

# Dictionary of Literary Biography

## William Archer

(23 September 1856-27 December 1924)

Martin Quinn

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PRODUCTIONS: *Quicksands; or, The Pillars of Society*, translated and adapted from Henrik Ibsen's play, 15 December 1880, Gaiety Theatre, London, 1 [performance];

*A Doll's House*, translated from Ibsen's play, 7 June 1889, Novelty Theatre, London, 20;

*Pillars of Society*, translated from Ibsen's play, 17 July 1889, Criterion Theatre, London, 1;

*Ghosts*, translated from Ibsen's play, 13 March 1891, Royalty Theatre, London, 1;

*A Visit*, 4 March 1892, Royalty Theatre, London;

*The Master Builder*, translated by Archer and Edmund Gosse from Ibsen's play, 20 February 1893, Trafalgar Square Theatre (transferred 6 March 1893 to Vaudeville Theatre), London, 37;

*An Enemy of the People*, translated from Ibsen's play, 14 June 1893, Haymarket Theatre, London, 7;

*Little Eyolf*, translated from Ibsen's play, 23 November 1896, Avenue Theatre, London, 24;

*John Gabriel Borkman*, translated from Ibsen's play, 3 May 1897, Strand Theatre, London, 5;

*When We Dead Awaken*, translated from Ibsen's play, 25 January 1903, Imperial Theatre, London, 2;

*Hannele*, translated from Gerhart Hauptmann's play, 12 April 1908, Scala, London, 1;

*Peer Gynt*, translated from Ibsen's play, 26 February 1911, Rehcaral Theatre, London, 1;

*The Pretenders*, translated from Ibsen's play, 13 February 1913, Haymarket Theatre, London, 35;

*The Green Goddess*, 27 December 1920, Walnut Street Theater, Philadelphia; 18 January 1921, Booth Theater, New York, 440; 6 September 1923, St. James's Theatre, London, 416;

*The Samurai*, 4 December 1923, Hippodrome Theatre, Bristol;

*The Joy Ride*, 18 May 1925, Prince's Theatre, Manchester; 8 February 1926, Q Theatre, London.

SELECTED BOOKS: *English Dramatists of To-Day* (London: Sampson Low, 1882);

*Henry Irving, Actor and Manager: A Critical Study* (London: Field & Tuer, 1883);

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*Masks or Faces? A Study in the Psychology of Acting* (London: Longmans, 1888);

*William Charles Macready* (London: Kegan Paul, 1890);

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*America To-Day* (New York: Scribners, 1899; London: Heinemann, 1900);

*Poets of the Younger Generation* (London & New York: John Lane, 1902);

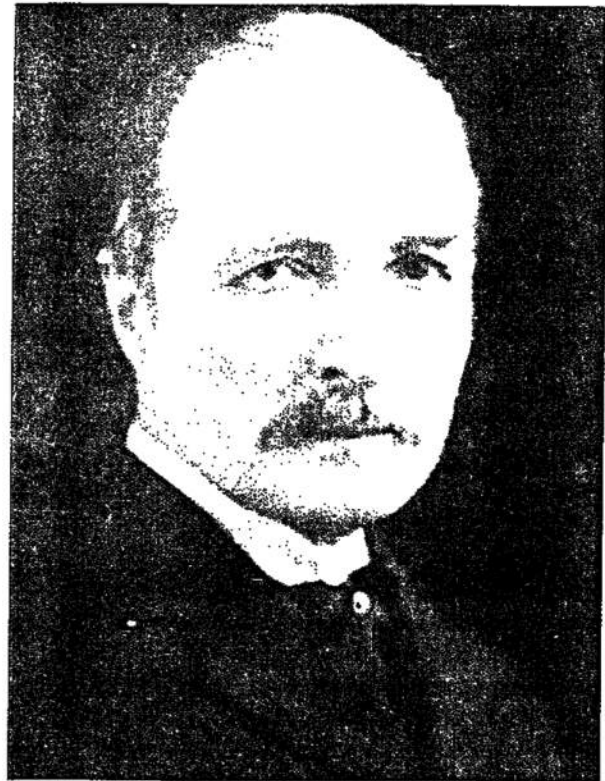
*Real Conversations* (London: Heinemann, 1904);

