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The Sense of Nonsense: An Annotated Edition of
Ring W. Lardner’s Short Plays

Scott A. Topping
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THE SENSE OF NONSENSE: AN ANNOTATED EDITION OF RING W. LARDNER'S SHORT PLAYS

by

Scott A. Topping

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of English

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
April 2001
This edition presents twenty-one short plays by Ring W. Lardner (1885-1933), most of which have previously been accessible only on microfilm and in special collections. No edition exclusively dedicated to Lardner’s plays has ever been published. Though Lardner is known primarily for his short stories and sports writing, he considered himself to be a playwright and lyricist. Throughout his career he wrote several full-length plays (collaborating with George Cohan and George Kaufman, among others) and hundreds of short plays and sketches from which my collection is derived. Lardner’s sensitive ear for American dialects, praised by H. L. Mencken, Carl Van Doren, and others, combines with his keen eye for the absurd in these short plays, providing a unique view of America’s Teens and Twenties. Included are representative samples of Lardner’s newspaper plays, written for his “In the Wake of the News” column in the Chicago Tribune (1913-1919), sketches written for the Ziegfeld Follies (1922), and all of the so-called nonsense plays (1922-1931) for which Lardner has received some critical attention. After a brief introduction to the life and dramatic work of Lardner, the twenty-one plays are presented in clear-text, with editorial emendations made to the non-substantive errors. A full listing of emendations and textual variants is recorded. Following the texts of the plays are extensive content notes, a complete and annotated listing of Lardner’s uncollected short plays, and a performance list of all of Lardner’s dramatic work.
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INTRODUCTION

Ring W. Lardner’s work enjoyed a rare mix of popular and critical approval during his lifetime, but over the last twenty-five years, his work has slowly begun to disappear from bookstore shelves and classroom anthologies; and as his readership has declined, so too has the attention of the critics. Lardner’s work is still in print, but most editions published in the last thirty years have been simple reproductions of earlier editions. No critical or scholarly editions of any of his works exist except one done of his “Bush” stories as a dissertation in 1972 (Keller). Of the four new collections of his work that have appeared since the 1970s, two have consisted entirely of his baseball stories. None has included his dramatic work. Only June Moon, among the full-length plays, has ever been published. Of the shorter plays, some have been collected as recently as the 1960s, but there are errors and oversights in those collections. No edition has ever focused exclusively on Lardner’s dramatic work.

If the absence of attention to Lardner in general and to his plays in particular were warranted, if it were a matter of literary merit, there would be no need for this present edition. Being difficult to find is not, in itself, a reason to be found. It is my contention that Lardner’s short plays, most of which were written to be read, rather than performed, do deserve to be collected and preserved, both for the timeless quality of their humor and for their unique perspective on American life in the Teens and Twenties. Lardner’s sensitive ear for American dialects, praised by H. L. Mencken...
and countless others, combines with his keen eye for the nonsense around him in his short plays to form many memorable scenes and lines. His literary and theatrical contemporaries enjoyed and were influenced by his short dramatic works because they knew them and sometimes performed them; but the works have never been presented to a larger audience in a manner in which they can be judged fully. This edition is an attempt to do so. Representative works from Lardner’s newspaper columns, musical revue sketches, and later nonsense plays are included, providing a full presentation of the range and progression of Lardner as playwright.

A Brief Overview of Lardner’s Non-Dramatic Work

Ring Lardner is usually referred to as humorist, columnist, sports writer, or short story writer, but rarely, if ever, as playwright or lyricist. Certainly, the more common categories in which he is placed represent the bulk of his work and the source of his wealth. He was a humorist. There is an element of humor in almost everything he wrote, and his humorous non-fiction was published in many popular magazines such as The Saturday Evening Post, Cosmopolitan, Liberty, The American, and the New Yorker. He was a sportswriter. After entering the newspaper business, quite by chance, in 1905, he wrote thousands of sports articles, first for the South Bend Times, later for The Sporting News and a number of Chicago newspapers, and finally for national syndication. Though he wrote very little about sports in the last thirteen years of his career, it was as a sportswriter that he first gained national attention, and it is still in that capacity that he is most often honored and remembered.
Receiving the J.G. Taylor Spink Award in 1963 from the Baseball Hall of Fame is one of his only writing honors. Lardner was also a successful columnist. From 1913, when he began writing “In the Wake of the News” for the *Chicago Tribune*, through the middle 1920s, when he was writing a nationally syndicated column, “Ring Lardner’s Weekly Letter,” for the Bell Syndicate, the newspaper columns were his greatest source of income. He reached millions of readers and influenced many future columnists and other writers with his style. Ernest Hemingway was among those who read Lardner’s “In the Wake of the News,” and learned by imitating Lardner’s vernacular style (Fenton 22-24). Finally, he was a master of the short story. His earlier work (from the beginning until the early 1920s), is dominated by comic stories, distinguished by their heavy use of slang vernacular, first-person narrators, and sympathetic characters. In his peak years of the 1920s, his stories, especially those in which he abandoned the familiar slang vernacular, tend to be more serious and certainly more satiric than those that preceded them. In the last few years of his life (1930-1933), most of his fiction is dark and humorless, filled with stories of loss of hope and despair. Of the one-hundred-twenty short stories that he wrote, only a few are still anthologized, “Haircut” chief among them, but it is because of these few stories that Lardner still receives some critical attention.

Critical Attention

Through the 1910s and early 1920s, when he was known primarily through his newspaper work and his baseball stories for the *Saturday Evening Post*, Lardner
gained some fans, but very little critical attention. Edmund Wilson and Virginia Woolf were among the first to see more than the simple humor provided by the semiliterate ball players in Lardner’s fiction. After reading Lardner’s famous epistolary baseball story *You Know Me, Al*, Woolf declared that Lardner was producing the best American fiction of the time, primarily because he let the characters act without authorial interference. She also recognized the importance of the baseball setting of the story, saying that the game provided "a centre" for Lardner’s American characters (1).

After F. Scott Fitzgerald prompted Lardner to collect his better short stories in a book (*How to Write Short Stories* in 1924), and Scribner’s released it and a uniform edition of his works the next year, the American critics began to take note. He received a great deal of critical attention in the late 1920s through the 1950s, though the type of attention varied. As to his literary merit, he has been hailed as a “genuine artist” by one critic (Holmes 26) and relegated to the less than literary position of a simple entertainer by another (Berryman 423). He has been hailed by Mencken for his accurate rendering of the American language and described as “essentially a comic philologist” by Carl Van Doren (177); but also considered to be a writer of “serious criticism of American life” (Schwartz 52), and “an authentic commentator on American capitalism in its frantic flowering” (Geismer 3). While Clifton Fadiman considers him to be “the coldest of American writers” (537), Sherwood Anderson credits him with demonstrating “more human sympathy” than any writer of his time (171), including Sinclair Lewis to whom he is often favorably compared. These sorts of debates about the depth and value of his work and the attitude of the author toward his characters continue to the present day. Some critical articles continue to find their
way into journals, and in 1992 a book-length criticism, *Ring Lardner and the Other*, was published.

**Lardner’s Dramatic Work**

According to tradition, when the columnist and beloved member of the Algonquin’s vicious circle, Heywood Broun, was on his death bed in 1939, his final words were: “If I pull through, I’ll remember that Ring Lardner would have lived longer if he had only written what he really wanted to write. And I will write only about horse racing, night clubs, gambling, and life” (O’Connor 224). It is true that Lardner, like Broun, never reached a point when he was able to write exclusively or even primarily for enjoyment. Lardner’s biographers, close friends, and his son believe writing “what he really wanted to write” would have meant that Lardner’s career would have been centered on music and theater rather than on journalism and short stories. The latter type of writing, the work that made Lardner famous and on which his reputation has been built, was, for the most part, and by his own admission, written to pay the bills. Throughout his life, though, while churning out seemingly endless amounts of writing for pay, he continued to write songs and plays of various sorts; he continued to practice his craft and to pursue his dream.

Perhaps the greatest irony in the life of the ironist Ring Lardner is that he found great success doing the things for which he had little personal drive and found almost no success in the field in which he desired it. As a child he, with his sister and brother, would write and act in little plays around the house. He also took a keen interest in music, mastering many instruments at a young age. When an opportunity
arose for him to use both of these talents in a local Niles, Michigan, minstrel show, he took it. In 1903, he wrote the lyrics and music for *Zanzibar*, in which he also acted and sang. Though the play itself is offensive to the modern reader, for its racial stereotyping and ethnic humor and for its too obvious puns (the Secretaries of Interior and Exterior are named Indoorso and Outdoorso, for example), Lardner’s involvement in it is a defining moment in his life and an indication of what sort of theatrical success Lardner was always seeking. By all accounts, Lardner was drifting at this stage in his life, unenthusiastic about any particular career path. After graduating from high school at the age of sixteen, he moved briefly to Chicago, where he worked as an office boy, and then, at his father’s urging, tried to continue his education at the Armour Institute in Illinois, where he failed every class but rhetoric. He left after one semester. At that point, he moved back home to Niles, Michigan to rest before taking other, mostly menial, jobs. Working on *Zanzibar* occupied that rest between jobs in a meaningful way. Lardner was able to channel his creative energies into something productive and was exhilarated by the experience. Also worth noting is that Lardner’s idea of theater became almost exclusively centered on musical comedy and musical revues from this point on. His mother had made sure he was familiar with the classics and with “serious” drama (Elder 243), but the popular theater was what called him. In his columns he referred to many serious dramatic productions, but usually to mock them or the pretensions of their audience. Until his final unfinished play, his own work was exclusively directed toward the popular theater in one way or another.
Newspaper Plays

Lardner began working for the South Bend Times in 1905, and by 1907 his sports reporting had caught the attention of the Chicago papers. His reputation as a unique and funny sports reporter continued to build as he worked for various Chicago papers and worked for a brief stint with the Sporting News and the Boston American. In 1913, the Chicago Tribune offered Lardner the column “In the Wake of the News,” a popular feature in their sporting section. Hugh E. Keogh, the former “Wake” columnist had recently died, and his replacement, Hugh Fullerton, was uncomfortable with the job. The “Wake,” as Keogh had written it, was a collection of humorous sports items and light verse; Fullerton had no love of either, and recommended Lardner, who was talented in both, for the job. Lardner’s first “Wake” columns are similar to Keogh’s in style and content. After establishing his popularity with his newspaper column, however, Lardner was able to experiment with form and subject matter; and the more the public accepted his experiments, the more he used his column to express himself in the various ways he wanted to, unconstrained by editors in the way he would later be constrained by producers. Lardner’s earliest columns in 1913 are primarily filled with short and sometimes irreverent sports commentaries and “dope,” inside information on Chicago’s sports teams and players. There are sports related verses and a few sports related dialogues. The “Wake” soon expanded in form and subject matter. By late 1914, “In the Wake of the News,” looked much less like Keogh’s column; it included letters to the editor (mostly invented), mock editorials, short stories, including many epistolary tales, and short dialogues or plays.
The subject matter of the column progressed from exclusively sports to include personal stories, political satire, news and criticism of popular entertainment, and stories of average citizens trying to understand the world around them. By the time Lardner left the "Wake" in 1919, the column had become almost exclusively dedicated to humor related to Lardner's life and nonsense.

One of the ways Lardner experimented in the "Wake" was through the use of short plays or dialogues, some of which are collected in this present edition. The majority of the early plays, whether they be realistic or more fanciful conversations, are set in the world of sports. Whether intentionally or not, many of the sports-related plays found in the "Wake" provided Lardner with another way of relating the "dope" to his readers. Using the play form he could present ball players in private or inaccessible settings without commentary, thus giving the reader a seemingly objective and unaltered view of the players. The sense of immediacy and intimacy created by the play form undoubtedly appealed to the reader in the way that a hidden camera would appeal to the modern television viewer's desire to feel close to their idols. Normally, when Lardner passed along information about the players, his persona created an obvious intermediary between the players and the audience. He was a friendly transmitter of information—one that seemed to be on the readers' side, and one who spoke the readers' language—but he was an obstacle to direct player-fan connection, nonetheless. The plays created the illusion of removing that barrier.

On 2 November 1913, Lardner began writing a series of poker game dialogues with "The P.G." Poker games occupied a great deal of the players' time during road trips, but only a privileged few could witness these games first hand. Lardner gave his readers admission to this private side of the player. The view was not idealized. Players were depicted as flawed—some greedy, many uneducated, all caustic in their
sense of humor. Conversation around the poker table was free-flowing, varying in subject matter from baseball games and various players’ performances in the games, the poker game at hand, and insults, often laced with ethnic epithets. Though it is common in the poker game dialogues for players to prey on each other’s insecurities and draw negative attention toward each other’s ethnic differences—one being called a wop and asked if he wants to eat some “spaghett” in one exchange and one being called a frog in the next—the tone is somehow generally light-hearted. Players get mad, but they fight back. Despite the intense level of “kidding,” no one leaves the table. One gets the sense that these players are bound together and that their insults are a strange, misdirected form of intimacy. They are all equally engaged in the conversational game, rough as it is, that accompanies their sport.

Adding to the sense of realism and intimacy in the dialogues are the distinctive personalities of each of the players/characters that Lardner develops. Players speak in different dialects, have different interests, come from different educational backgrounds, and possess different temperaments. Rather than a depiction of some ball players playing poker or some ball players with different names playing poker, the dialogues depict particular ball players with individual personalities playing poker. Fans of the day may know Chicago White Sox outfielder Ping Bodie, for example, for his hitting or for his defense, but while reading the poker game dialogues they get to know him (or sense that they get to know him) as a unique personality. They get to hear his voice as Lardner renders it, and they get to hear others’ opinions of him. Bodie is often the butt of jokes in Lardner’s depictions of Chicago White Sox poker games. Sometimes he is teased for his playing ability:

Weaver—What are you goin’ to do, Ping? It’s your turn.
Bodie—I don’t know how many they drawed.
Gleason—Well, you should know how many they drawed.
You block up the game just like you do the base lines.
Bodie—I ain’t the slowest runner on this ball club.
Lord—Not when Louie Comiskey’s with us. (“The P.G.” sec. 3: 1)

On other occasions, Bodie was singled out by the other players because of his lack of education:

Gleason—Where is the Mediterranean, Ping?
Bodie—Wotinell do I care ‘bout the oceans? Play cards.
Scott—Big Johnson’s about due to whiff about eighteen of the boys.
Bodie—he won’t whiff me.
Gleason—He won’t if Cal takes you out before the game.
Weaver—How do you feel, Ping?
Bodie—I could feel a whole lot better. I ett somethin’ in Philly.
Lord—You don’t mean to say you ate anything?
Bodie—I ett somethin’ that disagreed with me.
Gleason—You mean you drunk somethin’.
Weaver—No, no, Kid. That old boy couldn’t find no drink that disagreed with him.
Fournier—Probably ett some spaghett.
Bodie—No, I didn’t eat no spaghett, neither, you frog eater.
(“On to Washington” sec. 3: 1)

Like Lardner’s famous busher, Jack Keefe, from You Know Me, Al, Bodie has enough ego and enough excuses to prevent the reader from feeling too sorry for him when he is verbally challenged by the other players. He is a memorable character, a unique character, as are Kid Gleason, the master of the cutting remark, and the others. The reader of these dialogues is able to distinguish the characters by the content and quality of their speech and by doing so is able to feel a certain sort of intimacy with the otherwise distant players.

Lardner also gives his readers a glimpse into the inaccessible world on and around the diamond in his newspaper plays. In some of the plays, which are little more than dialogues supposedly overheard on the bench, the players provide a
running commentary on the game at hand, and, as they do in the poker game plays, insult each other’s playing ability. Besides being engaging in itself, the technique allows Lardner to report on games in a unique way, giving in-depth coverage to a particular game (the dialogues often consume two full days of the column), and capturing the spirit and emotion of the players along with the common play-by-play method of reporting. Typical of the repartee, is the following excerpt from the play “From Last Monday (The Sox Second),” written about a game between the Chicago White Sox and the Philadelphia Athletics:

Walsh—Whatever they hit ‘em, they drop safe.
Gleason—He hit that one all right.
Benz—Yes, but if’t been us, it’d been right at somebody. (14)

Lardner uses this technique to bring fans to locations and occasions at which even he wasn’t allowed. In “The House of Glass,” Lardner brings the reader into the club house of the New York Giants after their game six deciding World Series loss to the Chicago White Sox (on 15 October 1917). Heine Zimmerman, a former Chicago Cub and one of Lardner’s favorite targets of fun and ridicule while in Chicago, mostly because of his quick anger, attacks the other players for their poor performances. Showing Chicago fans a “realistic” glimpse of Zimmerman’s anger and disappointment over the loss must have added to the pleasure of their own victory.

Another world Lardner enters and allows his readers to enter through his plays is the world of the magnate—top secret conversations between the management figures in professional baseball. While some of their conversations may be based on truth—Lardner was friendly with many of the people included in the plays—Lardner seems to have a different motive for writing these plays than he did when writing the baseball-player dialogues and plays. Though the image presented of the common baseball player wasn’t without its imperfections, and while Lardner did allow the
players to reveal their ignorance and prejudices through their speech in his plays, the tone is light and non-judgmental; it is clear Lardner respected and enjoyed the players. They may be ignorant, but they are rarely duplicitous or mean-spirited. They insult fellow insulters, but never pick on the weak. They are bruised by each other’s comments but never deeply cut. Lardner’s depiction of the magnates is usually not so favorable or respectful. Rather than having a sense of behavioral limits—the line which can not be crossed—and dedication to a common goal, as the players do, the magnates are depicted as not having either of these qualities; on the contrary, they are intentionally hurtful or at least indirectly hurtful because of their self-centeredness, their single-minded focus on the dollar, and their indifference to the lives of their players. The scenes in which they are placed are less realistic than those of the diamond or of the poker game and more obviously concocted by Lardner to reveal the weaknesses of their character and to set them up as objects of ridicule.

Sometimes, Lardner uses a pairing of scenes, one taking place in the past and one in the present, or one taking place in the present and another in the future, to reveal the poor judgment or lack of character in the executives. Typical of this type are two plays, both entitled “1913” and “1914.” In the first (11 December 1913 10), the magnates praise former governor John Tener and elect him president of the National League in the part called “1913.” In “1914,” the same magnates are upset with Tener’s decisions and move to replace him with John D. Rockefeller, who they think will treat the job with more of a laissez-faire attitude. In another pairing of “1913” and “1914” plays (17 May 1914 sec. 3: 1), a magnate insults a player and refuses him a contract in 1913, then tries to lure him to the club in 1914 after the player has become successful. The theme of the magnate changing his mind to fit the current circumstances is common (see also “The Wage of a Magnate: In Three
Acts”.

In “The New Ritual,” Lardner satirizes the new corporate culture of baseball by implying that the corporation’s products, and not baseball itself, are all that matters to the new breed of baseball owners. In the play, Chicago Cubs manager Joe Tinker, using elevated Shakespearean language interviews a baseball “neophyte” about his favorite things. The neophyte responds to Tinker by saying that all of his favorite things are related to Armour products or Wrigley gum (William Wrigley and J. Ogden Armour being part owners of the club):

Brother Tinker—Hath knowledge of astronomy?
Neophyte—Ay, marry.
Brother Tinker—What, then, is thy favorite star?
Neophyte—Armour’s hams and bacons.
Brother Tinker—And thy favorite college?
Neophyte—Armour Institute.

... 
Brother Tinker—What is thy favorite line of poetry?
Neophyte—The flavor lasts.
Brother Tinker—Thy favorite motto?
Neophyte—Buy it by the box. (11)

In the end, the neophyte is hired without regard to his baseball skill, signaling the end of baseball for baseball’s sake—if ever such an era existed.

The two most ambitious efforts in this vein are two plays included in this edition, “Charles the First” and “King Henry the First.” The two Shakespeare parodies appeared within days of each other and within days of the event they describe, the firing of the Chicago Cubs player/manager Johnny Evers, one year after the firing of long-time player/manager Frank Chance. To Lardner, the firings were baseless and senseless, and more importantly, handled in a dishonest manner. The plays expose and mock the lack of baseball sense in the decisions and predict what continuation of this trend will bring. Charles Murphy, owner of the Cubs, exposes himself through his own words, as someone who mistakes the ephemeral for the
permanent and the trivial for the important. The situation itself is not of earth-shattering importance, but the ethics of the situation are; thus Lardner couches his humor and mock tone, indicating baseball’s minor importance in the grand scheme of things, in the elevated language of the grand historical battles and tragedies of Shakespeare, indicating the major importance of the principle at stake.

If the fans that comprise the readership of Lardner’s column are encouraged to feel close to the players and superior to the executives through his plays, they are not left untouched themselves. A particular kind of fan, to whom Lardner referred as a “bug,” was the object of scorn in many “Wake” columns and in later writing. The bug was exposed, usually through his (and sometimes her) own words, as ignorant of the details and intricacies of the game, and simply rude. Lardner described their actions in the stands in a series of columns called “In the Bleachers” and in plays, such as “In the Stand,” “A Friend of Frank’s,” and “Delays are Dangerous.” In “In the Stand,” a woman continually asks about the identity of the player Mike Doolan, and when she is able to remember his name, seems more interested in his vaudeville performance than his baseball playing. In “Delays are Dangerous,” the fan, Ralph Plague, follows Kid Gleason and irritates him with his comments and questions, all of which are uninformed. In “A Friend of Frank’s,” two Cubs fans, George Pest and Joe Bug, go to spring training and pester Frank Schulte and Heine Zimmerman, later arriving back home to brag to their friends about how they got to know the players.

One of the first playlets included in his column, “On the Elevated,” involves another irritating fan and establishes a familiar and common formula in his early fiction and even non-fiction work: one scene shows what happens and a follow-on scene shows how the truth gets altered by having it filtered through one of the characters, usually one who is ignorant or self-absorbed. In this playlet, the “Casual
Acquaintance” asks the “Scribe,” who one assumes to be Lardner himself, various questions about which the scribe should have superior, “insider” knowledge, but his questions are usually nothing more that assertions presented in question form. He wants verification from the expert of his beliefs that Comiskey paid too much for Chappell, that Walsh has been worked too hard, and so on. He is courteous to the scribe and even compliments the hometown of the scribe’s wife. In the second scene, in which the Acquaintance relays the information from his conversation to his wife, it is clear that his courtesy and his curiosity were only superficial, motivated by his need to have his opinions verified. When they are not confirmed by the scribe, he either ignores the answers, changes them to suit his needs, or dismisses them. The Acquaintance is willing to respect the expert when the expert agrees with him, but it is clear he truly believes that he would “be better than some of those dubs” if he were a writer. He is looking for confirmation of his beliefs from the authority while feeling superior to the authority, but Lardner has the last laugh. Lardner portrays the scribe as a kind and helpful person, the victim of the rogue who reveals his own faults in the second scene, thus doing what countless Lardner characters did in years following: he hung himself with his own words.

One of Lardner’s favorite targets outside the world of sports for his satire was an easy and common one—politics. As with baseball, he lampooned both the common people who discussed the topic in an uninformed manner, and those at the top, who didn’t seem to have the character necessary to do the job well. Lardner’s two political plays both deal with the war and both characterize Senators as being childish. Rather than trying to solve the problems of the people, Lardner’s politicians are busy wasting time and calling each other names. In “More Speed!” Cry Senators,” the play is preceded by a short news story about the spirit of bipartisanship.
that the Senate has adopted in order to make the war effort more effective. The actions of the senators, represented by one Republican and one Democrat, in the play prove to be in sharp contrast to the optimism of the news story. The senators are talking to each other, but only to insult each other's appearance:

Senator Stout—Will the senator tell me whether he blames the lack of German dyes for the altered shade of his chin camouflage?
Senator Spinach—The senator is evidently jealous because he cannot grow a beard. The senator had better invest in some anti-fat medicine.
Senator Stout—The senator would do well to rub some anti-fat lotion on his head.

Senator Spinach—if the senator tried to come in side ways, he'd tear all the buttons off his vest.
Senator Stout—if the senator yawned, he'd trip all over himself.
Senator Spinach—No, he wouldn't.
Senator Stout—Yes, he would.
Senator Spinach—The senator must get his clothes from an awning and tent maker.
Senator Stout—The senator must have a charge account at a hair restorer’s. (14)

The tone is no less childish, but the consequences are even more serious in Lardner's "La Follette of 1917," included in this volume. The childish senators in "La Follette" are self-absorbed and seem to be unable to communicate for any purpose other than argument. Each focuses on the points of disagreement in the other's speech, arguing for the sake of arguing, while the important issues of war are completely ignored:

FIRST SENATOR: I see they sunk the Laconia.
SECOND SENATOR: You mean "sank the Laconia."
FIRST SENATOR: I guess you know what I mean. I mean just what I said.
SECOND SENATOR: But you should use the preterit. That would be "sank the Laconia."
FIRST SENATOR: The Senator who says that tells a vicious lie
SECOND SENATOR: You're a liar yourself, you liar!
FIRST SENATOR: Remember, I bear no ill feeling toward you. But you're a crook!
SECOND SENATOR: You’re my best old pal, old pal. But you’re a low down thief! Any man that says “sunk” for “sank” forgets George Washington and the honor of the Stars and Stripes. (14)

The senators couch their statements in the traditional language of respect, prefacing their remarks with “The Senator,” and of patriotism, appealing to “George Washington and the honor of the Stars and Stripes,” but the issues with which they are consumed, in this case grammar, divert their attention from the serious issues before them.

On a less satirical and more purely humorous level, Lardner also drew from his personal life for material for his newspaper plays. Many of the plays taken from Lardner’s personal life reveal the frustrations of his occupation, as in “On the Elevated.” In others, such as “A Verse is Torn Up,” and “What Do You Want?” Lardner expounds on a similar theme. Starting in 1917, though, Lardner brought the plays to his home, specifically his breakfast table, in a series of plays which include the quirky conversations between Lardner, his wife Ellis, and their three (later four) children. The children are inventive and precocious, discussing their fantasies as readily as their realities, and failing to recognize the difference between the two. The children’s “logic” often borders on the nonsensical:

John.—What’s the downtown man’s name?
Bill.—The downtown man’s name is Mr. Downtownman; that’s his name, Mr. John.
John.—Do you come home on the elevator, too?
Bill.—No, I come home in my autobile.
Le Pere.—What kind of an automobile have you got, Mr. Bill?
Bill.—I’ve got a dangerous autobile. It runs over big ladies.
John.—If you ran over ladies you’d get arrested.
Bill.—It runs over policemen, too. (“Sunday Breakfast” 18)

Unlike the nonsense of the boardroom or of the Senate floor, the nonsense at the Lardner breakfast table has no possible negative effects on anyone. On the contrary, it
is a form of playfulness, which seems to unite the family. By presenting these settings to the reader, he is inviting the reader into his home and its unique sense of humor.

