English Association in Holland. The Association is entering on its third year under very auspicious circumstances. It has just registered the first signal success of its efforts to contribute towards the improvement of facilities for the scientific study of English. The number of its local branches is increasing; and the Executive Committee is in a position to announce a series of interesting lectures by well-known speakers for several months ahead.

The first of these is being given by Mr. Allen S. Walker, Hon. Secretary of the British Archaeological Association. He will be remembered by those who have attended the courses at Bedford College, both for his lectures and his excursions to places of interest in London. In the report on the Holiday Courses of Messrs. Ripman and Jones inserted in Engl. Studies I, pp. 177—180, the following reference to his work occurs: "The way in which Mr. Walker conducted a party of over two hundred over these various buildings (Tower, Guildhall, etc.), how he made himself understood by every one of them, called their attention to the principal parts, was simply splendid."

Mr. Walker will lecture on *London, the Capital of England, the Story of its Birth and Growth*. The lectures will be illustrated by lantern slides. The dates have been fixed as follows: Groningen 5 October, Utrecht 6 October, Haarlem 7 October, The Hague 8 October, Nijmegen 11 October, Amsterdam 12 October, Rotterdam 13 October.

The majority of branches will receive a second lecturer in November, probably Mr. Adair, Reader in Modern History at University College, London. Particulars, when settled, will be communicated by the local secretaries.

As has been already announced, Mr. Compton Mackenzie is expected to come in February, and Mr. G. K. Chesterton has consented to lecture some time next spring.

A new local branch has been formed at Nijmegen, with an initial membership of well over one hundred. The Committee consists of Mr. F. H. Hague, chairman; Miss A. H. A. Koch, hon. secretary and treasurer, Sloetstraat 10; Mrs. N. Schlimmer-van Oppen, Mr. D. van Bruggen and Mr. R. W. Zandvoort.