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- vately printed, 1904); republished as *A National Theatre: Scheme and Estimates* (London: Duckworth, 1907); revised by Barker as *A National Theatre* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1930);
- Some Com[m]on Objections*, 3 parts (London: Simplified Spelling Society, 1908-1909);
- Through Afro-America: An English Reading of the Race Problem* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1910; New York: Dutton, 1910);
- The Life, Trial, and Death of Francisco Ferrer* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1911; New York: Moffat, Yard, 1911);
- The Great Analysis: A Plea for a Rational World-Order* (London: Methuen, 1912; New York: Scribners, 1912);
- Play-Making: A Manual of Craftsmanship* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1912; Boston: Small, Maynard, 1912);
- Knowledge and Character: The Straight Road in Education* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1916);
- India and the Future* (London: Hutchinson, 1917; New York: Knopf, 1918);
- War is War; or, The Germans in Belgium: A Drama of 1914* (London: Duckworth, 1919; New York: Brentano's, 1919);
- The Green Goddess* (New York: Knopf, 1921; London: Heinemann, 1923);
- The Old Drama and the New: An Essay in Re-Valuation* (London: Heinemann, 1923; Boston: Small, Maynard, 1923);
- William Archer as Rationalist*, edited by J. M. Robertson (London: Watts, 1925);
- Three Plays by William Archer* (London: Constable, 1927; New York: Holt, 1927)—includes *Martha Washington*, *Beatriz Juana*, and *Lidia*;
- On Dreams*, edited by Theodore Besterman (London: Methuen, 1935);
- Tourist to the Antipodes: William Archer's 'Australian Journey, 1876-77,'* edited by Raymond Stanley (St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1977).

Eminent drama critic, translator, and journalist, William Archer achieved unexpected recognition at the age of sixty-five as the author of a successful formula melodrama, *The Green Goddess* (1920). Several other plays of his were rarely produced. By training a lawyer and by temperament more scholar-critic than creative artist (which is not to gainsay that he had written a novel, a short story, and a quantity of occasional poetry), Archer permanently affected the course of English drama through his translation and dogged, articulate de-

fense of Henrik Ibsen in the 1880s and 1890s. Moreover, his authorship of numerous influential books on theatrical history and theory, his long advocacy of a national theater, his mastery of at least four Continental literatures, and his connections with many of the literary and dramatic personages of his day secure Archer's position in the annals of the drama.



William Archer

Born in Perth, Scotland, Archer acquired his knowledge of Scandinavian languages during summer visits with grandparents who had migrated to Norway in 1825. While still at Edinburgh University being educated for the bar, Archer began to write for the *Edinburgh Evening News*; he took an M.A. in 1876. In the same year he left on the first of several "globe trots," staying with Australian cousins for several months before buying steerage passage from Melbourne to San Francisco. He stopped briefly to work as a journalist in California, crossed the Great Plains a year after Custer's cavalry met its fate at the Little Bighorn, and proceeded to New York, then to Edinburgh—having completed his circumlocution, or "ramble round" as he termed it, in twelve months. Once home he again fell to journalism. With his interest in drama on the ascendant and his enthusiasm for the bar on the decline,

he went to London at the age of twenty-two, in 1878, and eventually became drama critic on the *Figaro*.

Archer's public image was that of a dour Scot, humorless, hard, logical, with a temperament of almost icy reserve. His stiff, high collars gave him the air, George Bernard Shaw wrote, of having his head stuck in a jampot. Physically, he was handsome, tall, well-built, and he was addicted to black, buttoned-up suits—carrying himself with formal dignity; for most of his life he sported a trim, slightly drooping mustache. Despite his projection of a stoic manner he was in fact a highly emotional, kindly, often painfully shy man with little inclination for promoting himself; the theater was for him indeed a playhouse, a kind of internalized fantasy-land which became the main passion of his life. Archer went to the theater in much the same outwardly solemn mood as his Glasite Scottish ancestors had gone to church; he sat in the pit or balcony with equanimity; between acts he occupied himself with a book, and was never seen to take a drink. If the performance failed to hold his interest, he nodded off to sleep, which considering the abominable quality of most fin de siècle London theatrics was an act of critical protest in itself.