There are certain nonsensical elements to many of the newspaper plays—a ridiculous name, situation, or stage direction here and there—and many nonsense columns in short story or editorial style, but only a few of the plays included in Lardner’s “In the Wake of the News” give more than a hint at the sort of fully nonsensical play produced by Lardner in the 1920s. Plays such as “Fame: A Drama in Three Acts” include one nonsensical element; in this case it is the first completely unproducible play Lardner writes. All three acts in “Fame” are letters between a scout and an athlete. The acts consist of stage directions, explaining who has received the letter from whom, and then a copy of the letter received. The characters read, but never speak any lines. The first play to foreshadow the odd scenes and quick shifts in space and time of the nonsense plays is “The Follies of 1913: In Two Acts and Fifteen Scenes,” presented in full in this present edition.

“The Follies of 1913” is much more complicated and lengthy than any of the other previously published playlets in the columns. It simultaneously parodies the Ziegfeld Follies, and, by extension, other musical revues and vaudeville shows, and various sports figures and situations from the previous year. It is also a presentation of the ridiculous sports events of the year and a send-up of such year-in-review columns. It is the first playlet to contain many of the elements that come together later in the nonsense plays. There are unnecessary bits of information in the directions, such as a cashier being included in the characters in Act 1, scene 1. “Stein Songs” in scene three is sung by “Ping Bodie and a Chorus of Organ Grinders.” Scene 1 in Act 2 takes place in a hotel in Paris “painted by a union painter.” The actions of the characters seem random and whimsical as when Charles Ebbets in
scene 4 searches for an important historical event—any historical event—to use as an occasion for a dedication, settling on the first event he finds, the "Battle of Ischkebibble." Magnates are unreasonable and players are self-absorbed in all of the first act, dedicated to baseball events, and the second, dedicated to the rest of sports.

Near the end of the Lardner's tenure as "Wake" columnist, two two-part plays, both mock operas, which can be described in no other way than nonsensical, appear. The first is "La Bovina," in which Fred, a steer, is to be separated from his love, Bossy, and sent to a Chicago slaughterhouse. Bossy goes with Fred to Chicago and both are killed by a tack hammer. Another steer, Gus, follows them to the slaughterhouse, but is not fit to be killed. The final scene follows:

Scene 2.
Scene—Death Chamber at the Stockyards.
CHORUS OF KILLERS.
O, sweet is our job when we hit 'em just right,
When the steers go to sleep without saying good-night.
But when we don't bean 'em right square in the forehead
The way that they holler about it is horrid.
[Forty or fifty steers, heavily veiled, enter the death chamber. Among them are Fred and Bossy. Gus, the exempt, disguised as a lounge, looks on. The Killers raise their tack-hammers and go about their work. First Fred falls, then Bossy. As she strikes the floor, her veil falls off and Gus recognizes her.]
GUS.
[Anguished] Bossy! La Bovina! You've killed a milch cow! (14)

The second, "La Maledizione Di Pudelaggio: Yuletide Opera in Two Acts," is a drama of the holiday dinner table. Characters including Il Turkey, Il Plum, Lo Gravy, La Mashed Potato, various eating utensils, and Choruses of Olives, Celery, Bibs, and Napkins, sing of the tragedy which is Christmas dinner (a tragedy for the food, that is). In one scene, the fate of the Il Turkey and the workings of a love triangle are revealed:

TUTTI: Hail the festive bird!
LA MASHED POTATO (aside): Soon to be interred.
(Turkey takes the place of honor at the head of the table. Gravy enters silently and oozes up to him.)
LO GRAVY: Sire!
IL TURKEY: Well, Thickness?
LO GRAVY: I come to warn thee. Plum Pudding loves the fair Yam, whom thou hast stolen. As we left the kitchen, I heard him say, “That bird will get the stuffing knocked out of him!”
IL TURKEY: Chestnuts! (Beckons to the fair Yam.) My candied Kid!
LA YAM: My Lord!

IL TURKEY: Why dost thou so tremble?

LA YAM: (Aria.)
   My loved one, trouble is brewing:
   Our love will be our undoing.
   I just got a good long flash
   At White Potato, thy former mash.
   She loves thee still. Beware
   The curse of the pomme de terre! (19)

The sheer whimsy of both of these two-part plays creates both a fitting culmination to Lardner’s “Wake” plays, which became decreasingly sports related and increasingly nonsensical, and a fitting segue to the plays he writes primarily for himself, the plays which become known as simply the “nonsense plays,” in the decade to come.

Sketches and Plays for the Popular Stage.

While working for the Chicago Examiner in 1907, Lardner saw his first Ziegfeld production and his childhood love affair with the popular theater was rekindled. After that point, he never missed a touring Ziegfeld show, and it is evident by his actions that he had serious aspirations of writing for Ziegfeld and similar productions. In the 1910s, Lardner began writing songs, many intended for musical
reviews, a number of which were published, and in 1917, his dream of being part of a Ziegfeld show was realized when one of his songs was performed by Bert Williams, his favorite star. In an uncharacteristically proud moment, Lardner reports at the 1916 Follies: “Bert Williams has got a song I wrote for him only he isn’t singing it and while I don’t like to boast and will admit that maybe the song I wrote for him is no good still if it’s worse than the two songs he is singing I will vote for Wilson” (“In the Wake of the News” 8 July 1916 8). When it is performed by Williams in the 1917 Follies, Lardner writes, emphasizing his musical contribution: “When we seen the show he [Bert Williams] was singing the best song in it, entitled “Home, Sweet Home,” words AND music by your correspondent” (“In the Wake of the News” 8 August 1917 11).

Lardner was captivated by the Follies, but there is ample evidence that he was also repulsed by them. Though he was drawn by the mix of comedy and music, his high standards made it impossible to enjoy much of what he saw. Lardner dismisses the Follies of 1916 through faint praise. While in New York, he watches a performance and reports to his readers through his Chicago column that the show contains “one pretty song and one funny line” (“Wake” 8 July 1916 8). He later reports that “[t]hey are talking about cutting the funny line out of the Follies to make the show consistent” (“In the Wake of the News” 12 July 1916 13). The next year he reviews the Follies again, making a similar appraisal, reporting that “The funny line in the show occurs in the second act,” and “The Follies may be a good show when it strikes Chicago, late in the fall. Between now and then, the actors will have time to forget the libretto” (“In the Wake of the News” 8 August 1917 11). Other musical reviews fared even worse in Lardner’s writing. When Lardner saw an unnamed
review in 1918, he reported his “Friend Harvey” that “[t]he best thing about it was that the audience could smoke” (“In the Wake of the News” 12 February 1918).

One consistent criticism Lardner voiced about the Follies and other reviews concerned the unsophisticated and base humor. He sums up “Why They Laugh in Vaudeville” in a four-word poem of the same name:

Hell!
Damn!
Him!
Ham! (12)

It has been well documented by his acquaintances and biographers that Lardner was prudish and reserved. He took every opportunity to distance himself through humor from the sexual elements of the revues. It is as if he wanted everyone to know that though he enjoyed going to the shows, he was uncomfortable in them. Typical of his humorous distancing is a review of a musical revue that included chorus girls written to his “Friend Harvey”:

Well, Harvey, I don’t often change color, but I bet my old face was like a beet the way it felt and I kept getting scarerder and scarerder and a couple of times I felt like I would have to get up and leave and you can imagine my feelings when I noticed they was about 100 members of the fair sex in the audience and I thought they would be a general exodus when the curtain went up and they seen what kind of a show it was and they would all flea with that look on their faces like they get when they pretty near set down in the smoker by mistake. (“In the Wake of the News” 24 February 1917 14)

Lardner continued his criticism of sexually suggestive lyrics and shows until his death. His last regular writing assignment was writing a radio review column for the New Yorker, in which he often criticized lyrics he found to be too racy. Implicit in his criticism is the belief that popular music and theater can be morally and technically better, and that he could produce such material.
Lardner continuously tried to sell his sketches and songs to musical revues. He had a couple of his sketches included in small Chicago shows, but he was unable to find acceptance in major productions. In 1919, he signed a deal with Morris Gest, the theatrical producer, to write plays for him, and credited that deal with influencing him to leave the “Wake” and move to the East Coast, where he could be closer to the theater business (Elder 168). Unfortunately, Lardner was unable to write anything that Gest could use. Despite his initial optimism about working in the theater and despite his continued attempts to find work in the theater, Lardner did not meet with any degree of success until 1922 when Ziegfeld asked him to help write the book for that year’s Follies. He wrote five sketches for the show: three were rejected while the Follies were still in production, and the two remaining were “subjected to interpolation and rewriting” (Farnsworth151). One, that made it, “The Bull Pen,” which starred Will Rogers, was singled out in most reviews as a highlight of the show—though it was one of very few highlights, mostly because of the absence of Fanny Brice and W.C. Fields. Robert Benchley of Life Magazine wrote that waiting for Will Rogers or Lardner’s sketches made him realize “there is nothing like canoeing on a summer evening” (27). It was Lardner’s first full taste of the Follies, but it was a taste that he must have found to be sour.

Lardner quickly learned that his success in theater was dependent on a number of factors outside of his control. Unlike judgments of his other pieces of writing that were based solely on their own merits, judgment of Lardner’s work in the theater was based on the overall quality of the show and on the actors’ abilities. The creative process was also affected by others to a greater extent than it was in his prose career. Editors may have made suggestions, but Lardner’s work for print had usually been accepted as it was. Certainly no one changed his words without his consent. In the
theater world, Lardner found that this was common place. The working conditions and what he considered to be lack of respect for writers are what caused Lardner the most grief. The "collaborative" atmosphere of the stage was foreign to Lardner. When his skits were cut on what seemed to him to be the whims of others or when his words were altered by actors Lardner didn't enjoy it, to say the least. Lardner vented his frustration in his usual manner—through humor. In an article for *Cosmopolitan* called "Why Authors?" he writes of his *Follies* experience and speculates that it would be better to do away with authors all together, suggesting to Ziegfeld that he just let the actors write their scenes since they do it anyway, and stop wasting money on authors:

However the biggest waste is the royalties slipped to the boys that writes the original script of what some gay Mary Andrew has nicknamed the comedy scenes. Let a author tend a performance say 6 wks. to 2 mos. after the opening and when he has heard the lines then being used in said scenes he will wonder why is his name attached to them on the program. And between you and I he genally always wishes it wasn't. (122-123)

In the same article, Lardner also complains about the actors and their penchant for altering scripts:

The actors has got that nag of knowing what to put in and what to leave out which a writer can't never seem to learn and that is what makes it seem so silly for a producer to keep sending checks wk. by wk. to people that ain't got no more to do with the show than Jane Addams. Personally will state in this regard that I wouldn't cash cash the checks neither if it wasn't for the wife and kiddies. (125)

In a much more personal attack on Ziegfeld's character, the short story "A Day With Conrad Green," Lardner depicts the great producer as a petty, cheap, vain, and unintelligent song thief and general bully. Still, he felt drawn to the *Follies* and to Ziegfeld, because it and he represented success in the popular theater, which remained Lardner's elusive goal.
By the late 1920s, all of Lardner’s efforts had resulted in the minimal commercial success described above. Though he had tried his hand at writing full-length plays, none had been completed. What could have been his break came when George M. Cohan asked him to write a play based on his baseball story “Hurry Kane.”

Lardner had met Cohan in Chicago, but Cohan had never heard of him. He was accustomed to meeting with young theater aspirants and wanted to duck them as much as possible. When the two finally did meet, Lardner said: “Mr. Cohan, you’ve been in the theatre business for twenty years. You write songs and sing them. You dance. You write plays and produce them. You know everything there is to know about the theater. You’re the one man who can tell me what I want to know. Mr. Cohan, how the hell does a guy get on the water wagon?” (Elder 251). Cohan altered his plans for the evening so he could spend it with Lardner.

Cohan sent Lardner scripts to help him understand what it took to be a Broadway playwright. In return, Lardner submitted scripts to Cohan and they received personal attention. In 1917, Lardner sent him a play, which Cohan rejected because “I do not think the general public would be interested in so much baseball” (Elder 251).

Unfortunately, Cohan didn’t listen to his own advice and in 1928 produced a baseball story with Lardner, *Elmer the Great*. The play was re-written by Cohan to such a great extent that Lardner’s style is all but absent from the final script. Lardner complained in print and in private about Cohan’s liberties with his words in much the same manner as he had complained about Ziegfeld. It was made into three movies, but they have even less in common with Lardner than the final version of the play.

A collaboration that did work was the one he undertook with another George, George S. Kaufman, the next year. The two worked on a play version of Lardner’s
short story “Some Like Them Cold.” The system of collaboration was much more enjoyable to Lardner. He would write an act and show it to Kaufman. Kaufman would criticize it, and Lardner would re-write it—the only revision he had undertaken in his life. Kaufman acted as editor and manager rather than co-writer. The result was June Moon, which enjoyed a long run on Broadway and many road shows. It was produced again in 1997 and received the Lortel award for best revival that year.

Following his success with June Moon, Lardner made one more attempt to work for Ziegfeld, in the 1930 Ziegfeld production of Smiles. Lardner was brought in to save the show, and this delayed the opening by a week. Soon after, one of the show’s stars, Marilyn Miller (Fred and Edele Astaire were also in the program), got in a feud with the shows orchestrator, Paul Lannin, Lardner’s longtime friend. Vincent Youmans, the show’s songwriter, also a friend of Lardner’s, threatened to leave the show and stop Ziegfeld from using his material. The case ended in the New York Supreme Court and Ziegfeld was the winner (Ziegfeld 158). Lardner’s experience with musical theater ended much as it began, with frustration and disappointment. Lardner loved the form of the musical revue, but he didn’t like the way in which it was produced; he wanted to write funny sketches and songs, but was unable to do what he considered to be lowering his standards or relinquish his creative control to produce what others thought the mass market wanted.

The Nonsense Plays

Lardner found an atmosphere more to his liking among the small revues put on by more intellectual and creative types. The Author’s League, The Dutch Treat
Club, The Lambs Club, and a group associated with the Algonquin Round Table, all produced his small nonsense plays, whether they were intended to be produced or not. The first to make it to the stage was “The Tridget of Greva.” In the fall of 1922, “Tridget” was performed by members of the Algonquin Round Table (or as Donald Elder says, “more or less associated” with the Round Table) in a revue called The Forty-Niners. It was a follow-up to their successful show earlier that year, No Siree, which contained many short sketches in the same nonsensical vein as Lardner’s. From all accounts, “Tridget” was well received, though the revue as a whole was a flop. In his book American Musical Revue, Gerald Bordman credits “The Forty-Niners” with changing the direction of musical revue from a revue with sketches and music to a revue of music because of its complete failure and intellectual demands of its sketches (63). In short, the sort of sketches that were performed were difficult for the audience to understand. “Tridget,” though, the quirky and unusual play about nothing, survived on its own. It is still performed about a half dozen (official) times a year.

“The Tridget of Greva” seems to be a transitional play for Lardner. Like the sketches he wrote and unlike the later nonsense plays, it is intended for performance; yet it includes many nonsensical elements, chiefly in dialogue, later found in the nonsense plays. From “Tridget” until 1931 with the publication of “Quadroon,” Lardner wrote at least eight nonsense plays, but only “Tridget” and “Dinner Bridge” were written for the stage. The rest were written for newspapers and magazines, written for a reader’s mind, as were the plays he wrote earlier for “In the Wake of the News.” Because of their impossible stage directions, instructing actors to act as if...
they just came from a waffle house or to enter through a faucet, exotic and often shifting scenes, the outskirts of a Parcheesi board to a one-way street in Jeopardy, unusual casts, consisting of zebus, rats, and celebrities, and realistic applications of time, acts or scenes lasting from a few days to a week, the reader's mind, is, of course, the only place the nonsense plays could be staged.

Determining the "meaning" of the nonsense plays is an impossible and perhaps even nonsensical endeavor. Many tried to label these plays as "dada" or as parody of such, but Lardner claimed no such intention. In an interview with Grant Overton, Lardner specifically denied writing the plays to satirize the Moscow Art Theatre, saying he had written them long before there was such a thing (44), a claim supported by his plays published in his column "In the Wake of the News" and by the findings of his biographers. According to Donald Elder, his first biographer:

Dramaturgy was Ring's meat almost from infancy. He found a good deal of theatrical inspiration at home. The repartee in the Lardner family was swift and uninhibited by the rules of classical drama. Their favorite kind of humor was part of Ring's heritage as a writer. They were always amused by the kind of incorrect grammar and diction that characterizes the speaker; they played with words, and the more outrageous their puns, the funnier they were. Mrs. Lardner and the three youngest children were gifted with a wild kind of free association, and much of their conversation culminated in mad irrelevancies that resembled the dialogue of Ring's later nonsense plays. The Lardner family had a style; its influence on Ring's own style is marked. (243)

According to Lardner himself, he wrote them, and plays in general, simply because he enjoyed doing so. It was his lack of intention (and pretension) that convinced others, such as Ernest Hemingway, substituting for Ford Madox Ford as editor of the Transatlantic Review, to prefer Lardner's natural or "native dada" to what he considered to be the pretentious Russians (103) and declare that Lardner's nonsense was worthy of serious attention.
Despite Lardner’s objections, it is difficult to ignore some of the satirical arrows shot at American Theater in the nonsense plays. American drama during Lardner’s time was dominated by the lavish scenery of David Belasco and the naturalistic or realistic movements. Lardner’s nonsense plays satirize all attempts at naturalism in two distinct ways: first, by including “realistic” settings of both space and time which are impossible or impractical to reproduce, and secondly, by writing stage directions for the actors that are impossible to communicate to an audience. Drawing attention to the futility of realistic depictions of time in the theater, Lardner directs that the curtain be “lowered and partially destroyed to denote the passage of four days” in “Abend di Anni Nouveau,” or that it be “lowered for seven days to denote the lapse of a week” in “I. Gaspiri.” In “Taxidea Americana” the play is delayed and the crowd remains until the following Tuesday, at which point they begin going home. Such directions provide, as Delmore Schwartz has observed, “a concise definition of the limitations of naturalism in the theater” (52). The locations of his plays are also oftentimes impossible to reproduce, whether because of their fantastical nature—“A one-way street in Jeopardy” in “Abend di Anni Nouveau” or “The Outskirts of a Parchesi Board” in “Clemo Uti”—or because they are too large to be reproduced even by Belasco himself, as is the case with a football stadium with bands and fans in Act V of “Taxidea Americana.” Finally, the “realistic” directions for the actors defy communication to an audience. In “Abend di Anni Nouveau,” three giggling men are directed to “give the impression that one of them’s mother runs a waffle parlor”; “Clemo Uti” includes the directions "She exits as if she
had had waffles"; and in "Cora, or Fun at a Spa," a character "looks as if she had once
gone on an excursion to the Delaware Water Gap." Such information is impossible,
of course, to convey. Besides the various limitations of space, time, and knowledge,
working against the possibility of appearing real on the stage is the constant
awareness on the part of audience and actor that what is happening is, in fact, a play.
From the fisherman in "The Tridget of Greva" who remarks that the wind is coming
from "off-stage" to the waiter in "Abend di Anni Nouveau" who remarks that after
the murders of all of the characters, the play will have to be recast, Lardner's
nonsense characters are constantly reminding the audience of their own and the play's
own fictional nature. The message is clear: Nothing on the stage is, nor can it be
"real."

Though this message is common in many forms of experimental drama, it is
likely that Lardner's attitude toward realism in the theater expressed in the nonsense
plays had a satirical motive (deflating the over-reacher and the pretentious), rather
than a philosophical one. Unlike the dadaists, futurists, surrealists, expressionists, and
members of other avant garde movements, Lardner subscribed to no known theories
of drama; in fact, his alliance with the "common American" would force him to
eschew any such "highbrow" intellectual schools of thought.

Deflation of the pretensions of the theater, then, may have a more personal
motive. The nonsense plays may be a sort of gentle revenge for the way Lardner was
treated by the popular theater. Certainly, forcing two Broadway theatrical producers
to enter a scene riding pelicans and an actor to enter through a faucet has something
more than simple nonsense behind it. Lardner's complaints and frustrations voiced in
"Why Authors" are all addressed in one way or another in the nonsense plays. Lardner said that the actors didn't like "The Other World" because no one had a big enough part: in most of the nonsense plays, characters, and thus actors' roles, are replaced almost as soon as they enter the stage. No character (actor) dominates a nonsense play; in fact, they are often upstaged by rats, milch cows, laughing horses, and other animal acts. Lardner also complained that actors had a habit of embellishing his scripts with their own lines. In the nonsense plays, the author retains complete control. Actors do not have the power to revise because before they could do so, they are themselves revised out of the play. The character listings at the beginning of the plays rarely reflect the actual characters who appear in the plays; in the extreme, "Abend di Anni Nouveau" has all of the listed characters killed in the opening scene. Even when characters appear with their limited lines, they are interrupted by Lardner himself, through the use of intrusive and sometimes lengthy notes. In the nonsense plays, Lardner himself retains control of the script—something he was unable to do in the theater. The plays are, for the most part, unproducible, and that may be the only way Lardner thought they could remain his exclusive creative property.

If there are any direct influences on Lardner's nonsense, they probably come from the world around him—the actions of friends and strangers, and the sounds of the new American landscape. In a way, Lardner's nonsense is simply another journalistic endeavor for him; he reports the world as he sees it. Much of the Jazz Age party mentality that surrounded Lardner was, in fact, random and absurd. One scene Lardner describes to F. Scott Fitzgerald, his former neighbor and, at the time, a recent expatriate, resembles a scene in later nonsense plays in which characters imitate birds or buildings or come on the stage for no apparent reason on high
Lardner describes a Fourth of July party at Ziegfeld comic Ed Wynn’s house. The party lasted all evening and spilled over into the next day, when it moved to actor Tom Meighan’s house. Lardner explains: “the principal entertainment was provided by Lila Lee and another dame, who did some very funny imitations (really funny) in the moonlight on the tennis court. We would ask them to imitate Houdini, or Leon Errol, or Will Rogers, or Elsie Janis; the imitations were all the same, consisting of an aesthetic dance which ended with an unaesthetic fall onto the tennis court” (Letters 183). Another real-life scene Lardner reports has an unexplainable and nonsensical feel about it as well:

Well, what I started to say was that on Friday afternoon, I had to go way downtown to buy an algebra book for John, and I came uptown on a bus. I say on the roof and a lady sat down beside me. Her costume looked as if it had been cut out of a wash cloth. She said: “What time is it?” I said: “It is half past three.” She said: “Oh, I thought you were a Mexican.” (Letters 210-211)

As Lardner says at the close of the story, “[c]onversations like that can never be explained” (211). Lardner did not try to explain such nonsensical activities that happened around him; he simply reported them as he had reported sporting and political events for years before.

Of course, the everyday nonsense is distilled in the plays—all normalcy evaporates, leaving only the nonsensical. It is then made even more potent by Lardner’s exaggerated sense of the absurd. Drunken party performances and non sequiturs of the train stand out in everyday life as contrasts to the mundane and normal; in the nonsense plays such scenes are the mundane and normal. The woman on the train who asks Lardner for the time would be met by a character speaking his own non sequiturs; the party imitations would be met by other imitators or
something even more bizarre—say a zebu or a realtor. The nonsense plays create a world in which a gangster can be used as a card table, as in “Abend di Anni Nouveau,” without anyone finding it peculiar. Senator La Follette can practice sliding to base and be interrupted by a farmer on a pogo stick in “Taxidea Americana,” or Frank Case, the Algonquin Hotel manager can inexplicably ask the mayor of New York and the Prince of Wales: “Pardon me, Officer, but can either of you boys play a cellophane?” in “Quadroon” and no one is shocked. The degree of nonsense is higher in the plays than in his real-life experiences, exaggerated for comic effect, but the principle—people behave oddly and say things for no apparent reason—is the same.

Besides strange situations, one important and common element of the nonsense plays is the comical and offbeat sound of many of the individual words. Whether the words are real or invented, English or foreign, common or archaic, used in their proper form or in unusual ways, the odd-sounding words create a tone of strangeness and playfulness, which sets the sheer enjoyment of nonsense in motion. Lardner found many words to be funny simply because of their sound. If the word had a peculiar meaning, or he could invent such a meaning, the humor was doubled. Lardner played with unusual or invented words in his personal life as well as in print. It is reported that once, while playing a 1920s parlor game, Lardner was asked to list what he considered the ten most beautiful words: he listed “Gangrene, flit, scram, mange, wretch, smoot, guzzle, McNaboe, blute, crene,” explaining that “blute” is a “smoker who doesn’t inhale” and “crene” is “a man who inhales but doesn’t smoke” (Yardley 237). He loved the word “mange” so much, that’s what he named one of his homes. In his plays, such nonsense words, funny at their root simply because of their sound, appear in a variety of places—chiefly in the stage directions and in the listings.
of characters, but also in the lines spoken by the characters and even in the titles themselves.

One of the most common uses of the nonsense word can be found in Lardner's listings of characters in which either the name itself or the character's occupation is given a funny-sounding title. This habit harkens back to childhood and to the columns. In 1919, Lardner used several of his columns to pose questions to fictional readers and list their responses. The readers include "Lucius Kamelin, shoe horn agent," "Harold Spim, quarrel adjuster," "Charley Aspirin, stumble mate," "Geo. Plant, weasel pursuer," "John Sublett, blotter tearer," "Artie Hofman, shirt dispenser," and even himself, R. W. Lardner, as a "collar buttoner" (3 May 1919 20). These sorts of characters' names and descriptions appear in many of the nonsense plays: "I. Gaspiri" features "Ian Obri, a blotter salesman," "Egso, a pencil guster," and "Tono, a typical wastebasket"; "Cora, or Fun at a Spa" features "Plague Bennett, an embryo Steeplejack"; and "The Gelska Cup" includes "Palsy, a toe dancer".

Often, the nonsense sound of the words is drawn from foreign or pseudo-foreign sources. Because of unprecedented waves of immigration into the United States during Lardner's lifetime, and the increased awareness of foreign countries brought on by World War I and its aftermath, Lardner's world—first the newspaper world and then the theatrical and literary world—was flooded with new, and no doubt to the American ear, comically unusual sounding, foreign words. The daily headlines and news stories were filled with information about unpronounceable world leaders and exotic places. The streets and the stages were filled with a variety of accents. Lardner pokes fun at the superficial aspects of these new and exotic places and people, using their words and speech patterns for comic effect. "The Tridget of Greva" is translated from the "Squinch," a nonsense word; "I. Gaspiri," defined
parenthetically as “The Upholsterers,” is “adapted from the Bukovinan of Casper Redmonda; “Taxidea Americana” is “Translated from the Mastoid,” and “Cora, or Fun at the Spa,” makes a more subtle allusion to foreign drama, the French in particular, with its subtitle, “An Expressionist Drama of Love and Death and Sex.” In other plays, foreign accents, taken to the extreme, are the source of the humor. In “Dinner and Bridge,” for example, every common accent used on the vaudeville stage is included and exaggerated. Characters switch accents in mid-sentence, and are directed to “talk in correct, Crowninshield dinner English, except that occasionally, say every fourth or fifth speech, whoever is talking suddenly bursts into dialect, either his own or Jewish or Chinese or what you will.”