Having grown up bilingual in English and Norwegian, Archer became an early and ardent champion of Henrik Ibsen. He first made acquaintance with Ibsen's work at a Scandinavian chocolate party in 1873 after overhearing a woman refer to *Love's Comedy* in Norwegian as *glimrende vittig*, or "brilliantly witty." Astounded that anything in Norwegian could be described in such terms, he purchased the book, became instantly captivated, and awaited impatiently the publication of Ibsen's next play. When *The Pillars of Society* appeared in 1877, he made a quick, enthusiastic translation which, with less felicity, he dubbed "The Supports of Society." In March 1878 he wrote an analysis of the play with extracts for *The Mirror of Literature*. Failing to find a publisher for the whole translated work, he prepared a more careful but still freely adapted version which received a single matinee performance at the Gaiety Theatre in December 1880 under the title *Quicksands*. Significantly, this was the first production of an Ibsen play in Britain, but it would be years before another was attempted.

In the meantime Archer found an opportunity to present himself to Ibsen in Rome during December 1881, when the controversy over *Ghosts* was at its height in Europe. Three years later he met George Bernard Shaw, whom he discovered poring over the works of Wagner and Marx in the British Museum. Their friendship soon led to Archer's

securing Shaw a post as book reviewer on the *Pall Mall Gazette* and subsequently as art and music critic on the *World*, a newspaper for which Archer covered the London theater during the next quarter century. Feeling "a certain hankering after the rewards, if not the glories, of the playwright," Archer proposed a collaboration with Shaw: the Scot to furnish the action as the Dubliner supplied dialogue to a play tentatively entitled "Rhinegold" that would eventually become *Widowers' Houses*. However, upon discovering that Shaw had consumed the entire plot in the first act (Shaw claimed that he was well into the second), Archer despaired and promptly cancelled the enterprise. Stung by his friend's decision, Shaw set the manuscript aside for several years, thus delaying his debut as a dramatist for nearly a decade until *Widowers' Houses* was performed by J. T. Grein's Independent Theatre in 1892. (Several months later in a preface to the play, Shaw accepted Archer's own wry account, which had appeared in the *World*, of the aborted project.)

In effect, the abandoned collaboration proved a greater setback for Archer, who at the time still nurtured creative aspirations. Several months before the premiere of *Widowers' Houses*, a play by Archer was apparently performed by the Independent Theatre Society; unfortunately, the piece, entitled *A Visit*, seems to have been either lost or destroyed. Although they never attempted another formal partnership (Archer, though, would suggest one toward the end of his life), Archer and Shaw found themselves closely associated, as allies or opponents, in a number of campaigns and controversies (such as spelling reform, stage censorship, the national theater, and the abridgment of Shakespeare), reviewing and prefacing each other's works, and generally rolling one another's logs during their forty-year friendship.

Moreover, Archer introduced Ibsen's work to Shaw and thereby enlisted a dedicated partisan, later writing that he found in Ibsen "essentially a kindred spirit of Shaw—a paradoxist, a sort of Devil's Advocate, who goes about picking holes in every 'well-known fact' . . . looking at the teeth of every 'normally built truth' and proclaiming it too old to pass any longer." Archer's role as the preeminent defender of Ibsen against the likes of Clement Scott is widely acknowledged; his article "The Mausoleum of Ibsen," following his own empirical practice, holds the mirror up to the vituperative English press which greeted such pioneering works as *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts*, *The Wild Duck*, and *Rosmersholm* in the following style: "'morbid and unwholesome' . . . 'Strained deductions . . . pretentious in-

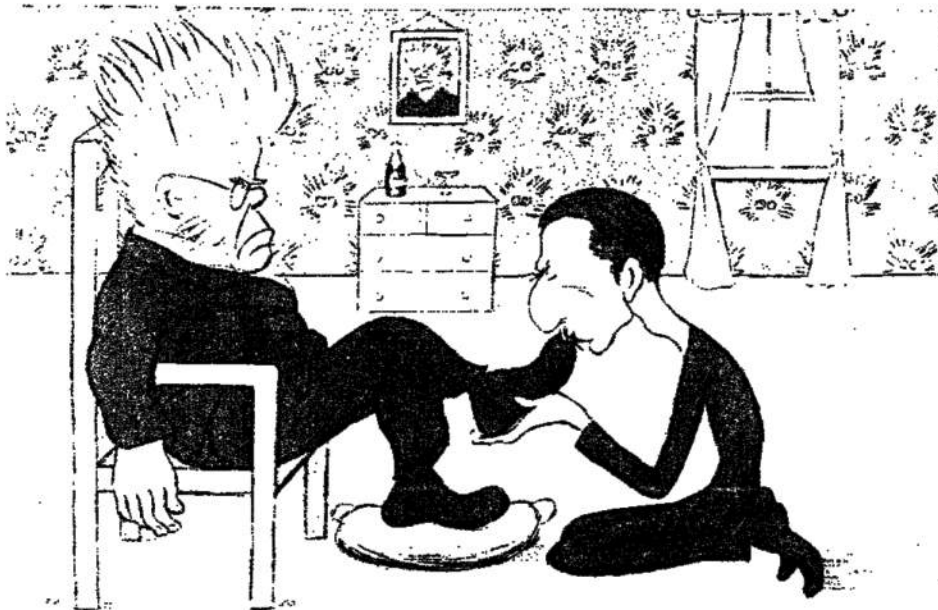
conclusiveness' . . . . 'unnatural, immoral and . . . undramatic' . . . . 'utterly preposterous . . . Ibsen is . . . nothing but a compiler of rather disagreeable eccentricities' . . . . 'Brain sick extravagances' . . . . 'Must nauseate any properly-constituted person' . . . . 'Gruesome . . . repulsive drama' . . . . 'Studies in insanity best fitted for the lecture room in Bedlam' . . . . 'morbid, impracticable rubbish.' " Archer's indictment of the "frantic," "frumious" anti-Ibsenites applied equally to the style of theatrical criticism of the day, so often purely rhetorical and ill-informed, and thus distinct from Archer's own prose—a model of direct, controlled high-mindedness, if occasionally Victorian in its rigorous formality. Moreover, it is clear that Archer was always more interested in the drama as an intellectual product than as a vehicle for acting; texts that relied on an actor to give them meaning, he maintained, were not literature. As a panegyrist of Ibsen and a sometime poet, Archer is lesser known. On the verso of an 1891 letter (from Shaw), Archer scrawled the following lines to the suicide Hedda Gabler:

There, there she lies, not "flushed" but  
  "fearless" now,  
One purpling puncture in her wax-white  
  brow,  
Stilled are the wheels of thought that whirled  
  so fast  
The quivering nerves are anodyne at last.

Shaw insisted that Archer might have risen to distinction as a poet and dramatist had destiny not "other fish for him to fry."

Aside from providing translated texts and occasionally attending rehearsals, Archer had remarkably little to do with actual productions of Ibsen's plays. He exhibited scarcely any curiosity about behind-the-scenes stagecraft and made it a staunch practice never to review an Ibsen premiere with which he was associated as translator. Although Archer sometimes found himself castigated as Ibsen's virtual plenipotentiary in England, his translations emerged in their day as definitive. As Shaw wrote, the "Archer-Ibsen had seized the public imagination . . . and would beat any other brand of Ibsen in English." Moreover, Archer recognized that in Ibsen's supposed defects—"pessimism, discord, and 'lack of idealism'"—lay much of the dramatist's strengths and the revolutionary qualities that the translator sought to convey.