Whatever dialect the characters in Lardner’s nonsense plays are speaking, their skills as communicators are usually similar. Characters speak without listening, ignore one another, and forget the subject of their conversation. The non sequitur becomes the essential element of their conversations. In “Clemo Uti,” and “Quadroon” almost no conversation transpires. In “Dinner Bridge” the waiter continually asks questions and leaves before he can get an answer: as Taylor explains “He’s been that way for years—a born questioner but he hates answers.” When characters do talk to each other about the same subject, there is inevitably misunderstanding, as when the glue lifters in “I. Gaspiri” fail to accomplish the most perfunctory of greetings: the first asks the second how he is doing and calls him “My Man,” and the second misunderstands the question as a request to sing “My Man.” Even when the conversation concerns more important matters the speakers are unable to maintain interest long enough to communicate. In “Abend di Anni
Nouveau” the waiter and the second policemen forget what they are discussing eight lines into the conversation: the subject is the mass murder that has just occurred and the bodies that lay before them.

Lardner distilled and thus intensified the nonsensical sounds and actions of his society into the comic tributes to non-communication and bizarre behavior known as the nonsense plays. Though they were written for personal amusement, they were still published, and others were let in on the joke. His nonsense plays received attention and praise when they were collected in *What o of It?* and posthumously in *First and Last*. Generally, they were admired for exposing what Lardner’s second biographer Jonathan Yardley calls “the phenomenon of non-communication.” Some believe the “non-communication” to be silly and comical; others find it signifies deep isolation and despair. For example, one critic says “The significance of his nonsense plays is precisely this despairing sense that nothing connects up with anything else” (Holmes 35). Another tries to account for the despair and the laughter it oddly brings:

There was one final stage beyond despair. It is no surprise to discover that Lardner turned to writing nonsense plays and fairy tales in which the main source of humor is the unintentional pun and the non sequitur. From one viewpoint they were simply extensions of what he had been describing all along [isolation]. Here, however, the isolation is so absolute and abstract that it sheds its human dimension and becomes an exercise in the absurdity and impotence of language itself. But in another way, these diversions recapture some of the childlike joy that must have made life seem so fresh to Lardner in those years when he was deciding to make his living by making people laugh—before he, like his characters and his age, had wised up. (Spatz 110)

The “childlike joy” of the nonsense plays is unmistakable. The comical scenes around the breakfast table related in the “Wake” plays are still present in the strange but harmless conversations and actions of the nonsense play characters.
Conclusion

In the last years of his life, Ring Lardner was writing what he hoped would be his best play. It was to be a serious look at alcoholism and its effects on the family, a topic Lardner was all too familiar with from his own empirical investigations, but one which he had always treated in his writing with humor. It was the only work he could motivate himself to do. Parts of the first two acts were completed, but Lardner’s failing health prevented him from doing any more. Despite what Heywood Broun thought, even doing what he loved wasn’t enough to bring back his health.

Lardner died at the young age of forty-eight, but he left an enormous body of work. His reputation as a sports writer, as a columnist, as a humorist, and as a short story writer is sound; however, his reputation as a dramatist is almost nonexistent. His legacy is mixed. Most of Lardner’s dramatic output was commercially unsuccessful. Many of his plays were unfinished or unproduced. With the exception of June Moon, for which he shares credit with George S. Kaufman, none of his longer dramatic works are still performed.

Perhaps Lardner’s problems with full-length plays are a mirror of his problems with the long form in fiction. Though F. Scott Fitzgerald, Scribner’s editor Max Perkins, and others continually prodded Lardner to write a novel, and tried to convince him that writing one was the only way to reach his literary potential and to ensure his reputation, Lardner resisted. Some of his collections of sequential short stories such as You Know Me, Al, The Big Town, and Gullible’s Travels, resemble a novel in length, but none resemble a novel in depth or scope. In fiction, Lardner
worked best with short forms and he attempted to write nothing else. Though he did attempt to write longer pieces in dramatic form, short plays were still his forte. Lardner produced enough short stories, short non-fiction pieces, and short plays (more than one hundred of each) to fill many books. Among them are many developmental pieces written while Lardner was learning his craft, and many uninspired pieces, written, for the most part, at the suggestion of others. But also among them are some of the most inventive and well-crafted pieces of his era. His reputation should rest on what he did produce, rather than on what he didn’t accomplish; on his best work, rather than his worst; and on what he was best suited to write, rather than on those forms for which he had no natural talent. If it is true that one needs a book-length work to establish credibility and a lasting reputation, then the problem of Lardner’s dramatic reputation may be one of poor representation and lack of collection rather than one of lack of output. Though the collections of his short stories are, for the most part, re-issues of older collections and not geared to a contemporary audience, they do exist, and Lardner receives some continued readership and critical attention because of it. Lardner wrote enough quality short plays to fill a book; one simply hasn’t been produced.

Lardner’s short plays include work he did for his newspaper column, “In the Wake of the News,” revue sketches, and nonsense plays. The newspaper plays cover a wide-range of topics in a variety of ways, beginning with sports-related plays. Though the names of the players are forgotten in many cases, the situations and attitudes are surprisingly current. One needn’t look too far to find present-day
examples of greedy magnates, uninformed fans, or, on the positive side, dedicated and engaging players. What sets them apart from other sports writing is Lardner’s ceaseless imagination, which can create for a daily column a wonderful two-part Shakespearean parody, expertly paraphrasing and quoting six plays (“Charles the First” and “King Henry the First”), or condense an entire year’s worth of sports stories into a two-act nonsensical play with parodies of modern songs and of dialect comedy (“The Follies of 1913”). When the subject matter is politics or Lardner’s personal life, the pertinence and inventiveness of the sports-related plays still is present. In “La Follette of 1917,” Lardner reveals childish behavior among Senators as exactly what it is by having the Senators call each other names and debate verb usage instead of doing the business of the country—a scenario which is as equally possible today as it was during World War I. In his breakfast table plays, he celebrates nonsense and fancy by “recording” the bizarre, disjointed, but creative repartee of the youthful members of his family.

Lardner brings this childlike sense of the absurd to the revue sketches and especially to the nonsense plays. While attempting to fit his unique talent to the Ziegfeld stage produced less than successful results, Lardner was still able to write a number of short plays that when taken off of the stage and presented in the more appropriate environs of the reader’s mind, are remarkably creative and up to date. Watching “Not Guilty” on the stage would deprive the audience of directions like “He sits down in a hubbub of quiet,” which are one of the greatest sources of humor in the play. Writing drama that was meant to be read rather than performed became
Lardner’s specialty. Without the restrictions of producers, actors, and a stage, Lardner was able to write whatever his imagination led him to write. It enabled him to write plays that satirized plays themselves.

The nonsense plays represent the best of Lardner’s dramatic work. They draw upon themes and subjects explored in his other plays, but bring them to a new level of absurdity. In the earlier plays there were speakers who were self-absorbed and dialogue that was nonsensical, but it was usually set against a “normal” and sane backdrop. In the nonsense plays the absurd is the norm. All of the characters are operating in their own worlds, for their own purposes. When they meet each other and converse, the non sequitur is the primary element of their discourse. The earlier plays included odd scenes or strange authorial commentary from time to time, but in the nonsense plays author’s notes or translator’s notes often interrupt the dialogue, stage directions are nearly always impossible to follow, and the odd scene is every scene. Though he wrote the nonsense plays for personal rather than “artistic” reasons, his “native dada” is no less inspiring and thought-provoking.

The plays collected in this present edition form a representative sample of Lardner’s short-form dramatic output. From the parodies and scenes he wrote for his newspaper columns, to his attempts to fit his talent to the revue stage, and finally to his wonderfully engaging nonsense plays, Lardner’s love for the form shows through, as does his talent for it. Lardner presents the world around him through a unique comic, satirical, and absurdist lens, one that exposes the arrogance and ignorance of a generation, while simultaneously bringing a smile to the reader’s face through the use

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of childlike nonsense.
NOTES ON THE TEXT

Rationale for Selection

Ring Lardner wrote more than one hundred short plays during his lifetime, most of which were written for a daily column, some of which were written for the Ziegfeld Follies and other popular revues, and some of which, the so-called nonsense plays, were written for either small reviews or magazines. The purpose of this edition is to present the best samples of these plays, rather than to include all of them. Plays were thus selected in such a way as to show Lardner's evolution as a playwright, represent his major stylistic and content types, and provide evidence of his unique talent. Only the last group of plays, the eight nonsense plays, is collected wholly in this edition. They represent his most mature work and have received the most critical attention.

Only three of his many sketches intended for the popular stage are included: "Not Guilty," "The Bull Pen," and "The Other World." "Rip Van Winkle, Jr.,” a sketch written for the Ziegfeld Follies of 1922 is not included because of the uneven quality of the play and the dubious nature of its authorship. Lardner complained in "Why Authors" that the best line in the play had been written by one of the actors. Furthermore, Lardner did not choose to publish "Rip Van Winkle, Jr." as he did "Not Guilty" and "The Bull Pen," implying that he was not pleased with the final product. "The Operating Room," an unpublished and unperformed sketch, loosely based on the
short story “Zone of Quiet” is not included strictly because of the uneven quality of
the writing. It is less polished than the others, and the humor is strained. Because the
other plays selected already provided ample evidence of the type of work Lardner did
for the revue stage, both accepted and rejected, there was no compelling reason to
include another sketch, especially given its quality. The remaining sketches Lardner
wrote are not included simply because no copy of them can be found. Knowledge of
their existence comes from secondary sources.

Most of the newspaper plays contain dated subject matter and suffer from
unevenness in quality, understandable in the context of writing a daily column;
therefore only the highest quality of plays which represent a common theme or a
certain stage in the development of Lardner’s short plays were selected. “On the
Elevated,” the earliest play collected, represents a common theme in Lardner’s, that of
the bothersome acquaintance. “The Follies of 1913,” “La Follette of 1917,” “Horrors
of War,” and “Breakfast,” mark the development of Lardner’s nonsense writing,
which eventually culminates in the writing of the nonsense plays, and they represent
Lardner’s writing about sports, politics, the common man, and family respectively.
“Charles the First,” and “King Henry the First,” give witness to Lardner’s creativity
and sophistication in sports writing. Other newspaper plays, many of which are
excerpted in this edition’s “Introduction,” included inventive song parodies,
humorous exchanges, or engaging scenarios, but failed to maintain their quality
throughout.
Selection of Copy-Text

Lardner rarely kept manuscripts or even copies of work he had completed; therefore, in most cases, the copy-text is derived from published sources. One of the plays exists only in typescript; one in typescript and in published state, and the rest only in published states. I considered the first published version of the text to be the most authoritative in all cases in which no earlier version existed and no later evidence of authorial revision could be established.

The copy-text for the newspaper plays ("On the Elevated," "The Follies of 1913," "Charles the First," "King Henry the First," "La Follette of 1917," "Horror of War," and "Breakfast") is the only text, Lardner’s "In the Wake of the News" column for the Chicago Tribune: No manuscripts exist, and none of the plays have ever been reprinted. The first magazine appearance of two of the sketches intended for use in The Ziegfeld Follies of 1922 ("Not Guilty." Cosmopolitan 74 (Feb. 1923): 80-81; and "The Bull Pen." Judge 82 (29 July 1922): 26-27) is used as copy-text, because those are the first versions of the texts for which Lardner’s control and consent can be established. "The Other World," also intended for use in The Ziegfeld Follies of 1922 was never published; therefore the copy-text is the typescript found in the Ring Lardner Papers of the Newberry Library in Chicago, the only known version in existence. Two versions of "The Tridget of Greva" are published in this present edition: the copy-text for the first comes from the Ring Lardner Papers of the Newberry Library in Chicago, and the second comes from the first book appearance, Blackouts (New York: Samuel French, 1935). The significant changes in the play
from typescript to publication, along with the amount of material for other plays
drawn from the typescript version, warrant publication of both in this edition.
Including both also allows a rare glimpse into Lardner’s revision habits. In the
absence of such manuscripts, the copy-text for the majority of the remaining plays is
drawn from their first magazine appearance. Included in this category are
“Thompson’s Vacation” (Cosmopolitan 73 (Sept. 1922): 82-83), “Taxidea
Americana” (The Wisconsin Literary Magazine 24 (DEC 1924): 1), “Cora, Or Fun at
a Spa” (Vanity Fair 24 (June 1925):42), “The Gelska Cup” (Life 4 June 1925: 16, 39-
40), “Abend Di Anni Nouveau” (New York Morning Telegraph 30 Dec. 1928: 1), and
“Quadroon” (New Yorker 18 Dec. 1931: 17-18). The final three plays draw
their copy-text from a publication other than first due to revision that Lardner made in
later publications. “I. Gaspiri,” is derived from Lardner’s What of It? (New York:
Scribner’s, 1925). Several earlier versions exist, but all were submitted for
publication by someone other than Lardner (see content note 161.1). “Clemo Uti—
‘The Water Lilies,’” is also derived from What of It?, but only because of a minor
change in the text. “Dinner Bridge” is taken from The New Republic (51 (20 July
1927): 227-229), rather than from its first publication, The Dutch Treat Club
Yearbook, because of significant changes to the text made by Lardner before
submission to The New Republic. For a complete publication history of the plays
included in this edition, please consult the first content note for each play.

Note: All of the texts included in this present edition are used with the
consent of the Estate of Ring W. Lardner.
Format of the Texts

All plays in this edition are presented in clear text, with all authorial corrections or editorial emendations listed separately in this section. All footnotes or introductory passages in the plays themselves are the author's own. In order to preserve the appearance of the original texts, the format of the plays has been reproduced, to the extent possible, from the copy-texts. Non-textual conventions, such as indentation, capitalization, use of italics, and placement of stage directions or character names, follow the style of the individual copy-texts; other non-textual features, font size and style, have not been reproduced.

Authorial Revisions and Corrections

The following collation shows the typed or ink or pencil holograph corrections and additions made by Lardner to the two plays for which a typescript exists. Corrections made by typing the correct letter directly over the top of another letter are not included. The page and line number of the correction is followed by the word or phrase as it appears in the present text. All lines in which words or symbols appear are counted. The original version of the text follows to the right of the bracket.

The Other World

108.19 Centered, beneath this line the words “Prof. Lyons” are typed and crossed out in pen.

113.6 papa ] pappa
Uncle Benny! ] Uncle [a word crossed out] Benny!

The Tridget of Greva (1)

126.9  oars ] orars
126.11  regulation ] regualtion
130.14  the letter said he’d ] the letter he’d
131.6  the baby was ] the bay was
131.19  Seems ] Seem s
131.20  Julia. ] Juliat
133.9  what is ] wha tis
133.18  two ] tow
135.18  abroad? ] aabroad?
136.4  How often have you crossed? ] How ofteenn have your crossed?
136.13  came ] cam
139.8  arches. So she ] Writes the word “Laffler” after “arches,”crosses out “So,” then crosses out “Laffler” and re-writes “So.”
139.11  nickel ] nicketl
139.22  (To Corby) ] (To Corby) Corby
140.14  Why, yes. ] Why, yos/
140.20  a strike. ] a string strike.
140.21  others ] other
141.9  No. It isn’t a sole. Only a ‘eel. ] No. Only a ‘eel.
Editorial Emendations

The following collation shows corrections to the text made by the editor. The page and line number of the correction is followed by the word or phrase as it appears in the present text. All lines in which words or symbols appear are counted. The original version of the text follows to the right of the bracket.

On the Elevated

59.3 over? ] over.

The Follies of 1913

60.14 owed it to Mr. Farrell ] owed it Mr. Farrell

Charles the First

78.2 bum.” ] bum.

Henry the First

88.15 I’ll send ] “I’ll send

Not Guilty

99.20 words. ] words
102.7 murdered? ] murdered
Textual Variations

The following collation shows the variations among editions of the plays, keyed to the present text. Changes to the accidentals and substantives of the text are listed; non-textual elements, such as changes in format, are not listed unless they have an impact on the reading of the text (i.e. italics in the dialogue to denote stress). The page and line number of the variation is followed by the word or phrase as it appears in this edition. All lines in which words or symbols appear are counted. The variations are listed to the right of the bracket. Each variation is listed in full, followed by an abbreviation of its source in parentheses. The editor’s comments are italicized. A complete listing of sources and their abbreviations follows.

Abbreviations

CLT “L. Gasperi.” Chicago Literary Times 15 February 1924: 3.


The Bull Pen

Followed by a footnote: “As played in the Ziegfeld Follies of 1922.” (FL, PRL, SUHE).

a pitcher ] a pitcher, played by (PRL)

I’d ] I’d (PRL)

God ] God (FL, PRL, SUHE)

that ] that (FL, PRL, SUHE)

The Tridget of Greva (2)

Note: All printed variations are listed and keyed to the second version of the play included in this present edition. For a comparison of the typescript version of “The Tridget of Greva” to its first printed state, see Appendix C in this edition.

You sure must ] You must (SUHE, TE)

That’s a hot one! ] Everything he could think of. (SUHE, TE)
He moistens ] Moistens (OAP)

I wish . . . hook] ] Replaced by the following:
BARHOOTER: I wish I knew who to ask.
CORBY (To BARHOOTER): Which way is the wind from?
BARHOOTER: (Moistens his finger and holds it up) It's from off-stage. (He draws in his line, discovers the bait is gone.) That fellow got my bait. (He throws his line out again without rebaiting it.) (SUHE, TE)

CORBY ] CORBY (To BARHOOTER) (OAP, SUHE, TE)

Omitted (SUHE, TE)

Yes, my ] Yes my (OAP)

"in" again without baiting the hook. ] out again without rebaiting it. (OAP)

Yes, and do you want to hear ] Yes, but do you want to know (SUHE, TE)

BARHOOTER . . . hill. ] Replaced with the following:
BARHOOTER: Well, two days before the baby was born, Bertha and her husband were out driving.
LAFFLER: Who’s Bertha?
BARHOOTER (Paying no attention): They were going up a steep hill and Harry tried to change into second speed.
LAFFLER: Who’s Harry?
BARHOOTER: But he made a mistake and shifted into reverse and the car went clear to the bottom of the hill. (SUHE, TE)

Big Bertha ] Bertha (OAP)

husband—that’s her husband—they were ] husband, that’s her husband—were (OAP)

manhole ] hill (OAP)

who is ] who’s (OAP)

Big Bertha ] Bertha (OAP)
He shifted into reverse by mistake and the car went clear to the bottom of the hill. He made a mistake and shifted into reverse and the car went clear to the bottom of the hill. (OAP)

Laffler looks in all directions, as if trying to locate (OAP); Barhooter and Laffler look in all directions, as if trying to locate (SUHE, TE)

Omitted (SUHE, TE)

I don’t . . . tried. No. Why? (SUHE, TE)

Omitted (SUHE, TE)

somebody—somebody] somebody. Somebody (OAP)

would] would (OAP, SUHE, TE)

Where were you born? . . . there. Replaced with the following: Laffler (To Barhooter): Is your first wife still living? Barhooter: I’m not sure. I haven’t been home for a long while. But I heard she was dead. Laffler: What did she die of? Barhooter: I think she got her throat caught between my fingers. (SUHE, TE)

you] you (OAP)

[To Corby] Omitted (OAP, SUHE, TE)

Omitted (SUHE, TE)

Laffler] Corby (OAP, SUHE, TE)

Corby] Laffler (OAP, SUHE, TE)

Omitted (SUHE, TE)

Thompson’s Vacation

word?] word! (RLR)
Clemo Uti—"The Water Lilies"

154.7 by mistake ] by a mistake (*Life*)

I. Gaspiri

157.1 I. GASPIRI ] L. Gaspiri (CLT); I Gaspiri (*FR, FL, PRL, SUHE*)

157.4 Redmonda ] Redmond (*FR*)

157.9 a nonentity ] *Omitted* (CLT, TR, FR)

158.14 cousin ] mother (CLT, TR, FR)

158.17 *Followed by* "ACT II (Deleted by Censor)" (CLT).

158.22 of a road ] o fa road (CLT)

159.1-2 help themselves ] hel pthemselves (CLT)

159.1 vantage ] vintage (CLT, TR, FR)

Taxidea Americana


160.3 by Ring W. Lardner ] *Omitted* (SUHE)

160.8 afterwards ] afterward (*WOI, FL, PRL, SUHE, RLR*)

160.9 old Chloe ] Chole (*WOI, FL, PRL, SUHE, RLR*)

161.4 practices ] practises (*WOI, FL, SUHE, RLR*)

161.7 practicing ] practising (*WOI, FL, SUHE, RLR*)

161.11 obbligato ] obligato (*WLM*)

161.13 tonight ] to-night (*WOI, FL, PRL, SUHE, RLR*)
Cora, or Fun at a Spa

164.3 in Three Acts ] Omitted (RLR)

164.11 TYLER* ] TYLER↑ (PRL)

165.15 He ] He (FL, PRL, RLR, SUHE)

The Gelska Cup

169.8 Gungha ] Gunga (Theater)

Dinner Bridge

178.1 DINNER BRIDGE ] Dinner & Bridge (DT)

178.11-179.13 The SCENE and Program Note are in reverse order (DT)

179.5 that ] That (DT)

179.12 and, ] and (DT)

179.16 flat-topped ] flat topped (DT)

179.22 nationalities ] nationalities, (FL, PRL, RLR, SUHE)

180.1 correct, ] correct (FL)

180.3 will. ] will.) (DT)

180.4 All ] (All (DT)

180.4 reënter ] re-enter (DT)

180.8 out, ] out (DT)

180.13 which ] which, (DT)

180.17 coming. ] coming (DT)
their hearse. . . their] their hearse . . . their (DT)

What's . . . bridge] Why do you always have to keep repairing it? (NR, FL, PRL, RLR, SUHE); The line from DT here makes much more sense than that which replaces it in NR and is repeated in all other versions (after Lardner's death).

Why . . . it?] Why do they always have to keep repairing it? (NR, FL, PRL, RLR, SUHE); The line from DT here makes much more sense than that which replaces it in NR and is repeated in all other versions (after Lardner's death).

had been married] had married (DT)

The Porno-graphic] “The Porno-graphic” (DT)

“Why, yes,] “Why yes, (DT)

her yes] her, yes (DT)

replied,] replied (DT)

rising] rises (DT)

talker.] talker— (DT)

quart.] quart! (DT)

rising] rises (DT)

Abend di Anni Nouveau

“Follies”] Follies (FL, PRL, RLR, SUHE, TE)

Wheelmen] Wheelman (FL, PRL, RLR)

KINDLY] kindly (FL, PRL, RLR, SUHE, TE)

WARES] Wares (FL, PRL, RLR, SUHE, TE)
Quadroon

193.3-7 Omitted (FL, PRL, RLR, SUHE)
195.13 “The Quadroon” [“Quadroon” (SUHE)
196.12 “The Quadroon” [“Quadroon” (SUHE)
196.19 “Hedda Gabler” [Hedda Gabler (PRL)
196.20 “Hedda Gabler” [Hedda Gabler (PRL)
197.8 Medaillon ] Médaillon (FL)
197.10 Suprême ] Supreme (FL, PRL, SUHE)
199.3 “The Quadroon” [“Quadroon” (SUHE)
199.18 “The Quadroon” [“Quadroon” (SUHE)
ON THE ELEVATED

Casual Acquaintance—Hello there. Going home?

Ball Scribe—Yeah.

C. A.—Must be pretty soft for you now that baseball’s all over.

Scribe—Uh-huh.

C. A.—What do you write about in the winter?

Scribe—Same thing.

C. A.—How do you mean? There ain’t any games.

Scribe—No, but there’s news just the same, and dope.

C. A.—I’ll bet it’s hard work thinking up something to write about.

Scribe—Uh-huh.

C. A.—What kind of a guy is this Murphy?

Scribe—O, he’s all right.

C. A.—Do you know him personally?

Scribe—Yeah.

C. A.—What kind of a guy is Comiskey? Pretty generous ain’t he?

Scribe—Uh-huh.

C. A.—Did he really pay $18,000 for Chappell?

Scribe—Well, he paid over $13,000 in cash and threw in some players.

C. A.—He got stung, didn’t he?

Scribe—O, I don’t know.
C. A.—How does it come you didn’t go around the world?
Scribe—Costs too much money and I couldn’t leave my family.
C. A.—You’re married?
Scribe—Yeah.
C. A.—Chicago girl?
Scribe—No. She’s from —.
C. A.—I was there once just for a couple of hours.
Scribe—that so?
C. A.—Yes; pretty little town. Good hotel, too. Is Walsh all in?
Scribe—Well, it’s hard to tell.
C. A.—They worked him to death, didn’t they?
Scribe—O, he could stand a lot of work.
C. A.—Do you travel with the Cubs all the time?
Scribe—No; half the time with the Sox.
C. A.—Which is the best bunch to hang around with?
Scribe—O, they’re about the same.
C. A.—Don’t you ever get tired of baseball?
Scribe—Uh-huh.
C. A.—Do you write about football, too?
Scribe—Sometimes.
C. A.—What do you do when there isn’t any baseball or football?
Scribe—I get off here. So long.
At Home

C. A.—I rode out tonight with ——. He writes up the baseball on the ——.

Mrs. C. A.—Yes. I’ve seen his accounts. What does he do now that baseball’s over?

C. A.—He has to keep on writing articles just the same.

Mrs. C. A.—Is he a pleasant fellow to meet?

C. A.—O, he’s all right. Got a little case of swelled head.

Mrs. C. A.—Is he young?

C. A.—No; about ——, I should think. He’s married.

Mrs. C. A.—He is?

C. A.—Yes, married a village bell from ——. I was there once. Rotten little burg. He says Comiskey got stung on Chappell. He says Walsh is all in. Callahan worked him too hard. That’s just what I was telling Paul the other day.

Mrs. C. A.—Does he travel around the country with the baseball team?

C. A.—Yes.

Mrs. C. A.—It must be pleasant for his wife. I’m glad you’re not a baseball reporter.

C. A.—I am, too. But if I was I’d be better than some of those dubs.
THE FOLLIES OF 1913:
IN TWO ACTS AND FIFTEEN SCENES

Additional numbers by R. Lardner. Produced
under personal direction of R. W. Lardner

ACT I.

Scene 1: Congress hotel bar at noon.

Characters in Scene:

Peerless Leader.............................Frank L. Chance

Also newspaper men, bartenders, and cashier.

Chance—No, no. I promised my wife I'd pass it up. You can say just as
positively as you like that I am through. I don’t like to disappoint Mr. Farrell, but
there’s nothing doing. It won’t make a bit of difference how much he offers me. I
wouldn’t sign for a million. I wouldn’t have left home only I thought I owed it to Mr.
Farrell to explain my refusal in person.

Scene 2—Fisher building bar at 3 p.m.

Characters in Scene:

Peerless Leader.............................Frank L. Chance

Also newspaper men and bartenders.