Two of Archer's books, *Masks or Faces?* (1888) and *Play-Making* (1912), reveal his particular devotion to the theater. *Masks or Faces?* is conceived as a pragmatic rejoinder to Denis Diderot's famous paradox that "to move the audience the actor must himself remain unmoved." Submitting this anti-emotionalist point of view to systematic, empirical investigation, Archer distributed elaborate questionnaires to leading actors and actresses of the day—Henry Irving, the Bancrofts, the Kendals, Sarah Bernhardt, Ellen Terry, Janet Achurch, To-



*"Henrik Ibsen, receiving Mr. William Archer in audience," by Max Beerbohm*



masso Salvini, and others—sifting and analyzing their responses. In *Play-Making* Archer compiled a manual of practical suggestions to the aspiring playwright which he hoped would be of interest to the master as well. Asserting that there could be no absolute rules for writing a play, and fully aware of the danger of falling into pedantry or quackery, Archer mainly discusses structural considerations, citing examples from Ibsen, Pinero, Shakespeare, Shaw, and others (in that order of frequency). He concedes that like most critics he is a “stickit” playwright,” but insists that “on the other hand, there is nothing to show that, if I were a creative artist, I should be a good mentor for beginners.”

Aside from his twelve-volume edition of Ibsen (1906-1912) and more than a dozen separate volumes on the theater in general (including two biographical-critical studies and three historical and theoretical works), Archer was prolific in other areas. Four books were a direct result of his travels, two of them about America, a country that aroused his consistent enthusiasm. In 1911, Archer journeyed on commission from *McClure's Magazine* to Spain to report on the prosecution of a dissident educator. *The Life, Trial, and Death of Francisco Ferrer* (1911) is still the best source in English on the event, one of a chain of occurrences which led eventually to the Spanish civil war. A voyage to India a few years later produced an illustrated tome entitled *India and the Future* (1917), which succeeded in raising a furor among nationalists and colonialists alike.

Busy as he always was, Archer typically took pains to encourage budding talent. In 1902 he produced *Poets of the Younger Generation*, more than 500 pages of poems and commentary which gave visibility to many hitherto obscure artists in the company of such luminaries as Housman, Kipling, and Yeats. During World War I Archer saw through the press a collection of poems by a young man who had been killed in action, generously contributing a lengthy introduction. But no doubt the most famous young writer whose cause Archer sponsored was the eighteen-year-old James Joyce, to whom Archer relayed Ibsen's personal thanks for a sensitive essay the university student had written for the *Fortnightly Review* (Joyce's first critical publication). Joyce's response was immediate and effusively appreciative: “the words of Ibsen I shall keep in my heart all my life.” In the summer of 1900 Joyce sent the critic the manuscript of a play in the manner of Ibsen to which Archer appended a full-dress analysis, pronouncing that although the drama seemed unworkable, “You seem to me to have

talent—possibly more than talent.” Later Archer corrected flaws in what became *Chamber Music* (1907) and paternally dissuaded Joyce from his plan to study medicine in Paris while simultaneously giving English lessons: “Forgive my frankness. It is, of course, no business of mine; but I am sure you are making a mistake.” Joyce continued to send Archer copies of his works, *Dubliners* (1914) and then *Exiles* (1918), but Archer seemed to have lost sympathy with the protege's mature productions. Nonetheless, Joyce never forgot the early consideration and, when Archer died in 1924, remarked, “I am sorry to see that Mr. William Archer is dead. He was very kind to me at one time. I am afraid he forgot it and me.”

Archer's relations with other writers were many and varied; he was associated at one time or another with virtually every author of note in Britain, and several from the Continent and America. Robert Louis Stevenson he loved, Oscar Wilde he praised, Arthur Wing Pinero, Henry Arthur Jones, Joseph Conrad, Thomas Hardy, William Butler Yeats, Mark Twain, James M. Barrie, Max Beerbohm, he touched them all. And they knew him, feeling his influence and sometimes responding with mixed reactions. Beerbohm once drew a cruel caricature of Archer genuflecting slavishly before a pompously enthroned Ibsen, but elsewhere privately praised “Archer's very very true and just critiques” and defense of “gentle Oscar.” Jones confided to his daughter, “I know of no critic who can safely be trusted to arrive at a wrong effect with so much precision and honest painstaking effort as Mr. William Archer.” Poet Rupert Brooke was also of two minds about Archer, writing from Rugby in 1909, “William Archer. A superb figure. Whiskers, and no brains; but infinite mid-Victorian kindness. Do you know him?” A more acerbic view came from Sean O'Casey in 1937: “Read the bastard Archer's book, and then you'll realize how the great live and the mean die. ‘He who saves his life shall lose it’ ” (a likely reference to Archer's resolve a year before his death not to attempt a complete history of English dramatic literature owing to advancing age). Whatever can be said for or against Archer, in an era when theater critics were regularly bought with chicken, champagne, and pretty actresses, he was presumed incorruptible and such an incarnation of rectitude that this dominant trait was accessible to burlesque. Nevertheless, due partly to Henry James's biographer Leon Edel, rumors persist that Archer led for several years a double life with the beautiful Ibsenite actress Elizabeth Robins.

Like many who survived the conflict, Archer

was radically shaken by World War I. So fervent were his patriotic feelings that he could scarcely be restrained from service at the front—though he was fifty-eight in 1914. Soldiering was part of the family tradition: brother, fellow translator, and biographer Charles was colonel of a Gurkha regiment in India; and Archer's son, whom Robert Louis Stevenson dubbed "Tomarcher" in his famous letter to the boy, became an officer in the trenches. Not accepted by the army, Archer turned his formidable mind and knowledge of European languages to the service of the Propaganda Ministry, producing a series of lengthy monographs in defense of civilization against the presumed barbarities of the "Huns." Thus throughout the bitter years of the war the following curious titles appeared: "The Thirteen Days, July 23-August 4, 1914: A Chronicle and Interpretation"; "501 Gems of German Thought"; "An Die Neutralen" ("To Neutral Peacelovers: A Plea for Patience"); "The Villain of the World-Tragedy: A letter to Professor Ulrich von Mollendorf"; "The Pirate's Progress: A Short History of the U-Boat"; and "The Peace-President: A Brief Appreciation." The tragedy of the conflict eventually struck Archer personally. In the spring of 1918, his only child, Tom, who had just returned from a "deliriously happy honeymoon in Ireland," was killed in action. As Shaw poignantly expressed his friend's grief, Tom "left his young widow to take his place in his parents' affections, the newly found daughter succeeding to the newly lost beloved son. . . . Yet Archer was loth to let the son go." Like Arthur Conan Doyle and other bereaved parents, he took an interest in superrational research, spiritualism, parapsychology, psychoanalysis, dreams, and even experimented with posthumous conversations through mediums—unsuccessfully—in his effort to reach Tom.

Yet as the pain of loss and war abated, Archer channeled his energies into renewed labor—this time into original drama as well. In 1919 his *War; or, The Germans in Belgium: A Drama of 1914* was published. The work is a three-act historical play depicting the military occupation of a typical Belgian village, or as Archer described it, "the catastrophic descent from unapprehensive serenity to devastation, decimation and ruin." The play focuses on the reprisals meted out to the villagers following what is construed as a franc-tireur attack on German sentries. The men of the village are rounded up; ten—including the Burgomaster—are selected to be shot while the rest are destined for prison camps in Germany. Despite the pleas of the villagers and the protest of a sympathetic German officer,

Lieutenant Kessler, who commits suicide on the spot rather than give the order to fire, the sentence is carried out as the curtain falls. The closing stage direction offers a naturalistic description of twitching limbs in the resulting carnage. Probably Archer's own grief is dramatized in the final scene as a middle-aged father rushes from the crowd to offer himself in place of his doomed eighteen-year-old son; the father is forcibly restrained. Of this play, conceived as an indictment of wartime brutality and ruthlessness, Shaw opined that had either side done no more than Archer represented they would have been veritable armies of angels. Archer himself understood that when he tried to write drama he produced "an essay cut into lengths and delivered by penny-in-the-slot puppets." Although Archer maintained that certain superficial resemblances to Maurice Maeterlinck's *Burgomaster of Stilemonde* were coincidental (he had earlier translated three of Maeterlinck's plays), he further appreciated that the armistice had "queered his pitch," removing any near possibility that the play would see the footlights. Dropping the war as a subject, he began to work other veins.