Chance—Well, fellahs, I signed up. He made me an offer I couldn’t turn
down. I’ve wired my wife.
A Newspaper Man—Have you heard from her?

Chance—Not since I signed. But I got a wire a couple of hours ago. She says the frost has killed all the oranges.

Scene 3—A jungle in California.

Song—“Stein Songs”..........Ping Bodie and Chorus of Organ Grinders.

It was summer in St. Louis
And a comrade says, says he:
“What a bunch of good ‘twould do us
To inhale two beers or three.”

Chorus.
For it’s always beer weather
When good fellows get together
In a burg like St. Louis,
With a place like Tony’s near.
(Repeat.)
So I waddled into Tony’s
With this most congenial pal,
And was gargling hot Bolognies
And a stein, when in blew Cal.
Chorus.
Oh, it’s always hot weather

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When me and Cal gets together,
With a stein on the table
And the cuss words ringing clear.

(Don't repeat.)

Scene 4—A public library in Brooklyn.

Characters in Scene:

A magnate.............................................Charles H. Ebbets
The Librarian..............................................Miss Smith

Magnate—Do you keep books here?
The Librarian—No; you’ll find them at the delicatessen.
Magnate—Have you got a history?
The Librarian—What kind of history?
Magnate—A big, thick one.
The Librarian—We keep all the big books on this shelf. You can look and see
for yourself.
Magnate—Let me see; let me see. Here’s one that’s all right. Let me see. It
says the Battle of Ischkebibble was fought on July 12. May I use your phone?
The Librarian—Go to it.
Magnate—Hello, hello! Is this the Eagle office? Give me the sporting
department. Hello! Is that you, Tom? Say, we’re going to have a double header and
a dedication on the 12th of July. That’s the date of the Battle of Ischkebibble. Get me? All right; good-by.

The Librarian—Good night, nurse.

Scene 5—The Polo grounds, New York.

Characters in Scene:

A Wonder ................................................Heine Zimmerman
A Sub ................................................................Artie Phelan
An Umps ..........................................................Mister Klem

The Wonder—What innin’ is this?
The Sub—The first.
The Wonder—Wotdehel! Only de foist? How do you feel?
The Sub—All right.
The Wonder—How many games do we play here an’ in Brooklyn?
The Sub—Three here and four in Brooklyn.
The Wonder—Hey, Klem, you catfish! Hey, Bill, you’re rotten, you catfish! Catfish, catfish, catfish!
The Umps—You’re out of the game.
The Wonder—That’s right, you catfish. Put me out an’ weaken our club, you crooked catfish.

Scene 6—A place in Cincinnati. Winter.
Characters in Scene:

The President........................................Himself

The Owner...........................................A Stockholder

His Brother........................................A Stockholder

The Owner—How much ve haf to gif up for Tinker already?

The President—Ve get him cheap yet. Ve gif eight tausend for Corriden und
gif Corriden und four others for Tinker und zwei pieces of cheese.

The Brother—Gut. So iss it. Tinker iss der man ve must haf.

The Owner—Ja. He iss ein vonder.

(A year later.)

The President—Vell, ve get rid from Tinker all right.

The Owner—Dot iss gut. He iss no gut. Vot ve get for him already?

The President—Twenty-five tausend, aber ve get of it only fifteen tausend.

The Brother—Not enough. Ve must also haf players yet.

The President—Fifteen tausend und players?

The Owner—Ja. Fifteen tausend und players.

The Brother—Vy not?

The President—All right. Ve buy der players mit der fifteen tausend.

The Owner—Ja. So iss it.

The Brother—So iss it.

Scene 7—The Sox ball park office.
Characters in Scene:

The Boston President...........................................Jim

The Manager.....................................................Jake

    The President—Jake, you’re fired.

    The Manager—What for?

    The President—You haven’t won a pennant and a world’s championship since last fall.

    The Manager—All right, I’m fired.

Scene 8—The Boston office.

Characters in Scene:

The Boston President...........................................Jim

The Owners..................................................John and Gen.

    The Owners—Jim, you’re fired.

    The President—What for?

    The Owners—You haven’t won a pennant and a world’s championship since last fall.

    The President—All right, I’m fired.

    The Owners—And take Bobby with you.

Scene 9—A bar in Chicago.

Song—“Bring Back”.............Chorus of Thirsty Guys
My Commy lies over the ocean,
My Commy lies over the sea,
And while he lies over the ocean,
Nobody buys highballs for me.
Bring back, etc.

ACT II.

Scene 1—A hotel in Paris (painted by a union painter).

Characters in Scene:

A Champion..............................................................Jack
A Relative...............................................................Gus

Champion—We mus’ hab mo’ gasoline.
Relative—Yes suh. An’ ah need some new shoes, suh.
Champion—We mus’ git some dough somewhah.
Relative—Whah we goin’ to git it?
Champion—Let’s you-all an’ me put on a fight.
Relative—No, suh; no, suh. Ah ain’t no solid ivory.
Champion—Dat’s all right. Ah won’t hurt. Ah’ll preten’ Ah done broke mah ahm.

Relative—You mus’ break de bofe of ‘em.
Champion—Maybe Ah’ll break ‘em bofe fust time Ah hit you in de haid.
Relative—What do Ah git out o’ dis perilous encountah?
Champion—Ah’ll buy you a pah o’ shoes.

Relative—But s’pose Ah gets mahself killed?

Champion—Den you won’t need no shoes.

Scene 2—A street in London.

Song—“Damn”..............Chorus of Britishers

Damn, damn, damn this chap McLoughlin,

With his bally auburn dome,

With his rotten, nawsty serve

And his bally speed and curve,

O, why don’t they keep the silly ass at home?

Scene 3—A Gymnasium.

Characters in Scene:

A Manager……………………………………Moe Grabbenstein

Kid Flynn……………………………………Tonio Ravioli

Young O’Brien……………………………..Meyer Ischkebibble

Penuts Peck………………………………Ivanovitch Dubinowsky

Flynn—You givva me no mon’ for sickada mont’.

Manager—Wy I should pay you moneys wen you don’t vight since last night?

Here iss vifty zen. Shud ub. I gall you poys in to dell you vot a gread sgheme I got it.

Hereafterwards you should eagsh vight eagsh others. Foist you, Meyer, should vight
Beanuds for the lideweighted jampionshieb. Then, after you have ligged Beanuds, Tony should choillenge you for your tidle and should lig you. Then, Beanuds should choillenge Tony and lig him. And so it goes.

O’Brien—How I should be jampion lideweighed wen I weigh a houndrd and foity?

Manager—I should raise the limids.

Peck—How ‘bout dis Ritchie slob?

Manager—He’s too heafy. He weights it a hundred and thoity-fife.

Peck—Say, what do we get out o’ dis?

Manager—Five percend of my share.

Peck—Give it to me now.

Manager—I’ll give you nothings. I paid you dree dollars las’mond.

Peck—I ain’t had no eats since Saturday.

Manager—That’s all right. If you starve a few more days, maybe you should vight Johny Coulon.

Scene 4—A Street in London.

Song—“Yankee Doodle”......................Chorus of Britishers

Yankee Doodle had four chaps

Riding on four ponies;

Doncher know, those bally chaps

They made us look like phonies.
Yankee Doodle, 'pon my word,

Yankee Doodle dilly,

Made our players look absurd;

Isn’t that too silly?

Scene 5—A College Campus in the Middle West.

Characters in Scene:

Prof. Killjoy..................................................Old Man Grump

Prof. Knockit........................................................Mr. Gloom

Prof. Killjoy—A theme was pointed out to me in the sporting columns of a local publication today and I gathered from it that the football season just past was considered highly successful.

Prof. Knockit—I am grieved to hear you say so. Was the article authentic?

Prof. Killjoy—Yes. I believe it was composed by Harry Eckersall, who is considered a profound writer on this subject.

Prof. Knockit—Well, professor, is it not plainly our duty to remedy this state of affairs?

Prof. Killjoy—We must do something.

Prof. Knockit—Have you pondered the matter?

Prof. Killjoy—Yes. I thought it over as I sat in chapel. I will prepare a set of resolutions to be presented at the next meeting of the conference board. The resolutions will provide that no student of the male sex shall participate in athletics;
that all athletic teams must be instructed by ladies over 90 years of age, who have mastered the art of crocheting Irish lace, and that all spectators at a football game must keep their backs turned to the field of play.

Prof. Knockit—Admirable! Will you stop in and have a cup of tea?

Scene 6—A street in London.

Song—“Rule Britannia!” .........................Chorus of Britishers

Rule, Britannia, rule out these Yankee tramps

Or Britons never, never, never shall be champs.

Finalé..........................................................Entire Company.

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CHARLES THE FIRST

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

Charles the First.

Cardinal Thomas and Cardinal Campion.


John, Duke of Troy, afterwards King John, afterwards deposed.

Francis Le Roy, King of Cubs, afterwards deposed.

A Fool.

Scriveners, Citizens, Murderers, Messengers, etc.

Scene—Partly in the Palace, partly out of it.

PROLOGUE.

I come no more to make you laugh; things now
That bear a weighty and a serious brow,
Sad, nutty, awful, full of bull and bunk,
Such scenes as tempt a guy to go get drunk,
We now present. Those with the dough may here,
If they so will it, buy us many a beer.

ACT I—FALL OF 1912

Scene 1.—An Antechamber in the Palace.
Cardinal Campion at work. Enter King Francis.

KING FRANCIS—

Will Charles now let me have a word with him?

CAMPION—

No, good my lord; therefore be patient.

K. FRAN—

Four league pennants, two world’s title triumphs;
Always in the race, and now I’m ousted;
Nor may I have the gentle satisfaction
Of telling to his face my ‘pinion of him.

Enter Cardinal Thomas from inner chamber.

THOMAS—

His highness asks that you depart from hence
And nevermore set foot in this here place.

K. FRAN—

Ingratitude! thou marble headed fiend,
More loathsome, when thou show’st thee in a boss,
Than a left hander!

CAMPION—

Pray, sir, be patient.

THOMAS—

Ay, beat it ere your rage so dev’lish grows
That you swat one of us upon the nose.

(Exit King Francis.)

Scene 2.—Another Antechamber in same.

Charles and Cardinals Thomas and Campion. Enter Scriveners.

CHARLES—

Good afternoon, good gentlemen. I’ve news:
King Francis is no longer manager.
It long has been my strong and firm belief
That ball clubs should be managed from the field.
As Francis is no longer fit to play,
I must select a young, more active man
Who’s able every day to do his part
As player and as manager to boot.

A SCRIVENER—

What guy have you selected for the place?

CHARLES—

The smartest player in the game today,
A man who will not loaf upon the bench
As did King Francis; this one long has been
Regarded as the brains of our whole club.
I’ll let him run the team as he sees fit,
Nor ever interfere with his desires.

My manager is John, the Duke of Troy,

A clever, brainy, estimable boy.

For him the fans a banquet have prepared,

The cost of which by me and I is shared.

(Exeunt.)

ACT II—SUMMER OF 1913.

Scene 1.—The Ball Park.

A large crowd of citizens, murderes, scriveners, etc.

FIRST CIT.—

The Trojan doth protest too much, methinks.

But that’s his only fault that I can see.

And I, who roasted Charles for canning Frank,

Now b’lieve he knew just what he was about.

SECOND CIT.—

I quite agree with you. These present Cubs

Are better far than those we had last year.

THIRD CIT.—

King John has pulled some very clever deals;

The club’s success, methinks, is all his work.

Enter Charles the First and A Fool.
CHARLES—

Full thirty thousand citizens are here.
I made no error when I named John king.
Le Roy already is forgot, and we
Are high up in the race. What say you, Fool?

FOOL—(Sings)—

Will you love me in October as you do in May?
Will you love me in the good old-fashioned way?
When the Sox have won the day,
Will you kiss me then, and say
That you love me in October as you did in May?

(Exeunt.)

ACT III—WINTER OF 1914.

Scene I.—Antechamber in the Palace.

Charles the First, Cardinals Thomas and Campion, and Scriveners.

CHARLES—

I've come to the conclusion that King John
Just gave the city series to the Sox.
If he'd but chloroformed the Duke of Scott,
Had murdered Benz and shot John Collins down,
Had stuck a knife in Harold Chase's back,
We would have copped the series from the Sox.

(Exeunt.)

Scene 2. – A Lonely Prairie.

Enter A Fool.

FOOL—(Sings)—

We all could be great managers, great managers, Oh, yes,

If only we were privileged to use the second guess.

Scene 3. – Throne Room in the Palace.

Charles the First and King John.

CHARLES—

Now when you’ve visited Bermuda’s shore
And signed up Jones, then seek the Phillipines
And sign up Smith. Then haste to Africa
And sign up Kelly. Then move on to Greece
And sign up Johnson. Then to Panama
And sign up Thompson. Then set out for Rome
And sign up Wilson. Then you may go home.

K. JOHN—

I never will forget your kindness, sir.
CHARLES—

Oh, anything to please my manager.

(Exeunt.)

Scene 4.—An Antechamber in the Palace.

Cardinal Campion and Scriveners.

CAMPION—

I have some news I can’t give out alone.

Just wait till I get Thomas on the phone.

Ah, here he hastens now.

Enter Cardinal Thomas.

THOMAS—

I just received a telegram from Charles,

The which he sent tomorrow from New York.

I’ll read it to you: "I am glad to say

That we’ve secured, as manager, O’Day,

A man whom all Chicago fans will back,

Because he used to pitch to Connie Mack.

Before they knew that he would get the job,

Chicago’s fans, enthusiastic mob,

Had planned a monster feast for him, the same

To follow up the Cubs’ first west side game.
He’ll be in charge for many years to come,
If I do not decide that he’s a bum.”
Now, that’s the telegram, so neat and terse,
That I received tomorrow.

SCRIVS.—

Good night, nurse.

(Exeunt.)

_Scene 5._—_New York._

Enter King Henry the First.

K. HENRY—

I’d better call up Tener while I’m here
And have him save a job for me next year.

(Exit.)
KING HENRY THE FIRST

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

CHARLES, Emperor of West Side.

HENRY THE FIRST, King of Playing Field.

HENRY, Duke of Bronix, afterwards King Henry the Second.

The Earl of Center Field.

The Earl of Left Field.

A Fool.

Citizens, Fans, Murderers, Scriveners, etc.

SCENE—The Loop. The West Side, and Elsewhere.

ACT 1—FEBRUARY, 1914.

SCENE 1—An Antechamber in the Palace.

Charles and Scriveners.

A SCRIV.—

Say on, my liege.

CHARLES—

John Evers had a lean and hungry look;

He thought too much; such men are dangerous.

Let me have men about me who are fat;

79
Cool headed men who manage from the bench.

A SCRIV.—

But won't the bugs resent this latest move
And hire a murderer to cut your throat?

CHARLES—

I fear them not; I bear a charmed life.

A SCRIV.—

'Tis nearly six o'clock; we must be gone.

CHARLES—

Well, beat it if you like; I speak right on.

[Exeunt Scriveners.]

SCENE 2—The Loop.

(Enter Three Fans and a Fool.)

FIRST FAN—

He'll never get another cent of mine.

SECOND FAN—

I won't attend another west side game.

THIRD FAN—

He's spilled the beans this time; I'm through for life.

[The Three Fans Pass On.]
A FOOL [Sings]—

The same old stuff I heard them pull,
The same old bluff, the same old bull,
The same old threats from every fan
I heard when Frank Chance got the can.
They vowed that they were through for aye,
But when came springtime's first warm day
They all quit work at 1 p. m.,
And to the park—the bunch of them.

[Exit.]

ACT 2—APRIL, 1914.

SCENE 1—The Ball Park.

(Enter Thirty Thousand Fans, Citizens, Murderers, Etc.)

FIRST FAN—

Well, here I am again, but I am here
To gibe at Charley and at Hank to jeer.

SECOND FAN—

I've come to roast and pan the rotten Cubs,
To cheer each effort of th' opposing club's.

THIRD FAN—

The whole Cub aggregation make me sick.
Come on, you Heine Zim! Come on, you Vic!

(Enter A Fool.)

A FOOL—

That they are mad 'tis true; 'tis true 'tis pity,
And pity 'tis 'tis true.

(Enter Charles.)

CHARLES—

What, only thirty thousand bugs and cranks
Come out to see this team of mine and Hank's?
Well, anyway, for all this dough much thanks.

SCENE 2—The Club House.

The Earls of Right Field, Center Field, and Left Field, and Henry, Duke of Bronix.

R. FIELD—

Well, boys, this year looks pretty soft for us.

L. FIELD—

Yes, yes; he hardly bawls us out at all.

C. FIELD—

He lets us bunt or wallop as we will.

BRONIX—

Comparisons are odorous methinks,
But I deemed Johnny far superior.
L. FIELD—

Diseased nature oftentimes breaks forth
In strange eruptions. Tell us, my Lord Bronix,
Why you consider Henry worse than John.

BRONIX—

I have no other than a Heine reason:
I think him so because I think him so.

C. FIELD—

Last year did you hold John in much esteem?

BRONIX—

Why, no; but then he still was with the team.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE 3—An Antechamber in the Palace.

Charles, King Henry the First, and A Fool.

K. HENRY—

How do you like my manager’s hat so far?

CHARLES—

O, Henry, what a wondrous boy you are!

K. HENRY—

And will I hold this job of mine for aye?
CHARLES—

Forever and forever and a day.

A FOOL—

At lovers’ perjuries, they say Jove laughs.

Beware the Ides of October.

[Exeunt.]

ACT 3—FALL OF 1914.

SCENE I—An Antechamber in the Palace.

King Henry the First and Charles.

K. HENRY—

You say you cleared a hundred thousand bucks

On this past season. Second place was ours.

We lost the city series, that is true,

But still you ought to be well satisfied.

CHARLES—

O, I’m well satisfied, all right, all right;

But now to sign my players for next year.

I’ll leave that job to you. A little trip

Of fifty thousand miles will do the trick.

K. HENRY—

I’ll do the best I can. My heart is set
On getting all the players I can get;
Of all our youngsters good reports I hear;
I b’lieve I’ll win the flag with them next year.
We’ll have to have a few new pitchers, sir.

[Exit.]

CHARLES—

We’ll also have a brand new manager.

[Exit.]

ACT 4—DECEMBER 1914.

SCENE 1—An Antechamber in the Palace.

Charles and Scriveners.

A SCRIV.—

You summoned us with promise of some news.

CHARLES—

Yes, gentlemen, a piece of news I have
That means Page 1 again for little Charles.
I have made up my mind that baseball teams
Must always fall if managed from the bench.
King Henry First has just resigned his place;
I make this brief announcement with regret,
For personally he had my respect;
I loved him, and I hate to see him go.
But now he's quit, there's naught remains for me
But to appoint another in his place.
I'll speak his name right here, right now, today—
A man who'll manage and will also play;
He'll have the firm support of every fan.
My manager is Heine Zimmerman.
The fans for him a banquet have prepared,
The cost of which by me and I is shared.

[Exit.]

A SCRIV.—

Now is the winter of our idleness
Made busiest summer by this son-of-a-gun.

[Exeunt.]

*SCENE 2—A Dense Forest.*

*King Henry the First.*

K. HENRY—

What a piece of cheese is man! How pecu­
liar in reason! How infinite in nerve!
In summer, how like an angel! In win­
ter, how like a Nut!
SCENE 3—The South.

The Earls of Right Field, Left Field, and Center Field.

L. FIELD—
Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

C. FIELD—
It hath a very ancient and fishlike smell.

R. FIELD—
How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is
To have a Hankless club.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE 4—The Loop.

Enter Three Fans and A Fool.

FIRST FAN—
He’ll never get another cent of mine.

SECOND FAN—
I won’t attend another west side game.

THIRD FAN—
He’s spilled the beans this time; I’m through for life.

[The Three Fans pass on.]

A FOOL (sings)—
When shall those three meet again?
The first spring day it doesn’t rain;
The first spring day it’s warm and fair,
I’ll ‘ttend the game and meet them there.

SCENE 5—The Bronix.

(Enter King Henry the Second.)

K. HENRY—

No, if I take this job
They’ll see this noble and most sovereign reason
Like sweet bells jangled, harsh, and out of tune.
Alas, poor Hank! I knowed him well;
A fellow of infinite chest, of most excellent fancy (vests).
He hath loaned me a buck a thousand times,
And now, how abhorred my imagination is!
My gorge rises at it.
I’ll send the boss the following brief worded telegram:
“Give some one else the management; I’m happy as I am.”

[Exit.]
SCENE 1.

(Floor of a Senate. Early March.)

First Senator—Mr. President, what are we going to do with this bill?

President—I’m not to be called till 11:30.

Second Senator—What’s the bill about?

First Senator—Nothing important. It’s just whether or not we buy a submarine for the navy.

Second Senator—I thought they had one.

Chorus of Senators:

Hail! Hail! The gang’s all here!

What the hell do we care now!

SCENE 2.

(Floor of a Senate. Early March.)

First Senator—I see they sunk the Laconia.

Second Senator—You mean “sank the Laconia.”

First Senator—I guess you know what I mean. I mean just what I said.

Second Senator—But you should use the preterit. That would be “sank the Laconia.”

First Senator—The Senator who says that tells a vicious lie.
Second Senator—You’re a liar yourself, you liar!

First Senator—Remember, I bear no ill feeling toward you. But you’re a crook!

Second Senator—You’re my best old pal, old pal. But you’re a low down thief! Any man that says “sunk” for “sank” forgets George Washington and the honor of the Stars and Stripes.

First Senator—Any Senator who says “sunk” ought to be in the Cabinet.

Second Senator—How much more time have we got?

First Senator—Three whole days.

Second Senator—Griffith ought to have held on to Gandil.

First Senator—He never seen the day he was as good as Judge.

Second Senator—The Senator who says “seen” for “saw” forgets what this country did in 1861.

First Senator—Well, I admit it. What did this country do in 1861?

Second Senator—They began a war.

First Senator—How did it come out?

Third Senator—Did you ever hear this one? It’s about two Irishmen, Pat and Mike. Pat says—

SCENE 3.

(Floor of a Senate. Early March.)

First Senator—How much more time have we?
Second Senator—Four minutes.

First Senator—And what is there to do?

Second Senator—Act on fifty-six important bills.

First Senator—That reminds me of a good one I heard yesterday.

Third Senator—I heard that one.

Fourth Senator—Kids, we ought to do something.

First Senator—All right. Let's sing.

Chorus of Senators:

My bonnie lies under the ocean,
My bonnie lies under the sea;
My bonnie lies under the ocean,
She was sank by the U-53.

First Senator—Time!
HORRORS OF WAR

CHARACTERS.

I. M. Littup, a civilian.

Private Pete of the 333d. Infantry.

A Passenger across the aisle.

Time—Saturday night.

Place—Smoker on the L.

(Private Pete, on leave from Camp Grant, has taken his girl home from the show and is now bound for his own home and bed. He drops into a seat and turns to the Sunday sporting section to get a hearty laugh. I. M. Littup boards the train at Clark and Lake and lurches into the seat with Pete.)

Littup—Some Weather.

Littup—But, what the h--l do we care? Hey, boy?

(Private Pete forces a smile.)

Littup—You got a uniform and I ain’t got a uniform. Is that right, boy? You got a uniform and I ain’t got a uniform. That’s the difference. Hey, boy? Otherwise everything’s all right. Outside of that everything’s all right. I’ll say it’s all right.

__

Littup—You got a uniform and I ain’t got a uniform. Is that right? You bet it’s right. And you’re all right, too. Anybody that’s got a uniform is all right. To h--l
with the kaiser! Am I right, boy? You bet I’m right. You know I’m right. If you
didn’t know I was right you wouldn’t have that uniform. Am I right, boy?

Littup—Uniform and no uniform—that’s me and you. You got one and I
ain’t. So I’ll take off my hat. (He takes off his hat and it drops and rolls into the
aisle). Well, there goes the old hat and what the h—I do we care? There’s plenty
more hats, hey boy? (A passenger across the aisle rescues the hat and returns it to the
owner.) Thanks. You’re a gemman. That’s all I got to say. That’s all I can say. But
if you say so, we’ll all get off at the next stop and have a drink on my hat. What do
you say? We’ll all get off at the next stop and drink to my hat.

And I got the money to pay for it. (He delves into his trousers pocket and by a
supreme effort, produces a neat, spherical bundle of bills, in the wake of which, $1.85
in dimes and nickels issues forth and rolls all over the floor of the car.) Let it go!
What do we care? Uniform and no uniform. That’s the difference. I take off my hat
and we’ll all get off at the next stop and have a drink.

——

Littup—Old Uncle Sam!

Littup—And if I was five years younger I’d have a uniform on, too. Five
years younger.

Littup—You wouldn’t believe I got a boy fifteen. Hey, boy? Do I look like I
had a boy fifteen? Yes, sir, fifteen years old in March. And if he was a little older
he’d have on a uniform.

Littup—Irwin. That’s the boy’s name. Fifteen years old. Some boy! That’s
my name and that's my boy's name. Irwin. I'm named after my boy. My boy's
named after me. Irwin.

Littup—We'll all get off at the next stop and have a drink on my boy. We'll
drink to my boy's hat. Fifteen years old.

Littup—Irwin Hat; that's my boy. Named after my hat in March. Uniform
and no uniform. That's the difference. They can say what they want to.

Littup—Outside of that everything's all right. And if I had something on the
hip I'd give you a drink soldier or no soldier. We'd all have a drink. And if
somebody threw me in jail I'd take off my hat. My boy Irwin's hat named after a
drink.

_____ 

Littup—And listen, boy, if you need a little piece of money you can have all
the money I got. (He puts the money back in his pocket) You can have every nickel I
got. If you need a piece of change all you got to do is say the good word. Is that fair?
I'll say it's fair. Say the good word.

Littup—Where do you get off?

Private Pete—Here.

_____ 

Glossary.

H--l; Hell.
BREAKFAST

(Written at the suggestion of Poet G. F. Lee, who said: "Why don't you put something in the paper about your family?")

CHARACTERS.

*Le père.*

*La mère.*

*John, their eldest son.*

*Jim, their middle son.*

*Bill, a son-of-a-gun*

The breakfast table. La mère and the three boys are in their places. Le père enters and sits down.

JOHN.

(to le père)—Good-morning, Buttered Parsnips.

JIM.

(to le père)—Good-morning, Painted Necktie.

JOHN.

(to le père)—Good-morning, Whiskers; have you shaved your whiskers?

BILL.

(to le père)—Good-morning, old friend.

95
JIM.

Oh, daddy, do you know what I seen?

LA MÈRE.

Saw.

JIM.

I seen a German soldier and a Murrican soldier. The German soldier said, "You’re no good!" So the Murrican soldier took his knife and fork and cut him to pieces and ett him up.

LA MÈRE.

Ate him up.

LA PÈRE.

Where did you see all this?

JIM.

In my country. You know, my country.

BILL.

They don’t have soldiers in my country; just queens.