In September 1919 Archer wrote excitedly to Shaw that "a tolerably complete scheme for a romantic melodrama" had come to him in a dream and lacked only the Shavian touch to become "infallibly THE PLAY OF THE CENTURY." With an eye to luring his old colleague into a potentially lucrative partnership (he confessed that there was no other object in mind than to make money), Archer outlined the plot of what would become his only box-office success, *The Green Goddess*. Two Englishmen and a woman would escape from a plane wreck to find themselves unwilling guests of an elusively charming Himalayan raja who hopes to exchange them for three of his countrymen whom the British are about to execute. Archer explained why thus far he had failed to distinguish himself as a playwright: "I have no power either of character-drawing or of writing dialogue. If a man is born without hands, it is quite unnecessary to prove a psychological-philosophical explanation of his not playing the piano." Unimpressed by his friend's protests of incompetence, Shaw declined the offer and urged him to go it alone. *The Green Goddess* was to be Archer's as *Widowers' Houses* had been Shaw's. The play was first presented in Philadelphia, with George Arliss as the raja, at the opening of the reconstructed Walnut Street Theater on 27 December 1920 and moved to New York the next month. Following a very successful two-year run in America, the melodrama opened at the St. James in



*A scene from the 1923 London production of The Green Goddess*

London on 6 September 1923, where it played for another year. After the emergence of talking pictures, the play was filmed in 1929 with Arliss again cast in the lead. *The Green Goddess* was warmly received by the public and taken as evidence that Archer the renowned critic not only knew his business but could have become a noted playwright had he so chosen. Theater aficionados saw no little irony in the circumstance that Archer, the champion of Ibsen and a herald of the new drama, should have chosen to capitalize on what was after all mere melodrama. Scholars like Allardyce Nicoll suggested that the critic had simply abandoned Ibsen. Archer, of course, knew his limitations and justified his reversion to the formulas of French dramatist Augustin Eugene Scribe on the grounds that he had no eye for character. As for Ibsen, Archer maintained that he had always responded more to the Norwegian's poetry than to his ideas, rightly insisting that the "old min" was "as convinced a constructor as Sardou," the popular nineteenth-century French playwright.

The success of *The Green Goddess* assured, Archer set to work on several other plays—three of which have survived. One was *Martha Washington: A Play in Eight Scenes*, published posthumously in *Three Plays by William Archer* (1927) with a foreword

by Shaw. The work traces the life of America's prototypical "first lady" from her Tidewater Virginia marriage to Col. George Washington in 1759 through the vicissitudes of the Revolution and hardships of Valley Forge to the former president's death at Mount Vernon in 1799. Amid suggestions that a new world order will prevail with the reconciliation of England and her former colony, the play captures something of the sweep of historical events with cameo appearances by Benedict Arnold and Patrick Henry and indirect glimpses of Lafayette and John André. However, it is hard to imagine the work as anything other than a minor historical pageant.

With the war, melodrama, and historical subjects out of his system, Archer turned to Elizabethan and Jacobean drama for themes that he would attempt to treat "in a more or less modern manner." His next two plays, *Beatriz Juana* and *Lidia*, both written in blank verse, were the products of a lifelong concern with the need for dramatic criticism to operate, as he wrote in his preface, "not by precept, but by example." The plays were collected in *Three Plays by William Archer*. They represent a continuation of his effort during a series of lectures at King's College in 1920 (republished in *The Old Drama and the New*, 1923) to correct the focus of



early nineteenth-century critics, preeminently Charles Lamb, upon the purely poetic rather than the dramatic qualities of the Elizabethan playwrights. In his remodeling of Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling* and Massinger's *The Great Duke of Florence*, Archer strove to extract from the works the "hidden elements of enduring vitality" which he believed that contemporary criticism had largely obscured.