LA MÈRE.

Take that spoon out of your glass.

BILL.

Just queens and Peter Rabbits, old friend.

JIM.

Oh, they don’t have just queens and Peter Rabbits in countries.
BILL.

They do in my country, old friend.

JIM.

Do not.

BILL.

Do, too.

JOHN.

Whiskers, do you want to hear me rhyme one?

LA PÈRE.

Go ahead.

JOHN.

Let’s see:

Old Whiskers wanted to shave.

But his whiskers wouldn’t behave.

BILL.

In my country they arrest them when they’re bad. They call up Central 100.

"Hello, is that a police? Send a police; Jimmie’s bad.” Then they come and arrest Jimmie.

JIM.

You’re bad yourself.

BILL.

You’re bad, your own self.
JOHN.

Bill’s bad.
And so is dad.
And everybody’s bad
Except John.

LE PÈRE.

That doesn’t rhyme very well.

JOHN.

(Get down from his chair)—Whiskers, Whiskers couldn’t catch me.
Whiskers, Whiskers, couldn’t catch a flea. (Runs round the table.)

JIM.

(Get down from his chair)—Painted Necktie couldn’t catch a flea.

LE PÈRE.

You wait till I get through.

BILL.

You won’t catch me, old friend. I’ll kick you in the mouth.

LA MÈRE.

Nobody likes you when you talk like that. Nobody thinks it’s funny.

BILL.

I do, old friend.
NOT GUILTY

Characters

CORDELIA SNOW, the defendant.

MR. WILLIAMS, her counsel.

MR. FITCH, District Attorney.

THE JUDGE.

C. M. PRETTYMAN, a witness.

LARS ANDERSON, a Swedish witness.

CLERK.

JURY, spectators, newspapermen, etc.

Scene—A criminal court room in Upper Hellangone.

At rise of curtain, everybody is on the stage, standing up. They soon get
tired and sit down.

CLERK: Hear youse! Hear youse! Hear youse! This court is now in session!

JUDGE: I must warn you that this court room will be cleared if there is any munching
on gumdrops. Counsel will proceed.

FITCH (rising): Your Honor, we will prove that this defendant, Mrs. Snow, was
captured red-handed in the murder of her husband. There is no controverting the
evidence in this case. It was cold-blooded, premeditated murder.

JUDGE: Counsel will confine himself to one syllable words.

FITCH: Our first witness is C. M. Prettyman.
CLERK (*calling*): C. M. Prettyman!

(*Prettyman takes the stand and Clerk administers the oath.*)

FITCH: Mr. Prettyman, do you know this defendant, Mrs. Snow?

PRETTYMAN: Yes, sir. I live in the same building, right across the hall.

FITCH: Please state what happened on the night of May twenty-eighth.

PRETTYMAN: Well, I got drunk and came home and set around awhile and then I went over to the Snow’s apartment.

FITCH: Why?

PRETTYMAN: I thought Mr. Snow was out.

FITCH: But he was not out?

PRETTYMAN: Oh, yes, he was! He was down and out. He was dead.

JUDGE (*slapping bench*): Good!

PRETTYMAN: And Mrs. Snow stood over him revolver in hand, still smoking.

FITCH: Who?

PRETTYMAN: Both of them.

FITCH: Then what happened?

PRETTYMAN: Mrs. Snow asked me to go and call the janitor. She was expecting company and wanted the room straightened up.

FITCH: And did you call the janitor?

PRETTYMAN: I did call the janitor.

FITCH (*to Williams*): You may take the witness.

(*He sits down.*)
WILLIAMS (rising): Mr. Prettyman, are you married?

PRETTYMAN: No, sir. I’m a widow.

WILLIAMS: What did your wife die of?

PRETTYMAN: She got her throat caught between my fingers.

JUDGE: Good!

WILLIAMS (to Prettyman): That will do. (Prettyman leaves the stand and Williams sits down.)

FITCH (rising): I will call Lars Anderson.

CLERK: Lars Anderson! (Anderson takes the witness stand and Clerk administers the oath.)

FITCH: What is your name?

ANDERSON: Lars Anderson.

FITCH: I thought so. (Catcalls.) What is your occupation?

ANDERSON (assuming a Swedish dialect): I ban janitor up to the Clifton Apartments.

FITCH: Do you know the defendant?

ANDERSON (looking at Mrs. Snow): Sure, that’s the murderer.

WILLIAMS (springing up): We object to that, Your Honor!

JUDGE: Objection sustained. (To Anderson) When it’s a lady you must call her a murderess. And if she’s a Swiss lady, you can call her a Swissess.

FITCH: Now, Mr. Anderson, tell us what happened the night of May twenty-eighth.

ANDERSON: Well, my woman and me, we ban went to a picture show. We seen
Ben Turpin. He’s cross-eyed. When we got home, we ban had a fight. She wanted I should take a bath and I said no. So just then this Prettyman come to the door and says I should go up to Mrs. Snow’s apartment. That’s the murderess.

JUDGE: Good!

ANDERSON: So I ban went up to Mrs. Snow’s apartment and found Mr. Snow laying on the floor. So I got the vacuum cleaner and swept him up.

FITCH: What makes you think he was murdered?

ANDERSON: That’s what Mrs. Snow said. But she ban all the time joking.

FITCH: The State rests. *(He sits down and Anderson leaves the witness stand.)*

WILLIAMS (rising): Your Honor, we have only one witness, the murderess herself, who will take the stand in her own defense. *(Mrs. Snow goes to the witness stand and Clerk administers the oath.)* Now, Your Honor, it seems to me that we might save this little lady a great deal of embarrassment if you would scrunch this indictment. Things have came to a pretty pass when a beautiful woman has to throw away a day in court every time her husband happens to get murdered.

MRS. SNOW: Don’t mind me, Judge. I’m enjoying every minute of it.

JUDGE: Counsel will proceed.

WILLIAMS *(to Mrs. Snow)*: State your name.

MRS. SNOW: Cordelia Snow. Cordelia means warm-hearted.

JUDGE: But Snow is cold.

WILLIAMS: Now, Mrs. Snow, why did you shoot your husband?

MRS. SNOW: Oh, I don’t know—poisons is so uncertain in this climate!
WILLIAMS: But what was the occasion of your killing him?

MRS. SNOW: No special occasion—just Saturday night.

WILLIAMS: Did you and your husband quarrel very often?

MRS. SNOW: Only when we were together.

WILLIAMS: What did you quarrel about?

MRS. SNOW: Oh, anything! We were both broad-minded.

WILLIAMS: Had you quarreled with him the night of the tragedy?

MRS. SNOW: Tragedy?

WILLIAMS: The night he died.

MRS. SNOW: Oh, that! Why yes, I suppose we quarreled.

WILLIAMS: What makes you suppose you quarreled?

MRS. SNOW: Well, he was home.

WILLIAMS: And did you always quarrel when he was home?

MRS. SNOW: Oh, no! Sometimes he was home and I was out.

WILLIAMS: Did that happen very often?

MRS. SNOW: Only when I could arrange it.

WILLIAMS (to Fitch): You may take the witness. (He sits down and Fitch rises.)

FITCH: Now, Mrs. Snow, how long were you married to Snow?

MRS. SNOW: Right up to the time he died.

FITCH: I am through with the witness.

MRS. SNOW: And it’s mutual, believe me!

WILLIAMS (rising): We rest, Your Honor. (Mrs. Snow leaves the witness stand.)
JUDGE: Counsel may have one minute apiece for summing up.

WILLIAMS (rising): Your Honor and queer looking people of the jury: This case reminds me of the woman who went to the photograph gallery and asked the photographer if he took pictures of children. Stop me if you’ve heard it. Well, this woman went into a photograph gallery and asked the proprietor, Mike, if he took pictures of children. “Yes, ma’am, we do,” replied Mike. Stop me if you’ve heard this one. “Well,” said the woman, “and how much are they?” She was referring to the price of photographs of children. “Three dollars a dozen,” replied Mike, the proprietor of the photograph gallery. “Well,” said the woman smilingly, “I guess I will have to come back later. I’ve only got eleven.” Now, Your Honor and ladies and gentlemen of the jury, this case is an exact parallel of the story I have just told. This defendant, Cordelia Snow, would never have killed Snow had it not been for the fact that she still lacked a dozen husbands.

(He sits down in practically complete silence.)

JUDGE: I will now call on the district attorney, Mr. Fitch, a man who won his spurs in a Swiss livery stable and a prominent Rotarian in Fitchburg, Mass.

FITCH (rising): Your Honor and jury: This case reminds me of an even older story than that which my distinguished colleague tried so hard and failed to tell. It seems that two gentlemen, Pat and Mike, were traveling through the hill country of Kentucky. It was very still. At length they came in sight of a cabin in the clearing. The only sign of habitation was the remnants of a mule and the tall figure of a man who leaned against a tree, spearing hazel nuts. “Wonder if he can talk,” said Pat to
Mike. “Try him,” said Mike to Pat. “Well, stranger,” said Pat, “this is a great country.” “I like it,” replied the Kentuckian. “Have you lived here all your life?” asked Pat. “Not yet,” replied the Kentuckian. Now, Your Honor and friends, we demand that this defendant, Cordelia Snow, be found guilty and fined no less than five dollars and costs. (He sits down in a hubbub of quiet.)

JUDGE: Would the jury like to ask any questions?

FOREMAN: Your Honor, was the deceased the defendant’s legal husband?

JUDGE (to Fitch and Williams): How about it, boys?

FITCH AND WILLIAMS: No question about that.

FOREMAN: Well, then, who had a better right to shoot him!

JUDGE: Gentlemen, this case is out, like a Yankee pinch hitter.

(CURTAIN)
THE OTHER WORLD

Characters.

Madame Goulash, the Medium---------------------Comedy Woman.

Prof. Lyons, her assistant----------------------Comedy Man.

Goldstein, a client-----------------------------Comedy Man.

Other clients:

Avery, Leach, Mrs. Kramer, Mrs. Foster, and two or three others.

Scene: Room in an apartment in New York. A circle of chairs for the clients, with a chair in the center for Madame Goulash. At rise of curtain, everybody on the stage except Madame Goulash. Prof. Lyons is finishing the task of seating the clients. Prof. Lyons should have a distinctive voice, preferably raucous. He is dressed in a seedy looking Prince Albert. He has had enough drinks to make him breezy and confident.

Prof. Lyons.

(Stands in the center of the circle of clients, after seating them)

Our dear medium, Madame Goulash, will be with us in a moment and before she comes we may as well dispose of the unpleasant feature of the sitting. I refer to the collection of money from our visitors here tonight. Madame Goulash would like to give her séances without collections. She hates money. She loathes what I have nicknamed mazuma. In fact, the reason she is a little late in appearing tonight is because the word money was mentioned in her presence during dinner and she
became violently ill. So before she arrives, I want to have all financial matters settled.

There will be a charge of five dollars for each visitor and I assure you we would not ask for it were the money not needed for a worthy cause.

(He collects money from the clients)

Goldstein.

Prof. Lyons.

It will be spent in getting Mrs. Conan Doyle’s hair bobbed. Now then, I will explain for the benefit of neophytes that Madame Goulash is what is known as a trumpet medium. The voices from Beyond enter her body and are passed out through a trumpet, which is attached to her by a rod of ectoplasm.

Mrs. Kramer.

What is this ectoplasm?

Prof. Lyons.

(Hesitantly)

Well, it’s—

Goldstein

(Butting in)

It’s something like tripe.

Prof. Lyons.

You said a mouthful.

(Madame Goulash enters in evening dress, with a toy tin trumpet dangling at her waist. The clients rise while Prof. Lyons presents her)
The Madame!

Madame.

My friends, please resume your seats. I am sorry to be late.

(She seats herself in the center of the circle and the clients sit down)

I have been ill. Just a little strain of the ectoplasm.

Prof. Lyons.

I will now retire and leave you with the Madame. I'm sorry that I cannot remain and enjoy the session, which I am sure will prove interesting.

Madame Goulash

Good-night, Professor. And please turn out the lights.

Prof. Lyons.

Yes, Madame.

(He switches off all the lights and pretends to leave the room)

Madame Goulash

Now, my friends, on a very few occasions, my controls are so eager to talk that no urging is necessary. But in the majority of cases, it is helpful if we join in the singing of some hymn. What hymn would you like to sing?

(There is a slight pause; than a voice is heard in the darkness, presumably a spirit voice, but really the voice of Prof. Lyons.)

Prof. Lyons’ Voice.

Sing “Mammy.”
Mrs. Foster

(Startled)

Who is that?

Madame.

It’s W. T. Stead, asking us to sing “Mammy.” All right, Mr. Stead. But you must help us out.

(Prof. Lyons’ Voice, now coming from another part of the stage, starts the refrain of “Mammy.” Madame and the clients join in, some of them off the key—“Mammy, Mammy, the sun shines east, the sun shines west, but now I know where the sun shines best—”)

Prof. Lyons’ Voice

(Interrupting. Note: The “spirit voice” is always the same voice, Prof. Lyons’ voice, and each time he speaks, his voice comes from a different part of the stage)

Here I am.

Madame.

(Silencing the singers)

Hush! Somebody’s here. Who is that?

Prof. Lyons.

It’s George.

Madame.

George Who?
Goldstein.

Maybe it's George Washington.

Madame.

I believe it is.

Mrs. Foster

(Excited)

Oh, could I talk to him?

Madame.

Certainly, lady. Talk to him.

Mrs. Foster.

Is that you, George?

Prof. Lyons.

Yes, mamma.

Mrs. Foster

George Washington?

Prof. Lyons.

Yes, mamma.

Mrs. Foster

Where are you, George?

Prof. Lyons.

Halfway across the Delaware.
Wait a minute! Here's somebody else!

Prof. Lyons.

Yes, mamma.

Madame.

Who are you?

Prof. Lyons.

I'm Little Bright Eyes.

Madame.

Oh, Little Bright Eyes, I thought I recognized your voice.

Avery.

(Skeptical)

Their voices all sounds alike to me.

Madame.

(To the clients)

Now, friends, we'll hear something funny. Bright Eyes always has a joke to tell us.

Prof. Lyons.

Yes, mamma.

Goldstein.

Well, what's the joke?
Prof. Lyons.

That man is impatient, mamma.

Madame.

Yes, Bright Eyes.

Prof. Lyons.

Well, I heard a new one today. The Czar of Russia was telling it to Rasputin.

It seems there was a couple of Lithuanians, Pat and Mike, went into a saloon and Pat asked Mike if he was drinking anything. "Yes," said Mike, "anything."

Goldstein.

My golly, I don’t want to go to heaven if that’s the kind of jokes they’re telling!

Madame.

Hush! Here’s somebody else.

Prof. Lyons.

Is Abe there?

Goldstein.

This is Abe. Who wants him?

Prof. Lyons.

Hello there, Abe.

Goldstein.

It’s Cousin Julius. Is that you, Julius?
Prof. Lyons.

Yes, mamma.

Goldstein.

I ain't your mamma. I'm your Cousin Abe.

Prof. Lyons.

Yes, papa.

Goldstein.

Well, Abe, how are you?

PROF. LYONS

Fine, papa.

Goldstein.

What is it like over there?

Prof. Lyons.

Oh, it's like Heaven!

Goldstein.

How are you getting along?

Prof. Lyons.

Fine, papa. I got the hat checking privilege.

Madame.

Here's somebody else.

Prof. Lyons.

This is Bill.
Madame.

Bill who?

Prof. Lyons.

Bill Shakespeare.

Mrs. Kramer.

Just imagine! Shakespeare himself!

Madame.

Talk to him, lady.

Mrs. Kramer.

Is that you, Shakespeare?

Prof. Lyons.

Yes, mamma.

Madame.

Ask him a question.

Mrs. Kramer.

What shall I ask him?

Goldstein.

Hey, Shakespeare, did you write your own plays?

Prof. Lyons.

No, papa.

Goldstein.

Well, who wrote them?
Prof. Lyons.
Avery Hopwood.
(He imitates a dog’s bark)
Leach.
What’s that?
Madame.
That’s God’s Airedale. Now, my friends, I suppose you’ve heard of Conan Doyle’s spirit photography. It is my pleasure to announce that I will be able to show you some pictures of the dead and gone. These pictures were taken by a friend of mine who passed away two weeks ago and took a Kodak with him.
Mrs. Foster.
Do you mean to say we’re actually going to see pictures of the dead?
Madame.
Yes. Pictures of the dead and gone.
(As this line is spoken, a photograph begins to appear on the wall. At first it is dim, but becomes plain. The room remains in darkness and only the picture is visible to the audience. It is a picture of Conan Doyle)
Goldstein
Why, it’s Conan Doyle himself!
Mrs. Kramer.
But he ain’t dead.
Madame.

He ain’t dead, but he’s gone.

(The picture fades out)

Mrs. Foster

I’d like to see a picture of real dead people.

Madame

All right.

(Another photograph appears. This time it is William Jennings Bryan)

Leach.

It’s W. J. Bryan!

Avery.

Is he dead?

Madame.

Oh, years ago. Talk to him somebody.

Goldstein.

Is that you, Bryan?

Prof. Lyons.

Yes, papa.

Goldstein.

What are you doing in heaven?

Prof. Lyons.

I’m over here after Darwin. He’s been trying to make a monkey out of me.
(The picture fades out)

Goldstein.

Well, we've heard voices and we've seen a couple of pictures, but we ain't seen no spirits.

Madame.

Ah, the gentleman wants to see a materialization. He shall be accommodated. We will now materialize a spirit and it will be a relative of some one right in this room. I can't tell you who. But one of you will recognize it.

(As she finishes speaking, a strange figure appears in the flesh. It is Prof. Lyons, but he is made up in a crazy costume so that it is hard to recognize him. As soon as he is visible, each client identifies him as some relative of his or hers. The following lines are spoken almost simultaneously.)

Mrs. Kramer.

Aunt Lucy!

Goldstein.

Uncle Benny!

Mrs. Foster.

Grandpa!

Avery.

My first wife!

Leach.

Cousin Sarah!
THE BULL PEN

CAST OF CHARACTERS

BILL CARNEY, a pitcher. ....................Al Ochs

CY WALTERS, a pitcher. ....................Will Rogers

JOE WEBB, a Busher. ......................Andy Tombes

SCENE: "Bull Pen" at the Polo Grounds during a game between the Yankees and Cleveland. Bill and Cy are seated on empty boxes.

JOE: What innings is it?

CY: Third.

JOE: What's the score?

CY: One and one. And in case you don't know who's playing, it's us and Cleveland. And you're in the American League.

JOE: I know what league I'm in and I know what league I wisht I was in. I wisht I was back in the Central League.

CY: Looks to me like you was going to get your wish.

JOE: They'll keep me longer than they will you.

CY: Well, I've got a good start on you. You only been here part of one season and I was here all last year besides.

JOE: Yes, but how many games did you pitch?

CY: Well, I pitched 154 games last year and about fifty so far this year. And I pitched 'em all right here where we're standing. Some guys gets all swelled up over

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pitching one no-hit game. Well, the Yankees has played over 200 games since I been
with them and nobody's got a hit off me yet.

JOE: I wisht I was where they paid some attention to a man.

CY: That's what I wished the first part of last season. But the last part of the
season, I wished they'd ignore me entirely. I used to make ugly faces at Huggins in
hopes he'd get mad and quit speaking to me. But just before every game he'd say, "Go
down to the Bull Pen and warm up." WARM UP! Say, there may be better pitchers
than me in this league, but there ain't none that's hotter.

BILL (commenting on game): Bob was lucky to get by that inning! Did you
see that one Scotty grabbed off Speaker?

JOE: Them guys don't know how to pitch to Speaker.

CY (gives him a look): No? How would you pitch to him?

JOE: First I'd give him my fast one—

CY: Hold on! Now you're pitching to the next batter. Speaker's on third base.

JOE: How would he get to third base?

CY: He'd slide.

JOE: You ain't seen my fast one when I'm right. It goes zooy! (Makes motion
with hands.)

CY: Yes, and after it bounced off Speaker's bat, it'd go zeet! (Makes similar
motion.) Especially this ball they're using these days—with a raisin in it.

BILL: The Babe's up. (Without raising his voice) Come on, Babe! Bust one!

JOE: He wouldn't bust one if I was pitching!
CY: How would you pitch to him?

JOE: High and on the outside.

CY: And that's just where it'd go.

BILL: No, he popped up.

JOE: Just the same, I bet Ruth's glad I ain't with some other club.

CY: He don't know you ain't.

JOE: I bet he don't break no home run record this year.

CY: Look how long he was out!

JOE: Well, it was his own fault. I bet if I'd went barnstorming, Landis wouldn't of dast suspend me that long!

CY: He wouldn't of suspended you at all. He wouldn't of never heard about it.

BILL: Coveleskie must have something in there. He made Baker pop up!

JOE: I wisht I could go in there to the bench.

CY: What for?

JOE (with a self-conscious smile): Well, do you remember before the game, when I was up there throwing to Schang? Well, they was a swell dame come in and set down right behind our bench. She looked like a Follies dame. And she give me some smile!

CY: She done well to keep from laughing outright.

JOE: She was trying to make me.

CY: She was trying to make you out.

JOE: I bet if Huggins had of left me stay on the bench, I'd be all set by now.
CY: Yes, and that's why Huggins don't let you stay on the bench. He told me
the other day, he says, "Cy, old pal, I hope it won't bother you to have this gargoyle
down there warming up with you all the time. But it's against the rules to have gals
on the bench, and if he was there I simply couldn't keep them off." He says, "I've got
a hard enough bunch to manage without adding Peggy Hopkins."

JOE: How do you know that's her name?

CY: Oh, I seen her looking at you and I asked one o f the ushers.

JOE: Peggy Hopkins! Do you know if she's married?

CY: I can't keep track.

JOE: Do you s'pose her name's in the book?

CY: Well, seems like I've seen it in print somewheres.

JOE (as if to memorize it): Peggy Hopkins.

BILL: Bob's wild. It's three and nothing on Sewell.

CY (to Joe): You better cut loose a little, kid. This may be our day.

JOE: Not both of us.

CY: Sure, providing he picks you first. (Slight pause.) But, listen, kid, if I
was you I'd leave the dames alone. Wait till you've made good.

JOE: I ain't after no dames. But I can't help the looks they give me.

CY: No more than you can help the looks God give you. And he certainly
didn't spread himself.

BILL: He's walked Sewell.

JOE: The gals seem to think I look O.K.
CY: How do you know?

JOE: The way they act. Do you remember that poor little kid in New Orleans?

CY: What kid?

JOE: The telephone gal in the hotel. She was down to the depot when we went away. But I ducked her. And that dame in Philadelphia.

CY: What do you owe her?

JOE: I don't owe you nothin', but she was out to the game every day, tryin' to flirt.

CY: Oh, that woman!

JOE: What woman?

CY: That's the woman that goes to the games in Philadelphia. You know those Philadelphia fans? Well, she's their sister.

JOE: I don't know who she is, but she certainly made eyes at me.

CY: She don't mean to make eyes. That's a nervous disease. She's been looking at the Athletics for six years. But you want to quit thinking about the dames and pay attention to your work.

JOE: I pay attention to my work!

CY: Well, at that, I can see you've made quite a study of the batters. You know how to pitch to Speaker and Ruth.

JOE: Yes, and some of them other high monkey monks.

CY: Well, how would you go to work on George Sisler?

JOE: Say, that guy won't never get a hit off me.
CY: I guess you're right. He told me one day that when he was through in the big league, he was through.

BILL: There goes Gardner. Another base on balls.

JOE: But there's one guy I could fool, is Sisler!

CY: Oh, anybody could fool him.

JOE: Well, how would you fool him?

CY: I'd say, "Hit this one, George." And then I'd throw him an orange. Then there's another way I bet I could fool him. I could say, "George, come out to the house to dinner to-night. My wife's a great cook. We live at 450 Riverside Drive."

When he got there, he'd find out I don't live at that address, and besides, I ain't married.

JOE: Well, I'd like to get a chance at him. And another guy I'd like to pitch against is Cobb.

CY: Irvin?

JOE: That ain't his name is it?

CY: You mean the man that writes the outfield for Detroit. That's Irvin.

JOE: That's right, Irvin.

BILL: He hit O'Neill in the arm. The bases is choked, boys.

CY (to Joe): Put something on her, kid! If he can just get Coveleskie!

(warming up at top speed) Listen, kid, if you get in, don't be scared to cut loose!

You got nothing to lose.

JOE: Do you think it'll be me?
CY: Well, it's one of us.

BILL (with feeling): Damn! Damn! And he had a double play right in front of him. Cy! He's waving to you!

CY (jumps up and tears off his sweater): Get out of the way, boy! He wants me in there! (JOE, dazed, gets out of his way and mournfully goes to the bench and sits down. CY throws one ball.)

CY: I'm ready. (He picks up his sweater and goes off-stage, carrying it on his arm.)

JOE: A fine manager we're workin' for!

(Curtain)
THE TRIDGET OF GREVA (1)

Translated from the Wymie

Characters

Louis Barhooter, The Tridget (Comedy Lead).

Desire' Corby, a Corn Vitter (Comedy Lead).

Basil Laffler, a Wham Salesman (Straight Lead).

(Translator’s note: Virtually the entire population of Greva suffers from vertigo.

An interior set. Barhooter, Corby, and Laffler are seated in three flat-bottom boats, the oars of which are either resting in the boats or dragging on the stage. One boat is at one side of the stage, another in the middle, and the third at the other side. Laffler is in the middle boat. The three men are “fishing” with regulation poles and lines. Corby’s and Laffler’s hooks are baited with small fish. Barhooter’s hook is bare. The men occasionally change their lines from one side of the boat to the other. The lines become tangled once in a while and are separated again with difficulty. Every little while one of the “fishermen” manipulates an oar as if changing the position of his boat; also every little while, one of them reels in his line and looks to see if there is anything on it, or if his bait is all right. The men are all elaborately rigged out in fishing costumes and each boat is equipped with a pail, tackle boxes and other fishing paraphernalia.

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Laffler

Well, boys, any luck?

(He looks from one to the other. Neither makes any reply, merely glaring at him as if annoyed)

Corby

(After a pause, to Barhooter)

How's your wife, Louis?

Barhooter

She's in pretty bad shape.

Corby

(Who has paid no attention to the reply)

That's fine.

Barhooter

By the way, she and I had a little argument last night about your mother. What was your mother's name before she was married?

Corby

I didn't know her then.

Laffler

Do they allow people to fish at the aquarium?

(Barhooter and Corby ignore him)

Barhooter

(To Corby)
Well, then, what was your mother’s first name?

Corby

I don’t know.

Barhooter

Do you mean to say that you don’t know your mother’s first name?

Corby

Why, no. I always called her mother.

Barhooter

But your father must have called her something.

Corby

I should say he did! Everything he could think of!

(Laffler’s and Barhooter’s fishlines become tangled. Barhooter gets out of his boat, untangles the lines and resumes his place in the boat)

Barhooter

(To Corby)

I wanted to ask you something about your sister, too.

Corby

What about her?

Barhooter

What’s the matter with her?

Corby

Who?
Barhooter

Your sister.

Corby

I'm not married.

(After a pause, Barhooter and Corby both laugh)

Barhooter

(To Laffler)

Do you know what we were laughing at?

Laffler

No. What?

Barhooter

I thought you might know.

Corby

(To Barhooter)

Which way is the wind from?

Barhooter

(Moistens his finger and holds it up)

It's from offstage.

(He draws in his line, discovers that the bait is gone)

He got my bait.

(Re-baits his hook and throws the line in again)
Corby

(To Barhooter)

Where is your brother now?

Barhooter

He’s in the states. I had a letter from him yesterday.

Corby

(Laughs shortly)

That’s a hot one!

Barhooter

What do you mean?

Corby

Trying to make me believe you’ve got a brother that can write.

Barhooter

I never said he wrote it himself. And besides, the letter said he’d been too drunk to write.

Corby

Drunk! In the United States! I thought they didn’t sell Liquor there any more.

Barhooter

Who?

Corby

I hear you’re an uncle.
Barhooter

Yes, and do you want to hear what happened?

Corby

No.

Barhooter

Well, two days before the baby was born, Bertha and her husband were out
driving and they were going up a steep hill and Harry tried to change into first speed,
but he made a mistake and got it in reverse and the car went clear to the bottom of the
hill in reverse.

Corby

Anybody hurt?

Barhooter

No, but the baby is very backward.

Laffler

Boys, I believe we are going to have a storm.

(The others pay no attention to him)

Corby

(To Barhooter)

Seems to me there’s something the matter with all your sister’s children.

Look at Julia.

(Barhooter and Laffler both look in all directions, as if trying to locate Julia)
Barhooter

(To Corby)

Can you imitate birds?

Corby

No. Can you?

Barhooter

No.

(After a pause)

I guess neither of us can imitate birds.

(To Laffler)

Hey, you! Can you imitate birds?

Laffler

No.

Barhooter

Can you imitate fish?

Laffler

No.

Corby

I can. What kind of fish do you want me to imitate?

Barhooter

You do the imitation and I’ll guess what kind of fish it is.
Corby

All right.

(Sits on the side of the boat)

What kind of fish is this?(135,238),(369,296)

Barhooter

A perch.

Corby

(Resumes his seat)

And what is this?

(Tries to get up from his seat, but trembles all over like an old man)

Barhooter

A weakfish. Now I’ll give you one.

(Takes the oars and “rows” violently)

Corby

Shad roe.

Laffler

Now watch me. I’ll imitate one.

(He does some business, but the other two ignore him)

Corby

(To Barhooter)

Louis, have you ever saved a life?
Barhooter

(Hesitatingly)

Well, yes, I have, but I don’t like to talk about it.

Corby

Of course, you don’t. I’m sorry I mentioned it. Forget all about it.

Barhooter

No. As long as you brought it up, you might as well get it straight. It happened last--

Corby

(Interrupting)

Never mind! I know you don’t want to tell it!

Barhooter

(Insisting)

It happened last summer. I was walking across a railroad bridge over the Niagara River. Suddenly I heard a cry. A little girl was running toward me. There was a mad dog chasing her.

Corby

How do you know he was mad?

Barhooter

He was calling her names. Well, I had read in a book that mad dogs have hydrophobia. That means they hate water.
Corby

Who doesn't!

Barhooter

Mad dogs won't go where water is. So I shouted, "Never fear, little girl; I'll save you." And I pushed her off the bridge.

Corby

That reminds me of a question I've wanted to ask you a long time. When you shave, what do you do with your old whiskers?

Barhooter

Why, I don't do anything with them.

Corby

Well, will you save them for me?

Barhooter

What do you do with them?

Corby

I play with them.

Laffler

Has either of you gentlemen ever been abroad?

Corby

I go four or five times a year.

Laffler

Don't you love it!
Barhooter

I don’t. I get sick every time I cross.

Laffler

How often have you crossed?

Barhooter

Just once.

Corby

(To Barhooter)

What ship did you come over on, Louis?

Barhooter

The Steerage.

Corby

I came over on the Mastodonic. They called it a floating palace.

Laffler

Well, was it?

Corby

No. It didn’t even float.

Laffler

Do you mean that it sank?

Corby

I do.
Laffler

Where?

Corby

In the ocean. Where do ships generally sink, in church?

Laffler

But what did you do?

Corby

What was there to do! We had to wait for the next ship.

Laffler

What time did the next ship come along?

Corby

Three in the morning. We had to stay up to catch it.

Barhooter

By the way, Corby, where were you born?

Corby

In Bed. Where were you born?

Barhooter

Me? I was born out of wedlock.

Corby

That's a mighty pretty country around there.

Laffler

Are you married, Mr.--?
Corby

Yes, twice.

Laffler

Is your first wife still living?

Corby

No/

Laffler

What did she die of?

Corby

She got her throat caught between my fingers.

Barhooter

Are you still living in town, Corby?

Corby

Yes.

Barhooter

That’s silly. Why don’t you be like me and live on a farm and raise pigs?

Corby

Do you have much luck with your pigs?

Barhooter

Oh, we never play for money.

Corby

We were expecting you at the house Saturday night.
Barhooter

Yes, and I wanted to come. But I had to go and call on my aunt. She’s got eczema.

Corby

I bet she was itching to see you. By the way, did she ever get married to that Pearson or whatever his name was?

Barhooter

No. She found out he had falling arches. So she left him flatfooted. Did you ever meet him?

Corby

Yes, you introduced him to me. It was the night you borrowed that nickel off me.

Barhooter

Haven’t you forgot that yet?

Corby

Well, you never paid it back.

Barhooter

I know, but a nickel! The way you keep crabbing about it, anybody would think it was a dime!

(He lifts his fishline from wherever it was and tosses it into the orchestra pit)

Laffler

(To Corby)
Mr. Corby--

Corby

Well?

Laffler

I've got to run down to Washington next week. I'm going to try to see the President.

Corby

What of it?

Laffler

Well, I never met him and I wondered if you'd give me a letter to him.

Corby

Me?

Laffler

Why, yes. Aren't you and the President pretty close?

Corby

He is.

(Barhooter's line grows taut and his pole bends)

Barhooter

(excited)

Boys, I've got a strike.

(The others share his excitement. His line comes up from the orchestra pit; hooked onto the end of it is the bottom of a shoe. Barhooter tries to "land" it)
Laffler

What is it? A flounder?

Corby

It’s a sole!

(As Barhooter is about to swing the “fish” into the boat, the sole of the shoe drops off, leaving him only the heel)

Barhooter

(dissapointed)

No. It isn’t a sole. Only a ‘eel.

Curtain.
THE TRIDGET OF GREWA (2)
Translated from the Squînc

CHARACTERS

LOUIS BARHOOTER, the Tridget

DESIRE CORBY, a Corn Vitter

BASIL LAFFLER, a Wham Salesman

At the rise of the curtain, BARHOOTER, CORBY and LAFFLER are seated in three small flat-bottomed boats. They are fishing.

LAFFLER

Well, boys, any luck?

[He looks from one to the other. Neither pays any attention]

CORBY

[After a pause, to BARHOOTER] How’s your wife, Louis?

BARHOOTER

She’s in pretty bad shape.

CORBY

[Who has paid no attention to the reply] That’s fine!

BARHOOTER

By the way, what was your mother’s name before she was married?

CORBY

I didn’t know her then.
Laffler

Do they allow people to fish at the Aquarium?

[Barhooter and Corby ignore him]

Barhooter

You sure must know her first name.

Corby

I don’t. I always called her Mother.

Barhooter

But your father must have called her something.

Corby

That’s a hot one!

[Laffler’s and Barhooter’s fishlines become entangled. Barhooter gets out of his boat, untangles the lines, and resumes his place in the boat]

Barhooter

[To Corby] I wanted to ask you something about your sister, too.

Corby

What about her?

Barhooter

Just anything. For instance, what’s the matter with her?

Corby

Who?

Barhooter

Your sister.
CORBY

I'm not married. [After a pause, BARHOOTER and CORBY both laugh]

BARHOOTER

[To LAFFLER] Do you know what we were laughing at?

LAFFLER

I have no idea.

BARHOOTER

I wish I knew who to ask. [He moistens his finger and holds it up]

The wind's from offstage. [He draws in his line, discovers the bait is gone] That fellow got my bait. [He throws his line "in" again without baiting the hook]

CORBY

I understand you're an uncle.

BARHOOTER

Yes, my sister is expecting a baby.

CORBY

On what train?

BARHOOTER

Yes, and do you want to hear what happened?

CORBY

No.

BARHOOTER

Well I'll tell you, two days before the baby was born, Big Bertha—that's my
sister—she and her husband—that’s her husband—they were driving up a steep manhole and Harry tried to change into second speed.

CORBY

Who is Harry?

BARHOOTER

The fellow who was driving. He was Big Bertha’s husband at the time.

He shifted into reverse by mistake and the car went clear to the bottom of the hill.

CORBY

In reverse?

BARHOOTER

Yes. And the baby is very backward.

CORBY

It seems to me there is something wrong with all your sister’s children. Look at Julia! [LAFFLER looks in all directions, as if to locate Julia]

LAFFLER

Where?

BARHOOTER

[To CORBY] Can you imitate birds?

CORBY

I don’t know. I never tried.

BARHOOTER

I wish you’d ask somebody—somebody you can rely on. [To LAFFLER] Can you imitate birds?
LAFFLER

No. Why?

BARHOOTER

I'm always afraid I'll be near somebody that can imitate birds.

CORBY

[To BARHOOTER] That reminds me, Louis—Do you shave yourself?

BARHOOTER

Who would I shave?

CORBY

Well, when you shave, what do you do with your old whiskers?

BARHOOTER

I don't do anything with them.

CORBY

Will you save them for me?

BARHOOTER

What do you do with them?

CORBY

I play with them.

BARHOOTER

[With no apparent interest] You're a scream, Corby. Where were you born?

CORBY

In bed. Where were you born?
BARHOOTER

Me? I was born out of wedlock.

CORBY

That's a mighty pretty country around there.

LAFFLER

[to CORBY] Mr. Corby—

CORBY

Well?

LAFFLER

I often wonder how you spell your name.

CORBY

A great many people have asked me that. The answer is, I don't even try. I just let it go.

LAFFLER

I think that's kind of risky.

BARHOOTER

[to LAFFLER] If I were you, I'd wait till some one asked me what I thought. You're just making a fool of yourself.

LAFFLER

I'm getting hungry. I wish we could catch some fish.

BARHOOTER

I'm hungry, too, but not for fish.
CORBY

I can’t eat fish either. I’ve got no teeth. [Opens his mouth and shows his teeth] About all I can eat is broth.

BARHOOTER

Well, let’s go to a brothel.

LAFFLER

Let’s–

BLACK OUT
THOMPSON'S VACATION: 
PLAY IN TWO ACTS

CHARACTERS:

THOMPSON, a plain citizen.
HAINES, another.
DILLON, another.

ACT I

AUGUST 28. The smoking car of a city-bound suburban train. Thompson is sitting alone. Haines comes in, recognizes him and takes the seat beside him.

HAINES: Hello there, Thompson.
THOMPSON: Hello, Mr. Haines.
HAINES: What's the good word?
THOMPSON: Well—
HAINES: How's business?
THOMPSON: I don't know. I've been on a vacation for two weeks.
HAINES: Where was you?
THOMPSON: Atlantic City.
HAINES: Where did you stop?
THOMPSON: At the Edgar.
HAINES: The Edgar! Who steered you to that joint?
THOMPSON: I liked it all right.

HAINES: Why didn't you go to the Wallace? Same prices and everything up to date. How did you happen to pick out a dirty old joint like the Edgar?

THOMPSON: I thought it was all right.

HAINES: What did you do to kill time down there?

THOMPSON: Oh, I swam and went to a couple of shows and laid around!

HAINES: Didn't you go up in the air?

THOMPSON: No.

HAINES: That's the only thing there is to do in Atlantic City, is go up in the air. If you didn't do that, you didn't do nothing.

THOMPSON: I never been up.

HAINES: That's all they is to do down there, especially in August, when it's so hot.

THOMPSON: They was generally always a breeze.

HAINES: Yes, I know what that breeze is in August. It's like a blast out of a furnace. Did you go in any of them cabarets?

THOMPSON: Yes, I was in the Mecca and the Garden.

HAINES: Wasn't you in the La Marne?

THOMPSON: No.

HAINES: If you wasn't in the La Marne, you didn't see nothing.

THOMPSON: I had some real beer in the Mecca.

HAINES: Say, that stuff they give you in the Mecca is dishwater. They's only
one place in Atlantic City to get real beer. That's the Wonderland. Didn't you make
the Wonderland?

THOMPSON: No.

HAINES: Then you didn't have no real beer. Did you meet many dames?

THOMPSON: Only a couple of them. But they was pips!

HAINES: Pips! You don't see no real pips down there in August. The time to
catch the pips down there is—well, June, July, September, May, or any time in the fall
or winter or spring. You don't see them there in August. Did you go fishing?

THOMPSON: No.

HAINES: Oh, they's great fishing around there! If you didn't go fishing, you
didn't do nothing.

THOMPSON (rising): Well, here we are.

HAINES: I think you're a sucker to pick out August for a vacation. May or
June or September, that's the time for a vacation.

THOMPSON: Well, see you again.

ACT II

Four minutes later. A downtown subway express. Thompson is hanging on a
strap. Dillon enters and hangs on the next strap.

DILLON: Hello there, Thompson.

THOMPSON: Hello.

DILLON: How's everything?
THOMPSON: All right, I guess.

DILLON: Ain't you been on a vacation?

THOMPSON: Yeah.

DILLON: What kind of a time did you have?

THOMPSON: Rotten.

DILLON: Where was you?

THOMPSON: Nowhere.
CLEMO UTI—"THE WATER LILIES"

CHARACTERS

PADRE, a Priest.

SETHSO

Both Twins.

GETHSO

WAYSHATTEN, a Shepherd's Boy.

TWO CAPITALISTS.*

WAMA Tammisch, her daughter.

KLEMA, a Janitor's third daughter.

KEVELA, their mother, afterwards their aunt.

[TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: This show was written as if people were there to see it.]

ACT I.

(The Outskirts of a Parchesi Board. People are wondering what has become of the discs. They quit wondering and sit up and sing the following song.)

CHORUS

What has become of the discs?

What has become of the discs?

We took them at our own risks,

*Note: The two Capitalists don't appear in this show.
But what has become of the discs?

(WAMA enters from an exclusive waffle parlor. She exits as if she had had waffles.)

ACTS II & III.

(These two acts were thrown out because nothing seemed to happen.)

ACT IV.

(A silo. Two rats have got in there by mistake. One of them seems diseased. The other looks at him. They go out. Both rats come in again and wait for a laugh. They don’t get it, and go out. Wama enters from an offstage barn. She is made up to represent the Homecoming of Casanova. She has a fainting spell. She goes out.)

KEVELA

Where was you born?

PADRE

In Adrian, Michigan.

KEVELA

Yes, but I thought I was confessing to you.

(The Padre goes out on an old-fashioned high-wheel bicycle. He acts as if he had never ridden many of them. He falls off and is brought back. He is in pretty bad shape.)
ACT V.

(A Couple of Salesmen enter. They are trying to sell Portable Houses. The rest of the cast don’t want Portable Houses.)

REST OF THE CAST

We don’t want Portable Houses.

(The Salesmen become hysterical and walk off-stage left.)

KEVELA

What a man!

WAYSHATTEN (the Shepherd’s Boy)

Why wasn’t you out there this morning to help me look after my sheep?

CHORUS OF ASSISTANT SHEPHERDS

Why did you lay there asleep
When you should of looked after his sheep?
Why did you send telegrams
When you should of looked after his lambs?
Why did you sleep there, so old,
When you should of looked after his fold?

SETHSO

Who is our father?

GETHSO

What of it? We’re twins, ain’t we?
WAMA

Hush, clemo uti (the Water Lilies).

(Two queels enter, overcome with water lilies. They both make fools of themselves. They don’t seem to have any self-control. They quiver. They want to play the show over again, but it looks useless.)

SHADES
I. GASPIRI
(THE UPHOLSTERERS):
A DRAMA IN THREE ACTS

Adapted from the Bukovinan of Casper Redmonda

CHARACTERS

IAN OBRI, a Blotter Salesman.

JOHAN WASPER, his wife.

GRETA, their daughter.

HERBERT SWOPE, a nonentity.

FFENA, their daughter, later their wife.

EGSO, a Pencil Guster.

TONO, a Typical Wastebasket.

ACT I

(A public street in a bathroom. A man named Tupper has evidently just taken
a bath. A man named Brindle is now taking a bath. A man named Newburn comes
out of the faucet which has been left running. He exits through the exhaust. Two
strangers to each other meet on the bath mat.)

FIRST STRANGER

Where was you born?
SECOND STRANGER

Out of wedlock.

FIRST STRANGER

That’s a mighty pretty country around there.

SECOND STRANGER

Are you married?

FIRST STRANGER

I don’t know. There’s a woman living with me, but I can’t place her.

(Three outsiders named Klein go across the stage three times. They think they are in a public library. A woman’s cough is heard off-stage left.)

A NEW CHARACTER

Who is that cough?

TWO MOORS

That is my cousin. She died a little while ago in a haphazard way.

A GREEK

And what a woman she was!

(The curtain is lowered for seven days to denote the lapse of a week.)

ACT III

(The Lincoln Highway. Two bearded glue lifters are seated at one side of the road.)

(TRANSLATOR’S NOTE: The principal industry in Phlace is hoarding hay. Peasants sit alongside of a road on which hay wagons are likely to pass. When a hay
wagon does pass, the hay hoarders leap from their points of vantage and help themselves to a wisp of hay. On an average a hay hoarder accumulates a ton of hay every four years. This is called Mah Jong.)

FIRST GLUE LIFTER

Well, my man, how goes it?

SECOND GLUE LIFTER

(Sings "My Man," to show how it goes.)

(Eight realtors cross the stage in a friendly way. They are out of place.)

CURTAIN
TAXIDEA AMERICANA

A Play In Six Acts,

Translated from the Mastoid by Ring W. Lardner

Characters.

Fred Rullman, an acorn huckster.

Old Chloe, their colored mammy.

Thomas Gregory, a poltroon.

Mrs. Gregory, his mother, afterwards his wife.

Phoebe, engaged to old Chloe.

Prof. Schwartz, instructor in Swiss at Wisconsin.

Buddy, their daughter.

Students, policemen, members of the faculty, sailors, etc.

Time—The present.

Place—Madison, Wisconsin.

ACT 1.

(In front of the library. Two students in the agricultural college creep across the stage with a seed in their hands. They are silent, as they cannot place one another. Durand and Von Tilzer come down the library steps and stand with their backs to the audience as if in a quandary).
DURAND

Any news from home?

(They go off stage left. Senator LaFollette enters from right and
practices sliding to base for a few moments. Ruby Barron comes down the library
steps.)

RUBY

Hello, Senator. What are you practicing, sliding to base?

(The Senator goes out left. Ruby does some tricks with cards and re-enters
the library completely baffled. Two students in the pharmacy college, Pat and
Mike, crawl on stage from left and fill more than one prescription. On the second
refrain Pat takes the obbligato).

PAT

I certainly feel sorry for people on the ocean tonight.

MIKE

What makes you think so?

PAT

You can call me whatever you like as long as you don’t call me down.

(They laugh).

CURTAIN

(Note: Acts 2, 3, and 4 are left out through an oversight).
ACT 5.

(Camp Randall. It is just before the annual game between Wisconsin and the Wilmerding School for the Blind. The Wisconsin band has come on the field and the cheer leaders are leading the Wisconsin battle hymn).

CHORUS

Far above Cayuga's waters with its waves of blue,
On Wisconsin, Minnesota and Bully for old Purdue.
Notre Dame, we yield to thee! Ohio State, hurrah!
We'll drink a cup o' kindness yet in praise of auld Nassau!

(The Wilmerding rooters applaud and then sing their own song).

CHORUS

We are always there on time!
We are the Wilmerding School for the Blind!
Better backfield, better line!
We are the Wilmerding School for the Blind!
Yea!

(Coach Ryan of Wisconsin appears on the field fully dressed and announces that the game is postponed to permit Referee Birch to take his turn in the barber's chair. The crowd remains seated till the following Tuesday, when there is a general tendency to go home).

CURTAIN
ACT 3.

(Note: The coaches suddenly decide to send in Act 3 in place of Act 6. A livery barn in Stoughton. Slam Anderson, a former Wisconsin end, is making faces at the horses and they are laughing themselves sick. Slam goes home. Enter Dr. Boniface, the landlord of a switch engine on the Soo lines. From the other direction, Farmer Hookle enters on a pogo stick).

DR. BONIFACE

Hello, there, Hookle! I hear you are specializing in hogs.

HOOKLE

I don't know where you heard it, but it's the absolute truth.

DR. BONIFACE

Well, do you have much luck with your hogs?

HOOKLE

Oh, we never play for money.

CURTAIN
CORA, OR FUN AT A SPA:
AN EXPRESSIONIST DRAMA OF LOVE AND DEATH AND SEX—
IN THREE ACTS

CHARACTERS

(In the order in which I admire them)

A FRIEND OF THE PRESIDENT

PLOAGUE BENNETT, AN EMBRYO STEEPLEJACK

ELSA, THEIR WARD

MANAGER OF THE PUMP ROOM

A MAN WHO LOOKS A GOOD DEAL LIKE HEYWOOD BROUN

MRS. TYLER*

CORA

POULTRY, GAME IN SEASON, Etc.

ACT I

A Pharmacy at a Spa. The Proprietor is at present out of the city and Mrs. Tyler is taking his place. She is a woman who seems to have been obliged to leave school while in the eighth grade. Plague Bennett enters. His mother named him Plague as tribute to her husband, who died of it. As Plague enters, Mrs. Tyler is seen replacing a small vial in a case behind the counter.

*Mrs. Tyler appears only when one of the other characters is out of the city.
PLAGUE: Well, Mrs. T.

MRS. TYLER: "Mrs. T." indeed! I see you’re still the same old Plague!

PLAGUE: What are you doing?

MRS. TYLER: What do I look like I was doing, spearing eels? I’m just putting this bottle of germs back in its place. The little fellows were trying to escape. They said they didn’t like it here. I said, “Don’t bacilli!”

(A Friend of the President enters)

PLAGUE: Hello, Doctor.

(He calls him Doctor)

FRIEND OF THE PRESIDENT: (As if to himself) That old devil sea!

PLAGUE: Well, Doctor, I’m going to Washington tomorrow.

(He repeatedly calls him Doctor)

FRIEND OF THE PRESIDENT: What of it?

PLAGUE: Well, they tell me you and the President are pretty close.

FRIEND OF THE PRESIDENT: He is.

(END OF FIRST ACT)

ACT II

A poultry yard at a Spa. The chairs and tables are in disarray as if a blotter salesman had been making his rounds. The Manager of the Pump Room is out of the city and the poultry are being fed by Mrs. Tyler. A Dead Ringer for David Belasco enters, crosses stage.
MRS. TYLER: You old master you! (Aside) I can never tell whether he's in first speed or reverse.

(Dead Ringer for David Belasco exits. Manager of the Pump Room returns to the city unexpectedly and Mrs. Tyler goes into pictures. Manager of the Pump Room stands in center stage as if he had been everywhere)

MANAGER OF THE PUMP ROOM: (Aside) I wonder what is keeping Elsa.

(Looks right) Ah! There she comes now, dancing as usual!

(Elsa enters left, fooling him completely. She is not even dancing. She looks as if she had taken a bath)

ELSA: Well——

MANAGER OF THE PUMP ROOM: (Turns and sees her) Elsa! I was just thinking about you. I was wondering what was keeping you.

ELSA: I presume you mean who.

(The curtain is lowered and raised to see if it will work)

MANAGER OF THE PUMP ROOM: What's the difference between that curtain and Ziegfeld?

ELSA: It works. And that reminds me that I just met a man who looks something like Heywood Broun. Here he comes now, dancing as usual.

(A Man Who Looks A Good Deal Like Heywood Broun enters)

MANAGER OF THE PUMP ROOM: (Aside) I'll say so!

MAN WHO LOOKS A GOOD DEAL LIKE HEYWOOD BROUN: What's that?

MANAGER OF THE PUMP ROOM: Why, this young lady was just saying she
thought you looked something like Heywood Broun.

MAN WHO Etc.: *(Throwing confetti in all directions)* She’s conservative.

(END OF SECOND ACT)

ACT III

*A Mixed Grill at a Spa. Two Milch Cows sit at a table in one corner, playing draughts. In another corner is seated a gigantic zebu.*

FIRST MILCH COW: Don’t you feel a draught?

SECOND MILCH COW: No. But we’d better be going. That gigantic zebu is trying to make us.

FIRST MILCH COW: He thinks he is a cow catcher.

SECOND MILCH COW: *(As they rise)* They say there are still a great many buffaloes in Yellowstone Park.

FIRST MILCH COW: So I herd.

*(The Milch Cows go out, followed at a distance by the Zebu. Cora enters.)*

She is dressed in the cat’s pajamas. *She looks as if she had once gone on an excursion to the Delaware Water Gap)*

CORA: *(Aside)* I wonder if it could be!

*(Plague Bennett and A Friend of the President enter in time to overhear her remark)*

PLAGUE: *(To Friend of the President)* Go on without me, Doctor. *(He still calls him Doctor. Friend of the President exits and Plague turns to Cora)* You
wonder if it could be who?

CORA: Why, I just met a man who looks a little like Heywood Broun. Here he comes now, dancing as usual.

(A Man Who Looks A Good Deal Like Heywood Broun enters)

PLAGUE: (Aside) He does, at that!

MAN WHO Etc.: At what?

PLAGUE: This little lady was just saying she thought you looked a little like Heywood Broun.

MAN WHO Etc.: A little! She's putting it mildly!

(Finds he is out of confetti and exits. A poisoned rat dashes into the open air, seeking water)

PLAGUE: That rat acts like he was poisoned.

CORA: God! You ought to saw me last night!

(END OF THIRD ACT)
THE GELSKA CUP

(This was the prize college play at Gelska for the year 1925. It turned out to be a terrible flop.)

CHARACTERS

DEAN HUSSEY OF THE PHARMACAL SCHOOL
DEAN INGE
DEAN CORNWALL
GUNGHA DEAN
COACH POISON OF THE CREW
PALSY, a Toe Dancer
"CHUB" HOLT
MEMBERS OF THE CREW
A WEAKFISH
CO-EDS, VASSAR GIRLS, BELLBOYS,
DOMINES, ASSISTANT COACHES, ETC

GEORGE CREEL

[Author's Note: The play as originally written had a lot of funny gags. For instance, the Weakfish used to appear in the last act and the other characters asked him where he had been. He was supposed to say, "I have been here a week." That was thrown out because the show lasted only one night. For another instance, in the last scene of the third act, Palsy and "Chub" Holt met one another on the stage and...]