*The Changeling* and Archer's *Beatriz Juana* have in common the central situation in which a Spanish noblewoman, Beatrice (Beatriz), committed by her father to marry a man she detests, enlists the cooperation of her father's steward DeFlores to murder the fiancé and so to make way for her secret lover. All goes according to plan until it is discovered that DeFlores himself lusts after Beatrice and proceeds to blackmail her unless she accedes to his wishes—whence complications ensue. Archer departs sharply from the Middleton-Rowley plot in which Beatrice commits adultery with and is finally murdered by her coconspirator, who himself commits suicide. Archer's Beatriz proves altogether more determined; and consistent with her wily nature and survivor's instincts, she wades through the blood of fiancé, husband, and the stooge DeFlores to engage yet another lover at play's end. In Archer's hands, Middleton's changeling proves no changeling whatsoever, but a veritable Lady Macbeth triumphant—a demon-woman incarnate who brooks no obstacle to her desires. Like *Martha Washington* and *Lidia*, *Beatriz Juana* was never performed.

*Lidia*, a comedy in four acts, is based on Massinger's play, in turn drawn from an old legend about a Saxon king who sends a trusted aide to reconnoiter a prospective bride; the aide reports falsely so that he may marry the woman himself. In Massinger's and in Archer's versions the plot has been further transmuted to involve the summons of Giovanni, the potentate's nephew and heir, to his sire's palace and the inevitable parting of the young man from his wise and beautiful childhood companion, the incomparable Lidia. Archer's King's College lecture on *The Great Duke of Florence* noted the play's great charm with the regret that the piece had not fallen into Shakespeare's hands, and thus achieved immortality. He further deprecated Massinger's crude dramaturgy, the unaccountable manner in which Lidia is informed of Giovanni's summons to the palace, and the clumsy effort to pass off Lidia's maid as the lady herself in order to discourage the Great Duke's attentions, a bit of farcical stage business which constituted in Archer's

view "the chief blot upon the comedy." *Lidia* is largely an academic attempt, therefore, to rectify these and other flaws.

Other original dramas by Archer, a 1923 one-act entitled *The Samurai* (perhaps a fragment of a more ambitious design) and a 1925 piece described by brother Charles as "a light and amusing 'crook-play'" called *The Joy Ride*, were performed but evidently have not survived. However, it was late for Archer to renovate completely what already had been an impressive enough career. His complaint of weariness, with which O'Casey took such violent issue, was perhaps justified. Journalism had taken its toll on Archer for forty years. Although never impoverished, he did not know real financial security until the success of *The Green Goddess* gave him an interval of unaccustomed leisure to explore creative channels. Unlike Shaw, he did not marry a millionairess, but in 1884 a woman who founded her own "Nerve Training Colony." On 17 December 1924, Archer wrote Shaw, Harley Granville Barker, and a few other close friends that he was obliged to enter the hospital in the next few days for an operation, but noted that he felt "as fit as a fiddle." He confided to Barker, though not to Shaw, his great disgust at the idea and admitted that the surgeons were planning to remove "a cyst or tumor somewhere in the region of the kidneys." He reaffirmed his comradeship with both writers, advising them that "whatever happens, let it never be said that I did not move in good society—I lunched today with the King of Norway and Prince Olaf." Just before Christmas he underwent the surgery and died a few days later.

Archer's wife, Frances, proceeded to give her late husband the traditional Christian burial he adamantly wished never to receive. From young manhood till the end Archer had been an unrepentant Rationalist, maintaining that a religion as good as Christianity could be invented any day of the week. Archer's farewell letter had been so understated that Shaw, then in Spain, was thrown into a "transport of fury" under the assumption that blundering doctors had killed his old friend. Unjust though his rage may have been, Shaw said that it carried him over his "first sense of bereavement." "When I returned to an Archer-less London," he eulogized three years later, "it seemed to me that the place had entered on a new age in which I was lagging superfluous."

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