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did not talk for an hour. The audience seemed to think something ought to be said, and they said it. PALSY had what we thought was a great line, namely, "That just shows you," but it came at a time when nobody was in condition to get it. Otherwise, the play reads as originally written.]

ACT I

An ironing board on the campus at Gelska University. It is Class Day. Dean Hussey of the Pharmacal School and Dean Faltness of the Laundry School enter from opposite directions. They find that they are on the same ironing board and there is nothing that can be done. They cannot possibly pass each other. They meet in the middle of the ironing board.

DEAN HUSSEY

(Reading from his cuff.)

Have you seen anything of "Chub" Holt?

DEAN FALTNES

"Chub" who?

DEAN HUSSEY

I forget.

DEAN FALTNES

No. Have you?

DEAN HUSSEY

No.
(They both realize that neither of them has seen anything of "Chub" Holt. They exit, each going out in the same direction he came from. They look as if they wished they had been cast for parts in some other play. The failure of the play depends on how they look.)

(END OF ACT I)

ACT II

A lounge in the Alpha Delt Fraternity House at Wrecking University. Wrecking University and Gelska University are great rivals, though over five miles apart. It is the annual Class Day custom to stage a boat race between the varsity crews. Coach Poison is making a final "pep" speech to the members of the Wrecking Crew, who are lying on individual divans in their life belts. They seem to pay no attention to their coach, but their facial expression is such that you cannot be sure. One of them is absent.

COACH POISON

(Reading from his cuff.)

Men, I might give you a lot of elaborate instructions, but all I am going to tell you is to remember these three points—First: Row! Second: Row! And Third: Row!

NUMBER SIX

(Glancing toward the audience.)

There's nobody in the first three rows.
COACH POISON

(Remains apparently indifferent, but really feels it; looks for his other cuff, on which the balance of the "pep" speech had been jotted down; discovers that in the confusion of Class Day he has come away from his home on Maple Street with only the one cuff; is non-plused for a moment, then is the same old coach.)

Men, I will add just a few words to those instructions—Fourth: Row! Fifth: Row! And Sixth: Row!

(Number Six and the Coxswain both look out into the vacant auditorium but make no comment.)

STROKE OAR

(Removing his life belt, as now seems safe.)

Coach, have you seen anything of "Chub" Holt?

COACH POISON

(After searching the campus.)

No.

(END OF ACT II)

ACT III

The Girls' Dormitory at Gelska University. NOTE: In most co-educational universities, the girls' dormitory is where the girls sleep, but at Gelska they all have insomnia, so the dormitory is used as a sort of Pince Nez where they pinch each other's noses when they get mad. At rise of the curtain the three Gelska co-eds are
sitting on individual divans apparently thinking of the time they were at Des Moines,
or perhaps it was twice.

MISS JAFFE

Do you remember the time we were in Des Moines?

MISS GORDON

(Reading from her cuff.)

Yes.

MISS JAFFE

Who is this Palsy that all the boys are so wild about?

MISS GORDON

Don’t you know her? The toe dancer? She has graduated from both these universities more times than I can think of without making a fool of myself, and now she is trying to make Phi Beta through her art.

MISS JAFFE

Have you seen anything of “Chub” Holt?

MISS GORDON

No.

MISS JAFFE

Do you suppose this Palsy has seen anything of him?

MISS GORDON

(Starts a new book.)

Whom she has seen and the reverse makes no difference to me.
(Begins another new book.)

MISS JAFFE

(Removes her life belt.)

I don’t suppose there is a chance for a game of bridge with only us three.

MISS GORDON

Three! We’re only two.

MISS JAFFE

(Looks around the room.)

Well!

(She has realized that they were alone all the time. The room now gives the impression that the other girl was not there to begin with).

(End of Act III)

ACT IV

The scene of the big annual boat race. NOTE: The Gelska-Wrecking boat race is always held in a room with a private bath and the town is so crude that in nine cases out of ten the water is not running, so that the crowd has to go home not only without seeing the race, but also without having the bath. This is perhaps what keeps the play what it is. At rise of curtain, both crews are in their shells, waiting for the water to be turned on. The students and townsmen are sitting on the edge, expecting something to happen, but not very hopeful. Even the soap has not shown up. Coach Poison is giving final instruction to his crew.
Men, get to your stations and put on your life belts! There is no telling when
the water will run.

NUMBER SIX

*(Counting the house, which takes him only a minute.)*

Can’t we get a room with a shower?

CLERK IN THE HOTEL

Have you a reservation?

NUMBER SIX

*(Removes his life belt.)*

Yes.

CLERK IN THE HOTEL

What name?

NUMBER SIX

Wallace Pierce.

CLERK IN THE HOTEL

We have no reservation in that name. We have one in the name of “Chub”

Holt.

NUMBER SIX

Have you seen anything of him?

CLERK IN THE HOTEL

No.
(The rival crews and crowd wait for a few moments and then adjourn to the Deke House, where the annual ball is held. Many of them are muttering that they won’t put up with it another year.)

END OF ACT IV

ACT V

The Deke House. Several Kappa Psis seem to have got in through some trivial error; they are trying to make the best of it. The audience by this time is booing everybody.

NUMBER THREE IN THE SHELL

How did the race come out?

NUMBER FOUR

I don’t know. I lost my oar.

NUMBER THREE

Did you see anything of “Chub” Holt?

NUMBER FOUR

Oh, yes. He fell out of the boat the same time as my oar.

COACH POISON

Come on, men! Get together! We must begin training for next year’s race.

NUMBER SEVEN

I played baseball once at the Polo Grounds.
COACH POISON

How did you come out?

NUMBER SEVEN

(Removes his life belt.)

I'm still there.

END OF ACT V

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DINNER BRIDGE

CHARACTERS

CROWLEY, the Foreman
AMOROSI, an Italian Laborer
TAYLOR, a Negro Laborer
CHAMALES, a Greek Laborer
HANSEN, a Scandinavian Laborer
LLANUZA, a Mexican Laborer

THE INQUISITIVE WAITER

THE DUMB WAITER

SCENE: An area under repair on the Fifty-ninth Street Bridge. Part of the surface has been torn up and, at the curtain’s rise, three of the men are tearing up the rest of it with picks. Shovels, axes and other tools are scattered around the scene. Two men are fussing with a concrete mixer. Crowley is bossing the job.

Crowley and the laborers are dressed in dirty working clothes. In the foreground is a flat-topped truck or wagon. The two waiters, dressed in waiters’ jackets, dickies, etc., enter the scene, one of them carrying a tray with cocktails and the other a tray with caviar, etc. The laborers cease their work and consume these appetizers. The noon whistle blows. The waiters bring in a white table cloth and spread it over the truck or wagon. They also distribute six place cards and six chairs, or camp stools, around the truck, but the “table” is left bare of eating implements.

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PROGRAM NOTE

This playlet is an adaptation from the Wallachian of Willie Stevens. For a great many years, Long Islanders and Manhattanites have been wondering why the Fifty-ninth Street Bridge was always torn up at one or more points. Mr. Stevens heard the following legend: that Alexander Woollcott, chief engineer in charge of the construction of the bridge, was something of a practical joker; that on the day preceding the completion of the bridge, he was invited to dinner by his wife’s brother; that he bought a loaded cigar to give his brother-in-law after the meal, and that the cigar dropped out of his pocket and rolled under the unfinished surface planking. Ever since, gangs of men have been ripping up the surface of the bridge in search of the cigar, but an article the shape of a cigar is apt to roll in any and all directions. This is what has made it so difficult to find the lost article, and the (so far) vain search is the theme of Mr. Stevens’ playlet. —Adapter.

FIRST WAITER, to CROWLEY: Dinner is served.

(CROWLEY and the laborers move toward the table.)

TAYLOR, to AMOROSI: I believe I am to take you in.

(AMOROSI gives TAYLOR his arm and TAYLOR escorts him to the table. The laborers all pick up the place cards to find out where they are to sit.)

CROWLEY, to AMOROSI: Here is your place, Mr. Amorosi. And Taylor is right beside you.

(Note to producer: Inasmuch as TAYLOR and AMOROSI do most of the talking, they ought to face the audience. In spite of their nationalities the laborers...}
are to talk in correct, Crowninshield dinner English, except that occasionally, say every fourth or fifth speech, whoever is talking suddenly bursts into dialect, either his own or Jewish or Chinese or what you will.

All find their places and sit down. The two waiters now reënter, each carrying one dinner pail. One serves CROWLEY and the other serves AMOROSI. The serving is done by the waiters' removing the cover of the pail and holding it in front of the diner. The latter looks into the pail and takes out some viand with his fingers. First he takes out, say, a sandwich. The waiter then replaces the cover on the pail and exits with it. All the laborers are served in this manner, two at a time, from their own dinner pails. As soon as one of them has completed the sandwich course, the waiter brings him the pail again and he helps himself to a piece of pie or an apple or orange. But the contents of all the pails should be different, according to the diner's taste. The serving goes on all through the scene, toward the end of which everyone is served with coffee from the cups on top of the pails.)

CROWLEY to AMOROSI: Well, Mr. Amorosi, welcome to the Fifty-ninth Street Bridge.

AMOROSI: Thank you, I really feel as if this was where I belonged.

HANSEN, politely: How is that?

AMOROSI: On account of my father. He was among the pioneer Fifty-ninth Street Bridge destroyers. He had the sobriquet of Giacomo "Rip-Up-The-Bridge" Amorosi.
TAYLOR, *sotto voce, aside to HANSEN*: This fellow seems to be quite a card!

LLANUZA: I wonder if you could tell me the approximate date when your father worked here.

AMOROSI: Why, yes. The bridge was completed on the fifth day of August, 1909. So that would make it the sixth day of August, 1909, when father started ripping it up.

TAYLOR, *aside to HANSEN, in marked Negro dialect*: I repeats my assertion that this baby is quite a card!

AMOROSI, *in Jewish dialect*: But I guess it must be a lot more fun nowadays, with so much motor traffic to pester.

TAYLOR: And all the funerals. I sure does have fun with the funerals.

CROWLEY, *in Irish brogue*: Taylor has a great time with the funerals.

HANSEN, CHAMALES and LLANUZA, *in unison*: Taylor has a great time with the funerals.

AMOROSI, to TAYLOR: How do you do it?

TAYLOR, *in dialect*: Well, you see, I’m the flagman for this outfit. When I get out and wave my red flag, whatever is coming, it’s got to stop. When I see a funeral coming, I let the hearse go by and stop the rest of the parade. Then when I see another funeral coming, I stop their hearse and let the rest of their procession go on. I keep doing this all morning to different funerals and by the time they get to Forest Hills, the wrong set of mourners is following the wrong hearse. It generally always
winds up with the friends and relatives of the late Mr. Cohen attending the final obsequies of Mrs. Levinsky.

CROWLEY, HANSEN, CHAMALES and LLANUZA, in unison: Taylor has a great time with the funerals.

AMOROSI: I'm a trumpet medium myself.

TAYLOR, aside to HANSEN: This boy will turn out to be quite a card!

LLANUZA, in dialect: What's the matter with this bridge?

CROWLEY: What do you mean, what's the matter?

LLANUZA: Why do you always have to keep repairing it?

AMOROSI: Perhaps Mr. Crowley has the repairian rights.

TAYLOR, guffawing and slapping HANSEN or CHAMALES on the back: What did I tell you?

LLANUZA, in dialect: But down in Mexico, where I come from, they don't keep repairing the same bridge.

AMOROSI, to LLANUZA: If you’ll pardon a newcomer, Mr. - - -, I don’t believe I got your name.

LLANUZA: Llanuza.

AMOROSI: If you’ll pardon a newcomer, Mr. Keeler, I want to say that if the United States isn’t good enough for you, I’d be glad to start a subscription to send you back to where you came from.

LLANUZA: I was beginning to like you, Mr. Amorosi.

AMOROSI: You get that right out of your mind, Mr. Barrows. I’m married;
been married twice. My first wife died.

HANSEN: How long were you married to her?

AMOROSI: Right up to the time she died.

CHAMALES, interrupting: Mr. Amorosi, you said you had been married twice.

AMOROSI: Yes, sir. My second wife is a Swiss girl.

HANSEN: Is she here with you?

AMOROSI: No, she’s in Switzerland, in jail. She turned out to be a murderer.

CROWLEY: When it’s a woman, you call her a murderess.

TAYLOR: And when it’s a Swiss woman, you call her a Swiss-ess.

(One of the waiters is now engaged in serving AMOROSI with his dinner pail.)

WAITER, to AMOROSI: Whom did she murder?

(WAITER exits hurriedly without seeming to care to hear the answer.)

AMOROSI, after looking wonderingly at the disappearing waiter: What’s the matter with him?

TAYLOR: He’s been that way for years—a born questioner but he hates answers.

CROWLEY: Just the same, the rest of us would like to know whom your wife murdered.

TAYLOR, HANSEN, CHAMALES, and LLANUZA, to CROWLEY: Speak for yourself. We don’t want to know.

CROWLEY: Remember, boys, I’m foreman of this outfit. (Aside to AMOROSI) Who was it?
AMOROSI: (Whispers a name in his ear.)

CROWLEY: I don't believe I knew him.

AMOROSI: Neither did my wife.

CROWLEY: Why did she kill him?

AMOROSI: Well, you see, over in Italy and Switzerland, it's different from, say, Chicago. When they find a man murdered over in those places, they generally try to learn who it is and put his name in the papers. So my wife was curious about this fellow's identity and she figured that the easiest way to get the information was to pop him.

TAYLOR: I'm a trumpet medium myself.

(WAITER enters and serves one of the laborers from his dinner pail.)

WAITER: How long is she in for?

(WAITER exits hurriedly without waiting for the answer. AMOROSI again looks after him wonderingly.)

HANSEN, to AMOROSI: Did you quarrel much?

AMOROSI: Only when we were together.

TAYLOR: I was a newspaper man once myself.

LLANUZA, skeptically: You! What paper did you work on?

TAYLOR: It was a tabloid—The Porno-graphic.

(WAITER enters to serve somebody.)

WAITER, to TAYLOR: Newspaper men must have lots of interesting experiences.
AMOROSI: I suppose you’ve all heard this story—

THE OTHER LABORERS, *in unison*: Is it a golf story?

AMOROSI: No.

THE OTHERS, *resentfully*: Tell it.

AMOROSI, *in dialect*: It seems there was a woman went into a photographer’s and asked the photographer if he took pictures of children.

(WAITER enters to serve somebody.)

WAITER: How does it end?

(WAITER exits hurriedly.)

AMOROSI: She asked the photographer if he took pictures of children. “Why, yes, madam,” replied the photographer—

TAYLOR: He called her “madam.”

AMOROSI: The photographer told her yes, that he did take pictures of children. “And how much do you charge?” inquired the madam, and the photographer replied, “Three dollars a dozen.” “Well,” said the woman, “I guess I’ll have to come back later. I’ve only got eleven.”

(The other laborers act just as if no story had been told.)

LLANUZA: Down in Mexico, where I come from, they don’t keep repairing the same bridge.

TAYLOR, to HANSEN: Can you imitate birds?

HANSEN: No.
TAYLOR, to CHAMALES: Can you imitate birds?

CHAMALES: No.

TAYLOR: Can anybody here imitate birds?

THE OTHER LABORERS, in unison: No.

TAYLOR: I can do it. Long before I got a job on this bridge, while I was helping tear up the crosstown streets, I used to entertain the boys all day, imitating birds.

AMOROSI: What kind of birds can you imitate?

TAYLOR: All kinds.

AMOROSI: Well, what do you say we play some other game?

CROWLEY, rising: Gentlemen, we are drawing near to the end of this dinner and I feel we should not leave the table until some one has spoken a few words of welcome to our newcomer, Mr. Amorosi. Myself, I am not much of a talker. (Pauses for a denial.)

TAYLOR: You said a full quart.

CROWLEY: Therefore, I will call on the man who is second to me in length of service on the Fifty-ninth Street Bridge, Mr. Harvey Taylor. (Sits down.)

TAYLOR, rises amid a dead silence: Mr. Foreman, Mr. Amorosi and gentlemen: Welcoming Mr. Amorosi to our little group recalls vividly to my mind an experience of my own on the levee at New Orleans before Prohibition. (Bursts suddenly into Negro dialect, mingled with Jewish.) In those days my job was to load and unload those great big bales of cotton and my old mammy used to always be there
at the dock to take me in her lap and croon me to sleep.

(WAITER enters, serves somebody with coffee.)

WAITER: What was the experience you was going to tell? (Exits hurriedly.)

TAYLOR: It was in those days that I studied bird life and learned to imitate the different bird calls. (Before they can stop him, he gives a bird call.) The finch. (The others pay no attention. He gives another call.) A Dowager. (TAYLOR is pushed forcibly into his seat.)

AMOROSI, rising to respond: Mr. Foreman and gentlemen: I judge from Mr. Taylor’s performance that the practice of imitating birds is quite popular in America. Over where I come from, we often engage in the pastime of mimicking public buildings. For example: (gives a cry): The American Express Company’s office at Rome. (Gives another cry.) The Vatican. (Gives another cry.) Hotel McAlpin. (A whistle blows, denoting that the dinner hour is over.)

CROWLEY, rising: Shall we join the ladies?

(All rise and resume the work of tearing up the bridge. The waiters enter to remove the table cloth and chairs.)

WAITER, the more talkative one: How many Mack trucks would you guess had crossed this bridge in the last half hour?

(He exits without waiting for a reply.)

(CURTAIN)
ABEND DI ANNI NOUVEAU:
A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS

CHARACTERS

ST. JOHN ERVINE, an immigrant.
WALTER WINCHELL, a nun.
HEYWOOD BROUN, an usher at Roxy’s.
DOROTHY THOMPSON, a tackle.
THEODORE DREISER, a former “Follies” girl.
H.L. MENCKEN, a kleagle in the Moose.
MABEL WILLEBRANDT, secretary of the League of American Wheelmen.
BEN HECHT, a taxi starter.
JOHN ROACH STRATON, a tap dancer.
CARL LAEMMLE, toys and games, sporting goods, outing flannels.
ANNE NICHOLS, a six-day bicyclist.

Act 1

(A hired hall. It is twenty-five minutes of nine on New Year’s Eve. A party, to which all the members of the cast were invited, is supposed to have begun at thirty-four minutes after eight. A waiter enters on a horse and finds all the guests dead, their bodies riddled with bullets and frightfully garbled. He goes to the telephone.)
WAITER (telephoning).

I want a policeman. I want to report a fire. I want an ambulance.

(He tethers his mount and lies down on the hors d’oeuvres.

The curtain is lowered and partially destroyed to denote the passage of

four days. Two policemen enter, neither having had any idea that the

other would come. They find the waiter asleep and shake him. He

wakes and smilingly points at the havoc.)

WAITER.

Look at the havoc.

FIRST POLICEMAN.

This is the first time I ever seen a havoc.

SECOND POLICEMAN.

It’s an inside job, I think.

FIRST POLICEMAN.

You WHAT?

WAITER.

The trouble now is that we’ll have to recast the entire play. Every member of

the cast is dead.

FIRST POLICEMAN.

Is that unusual?

SECOND POLICEMAN.

When did it happen?
WAITER.

When did what happen?

SECOND POLICEMAN.

I've forgotten.

(End of Act 1.)

Act 2

(The interior of an ambulance. Three men named Louie Breese are playing bridge with an interne. The interne is Louie Breese's partner. Louie leads a club. The interne trumps it.)

BREESE.

KINDLY play interne.

INTERNE.

I get you men confused.

BREESE.

I'm not confused.

THE OTHER TWO BREESES.

Neither of us is confused.

(They throw the interne onto Seventh avenue. An East Side gangster, who was being used as a card table, gets up and stretches.)

GANGSTER.

Where are we at?
BREESE.

Was you the stretcher we was playing on?

GANGSTER.

Yes.

BREESE.

There's only three of us now. Will you make a fourt'?

GANGSTER.

There's no snow.

(End of Act 2.)

Acts 3, 4 and 5

(A one-way street in Jeopardy. Two snail-gunders enter from the right, riding a tricycle. They shout their wares.)

FIRST SNAIL-GUNDER.

WARES! Wares!

A NEWSBOY.

Wares who?

FIRST SNAIL-GUNDER.

Anybody. That is, anybody who wants their snails gunded.

(Three men suddenly begin to giggle. It is a secret, but they give the impression that one of them's mother runs a waffle parlor. They go off the stage still giggling. Two Broadway theatrical
producers, riding pelicans, enter almost nude.)

FIRST PRODUCER.

Have you got a dime?

SECOND PRODUCER.

What do you think I am, a stage hand?

FIRST PRODUCER.

Have you seen my new farce?

SECOND PRODUCER.

No. I was out of town that night.

(End of Acts 3, 4 and 5.)
QUADROON

A Play in Four Pelts Which May All be Attended in One Day or Missed in a Group

Author's Note: The reason the name of the author is printed so high up in the script is that The New Yorker has a senseless habit of signing our stuff at the bottom or da capo, like Alexander Woolcott or Houghton Mifflin, so you are nearly through with it before you wish you had bought a Graphic or turned in your trousers to be pressed and try to get that seam out of it where I turned off the radiator.

The characters were all born synonymously; that is, in the "S'uth," they are known as half-castes. The only time the play, or series of plays, was performed with a whole cast, it was stopped by a swarm of little black flies, which don't bite, but are annoying. One time, in Charlotte, Utah, I forget what did happen.

At this point, a word or two concerning the actors may not embarrass you. Thomas Chalmers and Alice Brady are one and the same person. I owned some Alice-Chalmers before the crush in the market and had to give Kimbley & Co. twelve dollars hush money. I asked Mr. Nymeyer one of the partners to get me out of Wall Street and he said he had already moved me as far as Nassau. That is the kind of a friend to have in the stock market. He says one of the men in the firm paid $195,000 for a seat. Imagine, when you can get one for $22.00 to a Ziegfeld opening if you know Goldie or Alice. I can generally most always get one for nothing if he invites me to Boston or Pittsburgh to look at one of his shows and see whether I can improve it. Those kind, as Percy Hammond would say, are usually so good that they can't be

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improved and after I have heard the second comic's first wow, I wish I had stayed in
the hospital, where men are orderlies.

Speaking of hospitals, I turned the last one I visited into a pretty good
roadhouse. Harland Dixon came up and tap-danced, Vince Youmans and Paul Lanin
dropped in twice and played, and Vic Arden made the piano speak a language with
which it was entirely unfamiliar. Phil Ohman would have been there, too, if the
doctor had given me a little more nerve tonic and Mrs. Bechlinger, the housekeeper,
had had two pianos. Our gracious hostess told me, con expressione, that she had
never heard of Messrs. Youmans, Lanin, Arden, and Dixon, but had read my stuff
ever since she arrived in this country, ten years ago. This gave me a superiority
complexion over all musicians and tap-dancers until, at parting, she called me Mr.
Gardner. And dropping the subject of roadhouses entirely for the moment, Miss
Claudette Colbert came up to call one day and almost instantly, piling in like
interferers for Marchmont Schwartz, appeared fifteen internes, to take my
temperature. Previously they had treated my room as vacant.

This play, as hinted in the subtitle, is actually four separate plays with four
separate titles: "Hic," "Haec," "Hoc," and "Hujus." It can be seen that the original
author was a born H lover. He was the first Manny O'Neill and a great friend to
William A. Brady. He promised the latter, "If you ever have a daughter, I will provide
her with a vehicle." Well, Bill had a daughter, but Manny passed on without leaving
her even a roller-coaster. However, he had a great grandson, Eugene ("Greasy")
O'Neill, who acquired a fine sense of after-dinner speaking by playing the outfield for
Cincinnati and coaching football at W. and J. He took up the work where the old man had left off, at the top of a blank sheet of fools cap paper, and I kind of monkeyed with it until now it begins at ten in the morning and lasts until Walter Winchell goes to bed.

Remarks have been brandied back and forth concerning the difference in the number of lines given the male and female characters in the piece. The women have a great deal many more lines to speak than the men. There is, of course, a two-fold purpose in this arrangement. The first fold is that it pleases the women. The second fold is that it promotes harmony in the cast. During the intermissions, the ladies, God use his own judgment, have said so much that they are out of lewd words. End of notatum.)

HIC

Part One of "The Quadroon"

CAST

(In Order to Confuse)

CHRISTINE, his sister, played by Alla Nazimova

LAVINIA, her daughter, played by Alice Brady

CASEY JONES, a midwife, played by William A. Brady


Luncheon Intermission

of Half an Hour
THE ROTH LUNCH

127 West Fifty-second Street

November 22, 1931

Special Luncheon, 65 Cents.
Chopped Tenderloin Steak
or Calves’ Liver and Bacon.

Carrots Shoestring Potatoes String Beans
Choice of Desserts
Rice Pudding Strawberry Tart

Tea, Coffee or Milk.

HAEC

Part Two of "The Quadroon"

CAST

CHRISTINE, his sister, played by Alice Brady

LAVINIA, her daughter, played by Alla Nazimova

FRANKIE AND JOHNNIE, played by A. H. Woods

Scene: Department of Plant and Structures. An evening in 1850.

[Christine and Lavinia meet off-stage, dancing.]

LAVINIA—Did you-all evah see me-all in "Hedda Gabler"?

CHRISTINE—Does yo’all mean "Hedda Gabler" by William Anthony McGuire?

LAVINIA—Yo'all done said zac’ly wot Ah’m drivin’ at. How did yo’all lak me?
CHRISTINE—Well, Ah seen Mrs. Fiske.

FRANKIE AND JOHNNIE—Let's you and I run up to Elizabeth Arden's and free ourselves from fatigue with an Ardena Bath.

_Dinner Intermission_

_of One Hour and a Half*

Typical Dinner, $1.50

----

Medaillon of lobster au caviar

Grapefruit

Suprême of fresh fruit, Maraschino

Blue Point oyster cocktail

Fresh shrimp cocktail

_or_

Cream of lettuce, Parmentier

Clear green turtle, Amontillado

----

_(Choice)_

Filet of sole, Farci Isabella

Broiled Boston scrod, Maître d'Hôtel

Tartelette of Fresh mushrooms,

Lucullus

*It will doubtless promote good fellowship and good service if, when entering the hotel's dining-room, you say to the man in charge: "Hello, Maître d'Hôtel."
Country sausages, apple sauce

Breaded spring lamb chop

with Bacon, tomato sauce

Chicken hash au Gratin

Roast sugar cured ham, cider sauce

Omelette Glacé aux Confitures

Cold—Fresh calf’s tongue

with chow chow

Stewed celery or fresh string beans

Mashed or French fried potatoes

(Choice)

Pudding Creole Coffee éclair

Assorted cakes

Vanilla, raspberry or chocolate

ice cream and cake

Delicious apple Apple pie

French pastry Coffee, Tea or Milk

Make the Plaza Central

your New York Home During the
Entire Performance. Ask Arnold.

HOC

Part Three of "The Quadroon"

CAST

LYNN FONTANNE, a Mrs. Lunt, played by Grace George
CASEY JONES, a midwife, played by Bert Lahr
FRANK CASE, proprietor of the Algonquin, played by Alice Brady

Scene: Jimmy Walker's Wardrobe Trunk.

[The Mayor and the Prince of Wales meet outside the stage door, dancing.]

THE MAYOR—New York is the richest market in the world.
THE PRINCE—Not only that, but the New York Theatre Market is an unrivalled concentration of spending power.
THE MAYOR—The New York Magazine Program reaches that market exclusively.
FRANK CASE—Pardon me, Officer, but can either of you boys play a cellophane?

Passengers will Please not Linger in Washrooms until Other Passengers Have Completed Their Toilets.

HUJUS

Part Four of "The Quadroon"

CAST

CHRISTINE, her sister, played by Alla Nazimova

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LAVINIA, their little one, played by Alice Brady

FRED ASTAIRE, a hoofer, played by Morris Gest

Scene: An ambush in the Astor lobby.

[Fred and Lavinia dance.]

LAVINIA—The minute you try Pebeco Tooth Paste you know by its "bitey" tang that there is a tooth paste that really "gets somewheres."

FRED—Will you love me always?

LAVINIA—As long as you keep kissable.

[She kills her with an oyster fork.]

(Leave your ticket check with an usher and your car will come right to your seat).
CONTENT NOTES

The following are glosses of the plays keyed to page and line numbers in this edition (e.g. 144.8 means page 144, line 8). All lines in which words or symbols appear are counted. The word or words to which the note refers are on the left of the bracket; the note is on the right. Names, places, or words found in common reference materials are not included in this section unless their connection to Lardner or to the play requires additional explanation. The title of each play precedes that play’s notes. Shakespeare quotes are keyed to *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974). .

For purposes of concision, the following abbreviations are used in the notes:

“Wake” = “In The Wake of the News.” *Chicago Tribune*


**On the Elevated**

57.1 ON THE ELEVATED] The first and only appearance is in the “Wake” (22 October 1913: 15).

57.12 Murphy] Charles Murphy, owner of the Chicago Cubs.
57.16 Comiskey] Charles Comiskey (1859-1931), a former player and manager; owner and president of the Chicago White Sox (1900-1931); inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1939.

57.18 Chappell] LaVerne Ashford (Larry) Chappell (1890-1918), White Sox outfielder (1913-1915); later played with the Cleveland Indians (1916) and the Boston Braves (1916-17). His salary was the topic of much debate and speculation in Chicago sporting columns during 1913.

58.1 around the world] It was common for teams to follow their season with a barnstorming tour or with a world tour. The particular tour referred to in this line is probably the White Sox / New York Giants world tour which began in October of 1913 and ended in March of 1914. Lardner did not travel with the teams, but he did contribute to the book which commemorated the end of the tour, *March 6th, 1914: The Homecoming*. It was Lardner’s first published book appearance.

58.9 Walsh] Edward Augustine (“Big Ed,” “Ed”) Walsh (1881-1959), Chicago White Sox pitcher (1904-1916); finished his career with the Boston Braves (1917), managed in 1924, and was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1946.

The Follies of 1913

60.1 THE FOLLIES OF 1913] The first and only appearance is in the “Wake” (29 December 1913: 12). Lardner tried this nonsensical “year in review” once more in the less ambitious effort, “Follies of 1917” (“Wake.” 30 December 1917: sec. 2: 1).

60.9 Frank Chance] Frank Leroy (“Husk” or “The Peerless Leader”) Chance (1877-1924), played for the Chicago Cubs (1898-1912) and managed the Cubs from 1905 to 1912; finished his career managing the New York Yankees (1913-14) and the Boston Red Sox (1923); inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1946.

60.12 Farrell] Frank Farrell, co-owner (with Bill Devery) of the New York Yankees from 1903-1915.

60.16 Fisher Building] An early Chicago skyscraper, built in 1896, and located at 343 South Dearborn Street.

61.5 Stein Songs] Possibly based on the University of Maine “Stein Song,” written in 1904 by Maine freshmen Lincoln Colcord and Adelbert Sprague; recorded years later, in 1930, by Rudy Vallee.
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61.5 Ping Bodie | Frank Stephan ("Ping") Bodie (born Francesco Stephano Pezzolo) (1887-1961), Chicago White Sox outfielder (1911-1914); later played for the Philadelphia Athletics (1917) and the New York Yankees (1918-1921). Lardner attributed many short pieces in the "Wake" to Bodie and often poked fun at the player's malapropisms and less than keen intellect.

61.19 Cal | James Joseph ("Nixey" or "Cal") Callahan (1874-1934), player / manager of the Chicago White Sox; began his career with the Philadelphia Phillies as a pitcher (1894), played a variety of positions for the Chicago Cubs (1897-1900), played a variety of positions for the Chicago White Sox (1901-1905, 1911-1913), and managed the Chicago White Sox (1903-1904, 1912-1914); ended his career managing the Pittsburgh Pirates (1916-1917).

62.7 Charles H. Ebbets | (1855-1925), owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers.

63.6 Heine Zimmerman | Henry ("Heinie" or "Zimmie") Zimmerman (1887-1969), the colorful Chicago Cubs second and third baseman (1907-1916); finished his career with the New York Giants (1916-1919); known as much for his angry tirades against the umpires as for his excellent hitting. See also note 63.15-17.

63.7 Artie Phelan | Arthur Thomas ("Art" or "Artie") Phelan (1887-1964), a Chicago Cubs second and third baseman (1913-1915), who began his career with the Cincinatti Reds (1910, 1912).

63.15 Mister Klem | Colorful umpire William ("Bill" or "The Old Arbitrator") Klem (1874-1951); umpired from 1905 to 1940 and was chosen to umpire in eighteen World Series; inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1953.

63.15-17 You're . . . catfish | The outburst by Heine Zimmerman alluded to here provided Lardner with much material for his column in 1913. Zimmerman was fined $100 for yelling at umpire Klem. While Zimmerman was deciding whether to or not to pay the fine, Lardner lampooned the situation with two memorable verses:

The C, or not the C, that is the question—
Whether 'tis nobler for the dough to suffer
Mistakes and errors of outrageous umpires,
Or to cut loose against a band of robbers,
And, by protesting, lose it? To kick—
to beef—
To beef!—perchance to scream: "Aw,
there, you dub,
You — — — — — — — — —!!!”
But that sharp flow of breath, what it would cost,
A sloughing off of these one hundred bucks,

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Must give me pause—there's the respect
That makes dumb agony of two long weeks;
For who would bear the crazy work of Klem,
Cy Rigler's slips, the raw mistakes of Quigley,
The guesses wild of Orth and Hank O'Day,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a few cuss words! Who would Brennan bear,
Or shut up under Eason's worst offense,
But for the dread of dropping all that dough,
Of losing all those togs, deprived of which
No guy is really swell!—Yes, I'll keep still.
Thus money does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native Bronix disposition
Is stifled by a bunch of filthy luc;
And ravings of my own fantastic sort
Are all unheard, though my long silence does
Disgrace the name of Heine.
("Heine's Soliloquy." "Wake." 2 July 1913: 13)

Half a C, half a C,
Half a C, sundered,
Cut from the other half,
Half a big hundred.
Forward the Cub Brigade!
"Charge at the umps!" they said,
But Zim in silence stood.
O you big hundred!

... Players to right of him,
Players to left of him,
Players in front of him
Hollered and thundered,
Bellowing like a calf
At the whole umpire staff,
But Heine's jaws are locked,
Earning the other half
Of the big hundred.
("Wake." 20 June 1913: 13)

64.5 Tinker ] Joseph Bert ("Joe") Tinker (1880-1948), a Chicago Cubs short stop (1902-1912), famous as part of the "Tinker to Evers to Chance" combination; later played for the Cincinatti Reds, the Chicago Federal League club, which he also managed (1914-1915), and then finished his career as player/manager of the Cubs in 1916; he was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1946.
Corriden] John Mitchell ("Red") Corriden, Sr. (1887-1959), a Chicago Cubs shortstop (1913-1915); began his career with the St. Louis (1910) and the Detroit Tigers (1912).

THE BOSTON PRESIDENT---------------------Jim] James R. McAleer, Boston Red Sox President (1912-1913); was replaced by Joseph J. Lannin (1913-1916), the father of Lardner's friend Paul Lannin. Lardner commented on the situation referred to in scenes seven and eight in verse as well:

Two Verses.

1.
A magnate named Jim McAleer
Grabbed off the big money one yeer.
Or so sad, or so mad
That he ousted his young manageer.

2.
There was a young leader named Stahl,
Whose team won the title one fahl.
Which so pleased the boss
That he grew very cross
And drove Stahl clear out of basebahl.
("Wake." 18 July 1913: 9)

Jake] Garland ("Jake") Stahl (1879-1922), manager of the Boston Red Sox (1912-1913), who posted a 39-41 record before being replaced by Bill Carrigan (40-30); he had a 105-47 record the year before and had led the Boston club to a World Series win; earlier was a player/manager for the Washington Senators (1905-1906); also played outfield for the Boston Red Sox (1903), Washington Senators (1904-1906), New York Yankees (1908) and again for the Boston Red Sox (1908-1913).

Commy] Charles Comiskey, see note 57.16.

A CHAMPION-------------------------------Jack] Arthur John ("Jack") Johnson (1878-1946), an African American and heavyweight boxing champion. In May of 1913, Johnson was convicted of violating the "White Slave Traffic Act" in Chicago and was sentenced in June to a one-year imprisonment and $1000 fine. He fled the country while awaiting appeal and fought the rest of the year in France.

McLoughlin] Maurice McLoughlin, the 1912 and 1913 United States Open tennis champion and 1913 Wimbledon singles finalist.

Harry Eckersall] Harry ("Eckie") Eckersall, a Chicago sportswriter.
and Lardner's longtime friend and mentor.

70.6 Rule Britannia!".................Chorus of Britshers ] Cf: "Rule Britannia"
(Thomas Augustine Arne, Alfred. London: A. Millar, 1740): "Rule, Britannia, rule
the waves;/ Britons never will be slaves."

Charles the First

71.1 CHARLES THE FIRST ] This short play is one of two ("King Henry
the First" being the other) written in mock-Shakespearean style about the managerial
turmoil in the Chicago Cubs organization. After long-time player/manager Frank
Chance was released by the club in 1912, the Cubs made player Johnny Evers
manager in 1913; he was followed by Hank O' Day in 1914. The play's only
appearance is in "Wake" (12 February 1914: 10).

71.3 CHARLES ] Charles Murphy, owner of the Cubs. See note 57.12.

71.4 THOMAS ] Charles H. Thomas, secretary, later president, and then
secretary again of the Chicago Cubs.

71.4 CAMPION ] Al Campion, a Chicago Cubs secretary.

71.5 HENRY ] Henry Francis ("Hank" or "Peep") O'Day (1862-1935), a
pitcher on various teams from 1884-1890, an umpire, and Cubs manager in 1914.

71.6 JOHN ] John Joseph ("Johnny," "The Crab," or "The Trojan") Evers
(1881-1947), Cubs second baseman (1902-1913) and manager (1913); traded to
Boston in 1914 and continued to play or manage off and on until 1929; inducted into
the Hall of Fame in 1946.

71.7 FRANCIS LE ROY ] Frank Leroy ("Husk" or "The Peerless Leader")
Chance (1877-1924), played for the Cubs from 1898 until 1912 and managed the
Cubs from 1905 to 1912. Chance fought with owner Murphy over Murphy's refusal
to spend more money to acquire the sorts of players Chance thought were necessary to
keep the club in contention. He was released at the end of the season. In 1913
Chance accepted a position as player/manager of New York Yankees. He was
inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1946.

71.12-17 I... beer ] Cf. Henry VIII, Prologue, 1-6: "I come no more to make
you laugh; things now/That bear a weighty and a serious brow,/Sad, high, and
working, full of state and woe:/Such noble scenes as draw the eye to flow,/We now
present. Those that can pity, here/May (if they think it well) let fall a tear."
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72.3-5 Will . . . patient ] Cf. Richard III, V.i.1-2, in which Buckingham is being led to his execution by the Sheriff: “Buck. Will not King Richard let me speak with him? / Sher. No, my good lord, therefore be patient.”

72.7 Four . . . triumphs ] Chance had a lifetime record as manager of 946-648 (.593), winning pennants for the Cubs in 1906, 1907, 1908, and 1910, and winning the World Series in 1907 and 1908. The Cubs finished second in 1911 and third in 1912, much better than expected.


73.10 no . . . play ] Frank Chance suffered from many ailments, mostly due to many “beanings” while at bat. 1908 was the last season he played regularly.


75.17-76.1 I’ve . . . Sox ] Lardner elaborates on the unfairness of Murphy’s views in a column entitled “The Second Guess” (“Wake” 14 February 1914: 14). He presents Murphy’s examples of Evers’ “bad judgment” and demonstrates why any manager would have made the same decisions under similar circumstances.


75.21 Harold Chase ] Harold Homer (“Prince Hal” or “Hal”) Chase (1883-1947), White Sox first baseman (1913-1914).

77.12-78.4 I . . . tomorrow ] Lardner explains the telegram and his reaction to it in greater detail in his column the next day (“Wake.” 13 February 1914: 14). Lardner quotes from the official announcement of Evers’ release (called a “resignation”) and emphasizes that he is appalled by the dishonesty rather than the content of the announcement: “It isn’t so much what he does as the orn’ry way he does it.” Lardner continues:

He might have said: “Manger Evers and I have had a disagreement and the result is that I have discharged him. The public may think I
have made a mistake, and perhaps I have. If so, I will be the sufferer. But I believe I have done right and that results will prove it. Hank O’Day is the new manager of the Cubs and I ask that he be given a fair chance by the fans.”

But no. “Evers has resigned as manager.” “It was a question during last season whether the hot headed Evers could remain at the head of the Cubs or not. But I decided to let him continue because no other manager was available at the time.” “Evers’ mismanagement cost us the pennant.”

“Evers could not control his temper on the ball field; neither could he control his players.” “Personally, I have the highest regard for Evers and feel very kindly toward him.” “If he leaves the Chicago club, I trust he will have all the success in the world.”

And that “telegram,” written before any of us knew what was coming off:

“The announcement made today that HENRY O’Day is to manage the Chicago Cubs came as a great surprise, BUT IT WAS WELL RECEIVED IN BASEBALL CIRCLES.” “He was born on the west side of Chicago within six blocks of the Cubs’ METROPOLIS.” “WHILE WE ARE SORRY EVERS WILL NOT BE WITH US.” “His (HENRY’S) admirers ARE GOING TO GIVE HIM A MONSTER BANQUET.”

And then: “I care nothing for the opinion of other people in baseball,” which statement scarcely harmonizes with the frantic but futile effort to make old Gen. Public believe that John voluntarily resigned and was not pushed.

... BUT, if Mr. Murf had gone about it in a different way; if he had changed managers with as little commotion as was made by C. A. Comiskey when he deposed Duffy and appointed Callahan, we might have lived through this week without being obliged, a hundred times daily, to answer somehow the unanswerable question—"What do you think of that—NOW?"
This short play is the second of two ("Charles the First" being the other) written in mock-Shakespearean style about the managerial turmoil in the Chicago Cubs organization. See note 71.1 for further background. The play appeared in the "Wake" on 15 February 1914 (sec. 3: 1).

CHARLES] Charles Murphy. See note 57.12.

HENRY] Hank O'Day. See note 71.5.

HENRY] Henry ("Heinie" or "Zimmie") Zimmerman; see note 63.6.

John Evers] See note 71.6.

KING HENRY THE FIRST] Cf. Julius Caesar I.i, 192-195: "Let me have men about me that are fat, / Sleek-headed men and such as sleep a-nights. / Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look, / He thinks too much; such men are dangerous."

Vic] Victor Sylvester ("Vic") Saier (1891-1967), Cubs first baseman (1911-1917), and fellow Michigan native.

That. . . true] Cf. Hamlet, II.ii.97-98: "That he's mad, 'tis true, 'tis true 'tis pity, / And pity 'tis 'tis true . . . ."


Diseased . . . eruptions] I Henry IV, III.i.26-27.

At . . . laughs] Cf. Romeo and Juliet II.ii.92-93: "Thou mayest prove false: at lovers' perjuries / They say Jove laughs. . . ."

Beware . . . October] Cf. Julius Caesar I.ii.18: "Beware the ides of March."

Second . . . true] The 1914 Cubs finished with a record of 78-76 under manager O'Day, fourth in the National League. They did manage to win the city series.

DECEMBER 1914] Lardner's cynical prediction that O'Day would be replaced at season's end came true, though earlier than December. By 13 October 1914, Lardner had to report that O'Day was to be replaced by Roger Bresnahan.
(1879-1944), then a player/manager for the St. Louis Cardinals. He stayed with the Cubs for one year.

85.16 Page . . . Charles Lardner suspected that Murphy's dramatic method of firing managers was, in part, an attempt to gain publicity and attract attention away from the dealings of the upstart Federal League. In his column of 13 February 1914 ("Wake"14), Lardner includes the verse "Getting Even":

Cried Murf.: “Can these Federals put me to shame
By grabbing the whole sporting sheet?
I'll show them a few in this press agent game!”
And he jumped on Page One with both feet.

86.12-13 Now . . . son-of-a-gun] Cf. Richard III I.i.1-2: "Now is the winter of our discontent / Made glorious summer by this son of York."

86.18-21 What . . . Nut!] Cf. Hamlet II.ii.303-307: “What [a] piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving, how express and admirable in action, how like an angel in apprehension, how like a god!”

87.4 Something . . . Denmark] Hamlet Liv.89.

87.8-9 How . . . club.] Cf. King Lear I.iv.288-89: “How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is / To have a thankless child!”

88.8-9 They’ ll . . . tune] Cf. Hamlet III.i.157-158: “Now see [that] noble and most sovereign reason / Like sweet bells jangled out of time, and harsh.”

88.10 Alas . . . it] Cf. Hamlet V.i.184-188: “Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio, a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy. He / hath bore me on his back a thousand times, and now / how abhor’d in my imagination it is! my gorge rises / at it.”

La Follette of 1917

89.1 LA FOLLETTE OF 1917] The first and only appearance is in the "Wake," on 7 March 1917 (14).

Before declaring war on Germany on 6 April 1917, thus entering World War I, Congress and the President waged a war of words against each other over the best course of action to take. In February 1917, President Wilson asked Congress to expand his powers of war; the Senate, led by Senator La Follette, refused the request. The war debate paralyzed Congress through March, when this piece was written.
Lardner also commented on the situation in his column on 6 March (16):

"Much has been said and is being said of the recent conduct of Congress. Certain (and uncertain) senators have been sharply criticised for placing obstacles in the way of our President's plan of campaign against the Kaiser. The President's scheme is to arm our merchant ships, so that if none of a submarine's six torpedoes hits its mark and the sub is obliged to come to the surface and fire its guns, our boats will have something with which to fire back.

This plan is almost certain to bring about the downfall of the German Empire.

BUT, it is a slow method of accomplishing the aim. Congress is perfectly right. It is as anxious to avenge the national honor as is the President. But it wants quicker results. The Wake believes Congress' scheme superior to the President's, and is permitted this morning to tell what it is: Congress wants to make the Germans laugh themselves to death."

89.1 LA FOLLETTE ] Senator Robert Marion La Follette, Sr. (1855-1925), a Republican from Wisconsin who led the opposition of United States entry into World War I; a former U.S. Representative (1885-91) and Wisconsin Governor (1901-06); Progressive party presidential nominee in 1927. La Follette makes an appearance also in "Taxidea Americana."

89.11-12 Hail! . . . now! ] Cf. "Hail! Hail! The Gang's All Here": "Hail, hail, the gang's all here, / Sure we're glad that you're here, too!" Also adapted in 1915 as part of the Ohio State University fight song, "Fight the Team," written by student William A. Dougherty, Jr.: "Hail! Hail! The gang's all here / So let's win that old conference now!!"

89.15 Laconia ] The Cunard-owned Laconia was sunk on 25 February 1917 on its way back from the United States to its destination in Liverpool by a German U50 submarine. Six passengers and six crew members were killed.

90.10 Griffith ] Clark Calvin ("General," or "Griff") Griffith (1869-1955), manager of various baseball teams (1901-1920), and of the Washington Senators (1912-1915); inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1946.

90.10 Gandil ] Arnold ("Chick") Gandil (1887-1970), first baseman for the Washington Senators (1912-1915); also played for the Chicago White Sox (1910, 1917-1919) and the Cleveland Indians (1916).

90.11 Judge ] Joseph Ignatius ("Joe") Judge (1894-1963), first baseman for the Washington Senators (1915-1932); finished his career playing for the Brooklyn
Dodgers (1933) and the Boston Red Sox (1933-1934).

90.17-18 Pat and Mike ] “Pat and Mike” references are common in Lardner nonsense and can be found in this present edition in “Not Guilty,” “The Other World,” and “Taxidea Americana,” as well as in this play. According to Elder (128-9), Joe Farrell and Lardner originated these “Pat and Mike” stories (though Pat and Mike were common names used in vaudeville for Irish comedy routines) while enjoying evenings out together at the Chicago Press Club and elsewhere in the city. As a sort of parody of “funny stories,” which Lardner abhorred, Lardner would tell a very long and boring story about two girls named Pat and Mike and their Lithuanian nurse. Farrell would interrupt the story with fits of nearly uncontrollable laughter. The story would end with the house of Pat and Mike burning to the ground. The audience, taking Farrell’s lead, would be laughing without reason.

The story went through many changes, only the characters of Pat and Mike remaining the same. Edmund Wilson relates hearing Lardner tell the story of two foxes named Pat and Mike who fight in a bathtub. Typical of other “Pat and Mike” stories is one which appears in the “Wake” on 21 May 1919 (18). Suicidal Lizzie Black is looking for a can opener. She is in the bath and puts the stopper to her ear and talks to the clerk. Three days later a bell hop comes with the opener. He offers the opener with this stipulation: “But first I want to tell you the story of the two Rhodesians, Pat and Mike.” After hearing the story Lizzie Black decides to kill the bell hop instead of herself.

91.9-12 My . . U-53. ] Cf. “My Bonnie,” a traditional folk song: “My Bonnie lies over the ocean, my Bonnie lies over the sea, / My Bonnie lies over the ocean, O bring back my Bonnie to me.”


Horrors of War

92.1 HORRORS OF WAR ] First and only appearance is in the “Wake” (30 January 1918: 18).

Breakfast

95.1 BREAKFAST ] First and only appearance is in the “Wake” (8 January 1919: 13).
Not Guilty

99.1 NOT GUILTY ] As with “The Other World,” this skit was intended for inclusion in the Ziegfeld Follies of 1922, but dropped from the show before it was performed. It was published in Cosmopolitan (74 (February 1923): 80-81) and never collected. In “Why Authors?” (WOI 121-129) Lardner explains:

Then they was a scene about a woman on trial for murdering her husband. In this scene 4 of the characters was supposed to be comical and the other 3 was straight. Unluckily 1 of the straight parts was assigned to a star who wouldn’t lower himself to play straight for nobody. So he said the scene was l----y, a adjective very popular in the profession and derived from a little mammal which you might say was the only real winner in the European war. Well he said the scene was l----y so often that finely the scene believed him and jumped out of the show” (126).

101.17-20 Sure . . . Swissess ] These lines are paraphrased in “Dinner Bridge,” (183.5-9).

102.1 Ben Turpin ] Bernard Turpin (1874-1940), comic actor known for his crazy eyes, which he once had insured by Lloyds of London.

The Other World

106.1 THE OTHER WORLD ] As with “Not Guilty,” this skit was intended for inclusion in the Ziegfeld Follies of 1922, but dropped from the show before it was performed. It has never been published or performed. The text used in this collection comes from the typescript found in the Ring Lardner Papers, Newberry Library, Chicago. In “Why Authors?” (WOI 121-129) Lardner explains:

They was one about a fake seance but it was threwed out after the 2nd. reading because nobody’s part was better than anybody else’s which everybody seemed to take as a insult” (126).

107.5 Goldstein. ] Nothing follows this cue in the typescript.

108.21 “Mammy” ] “The Sun Shines East—The Sun Shines West,” popularly known as “My Mammy” or “Mammy,” written in 1921 by Sam Lewis and Joe Young, with music by Walter Donaldson. The song was introduced in the show “Sinbad” that year by William Frawley (of “I Love Lucy” fame) and later became Al Jolson’s signature song.
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109.5 W. T. Stead] William Thomas Stead (1849-1912), a respected English journalist, prolific writer, champion of many causes, and founder of *The Review of Reviews*; took up spiritualism in the 1890s and edited a psychic journal called *Borderland*; predicted the sinking of the Titanic, yet still chose to travel on it, and died as a result.

112.7 Pat and Mike] See note 90.17-18.

112.7-8 Pat . . . "anything."] This joke first appears in the "Wake" on 19 October 1917 (11).

115.2 Avery Hopwood] One of the most successful playwrights of the 1910s and 1920s, Hopwood (1882-1928) was famous for his bedroom farces, oftentimes having many running simultaneously on Broadway.

The Bull Pen

119.1 THE BULL PEN] Written for and performed in *The Ziegfeld Follies of 1922* (New Amsterdam Theatre, New York, 5 June 1922), which had a run of 541 performances. It was published in *Judge* (82 (29 July 1922): 26-27) and later collected in *FL* (333-339), *PRL* (721-725), and *SUHE* (129-133).

119.3 Al Ochs] An actor and vaudevillian.

119.4 Will Rogers] (1879-1935) Follies star (1916-1918, 1922, 1924, 1925), columnist, and comedian, known for his rope tricks and down-home wisdom. Lardner and Rogers showed each other public respect, often mentioning the other in their columns, and a degree of private respect as well. Lardner considered Rogers to be a fine performer, but less than comically sophisticated.

119.5 Andy Tombes] Andrew Tombes (1885-1976), an actor.

120.5 Huggins] Miller James ("Hug," or "The Mighty Mite") Huggins (1879-1929), manager of the New York Yankees (1918-1929); previously managed the Saint Louis Cardinals (1913-1917); inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1964.


120.10 Scotty] Lewis Everett ("Decon" or "Scotty") Scott (1892-1960), New York Yankee shortstop (1922-1925); began career with the Boston Red Sox (1914-
Speaker ] Tristram E. ("Tris," "Spoke," or "The Grey Eagle") Speaker (1888-1958), Cleveland Indian center fielder (1916-1926) and manager (1919-1926); began career with the Boston Red Sox (1907-1915); finished career with the Washington Senators (1927) and the Philadelphia Athletics (1928); inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1937.

Landis ] Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, the first commissioner of baseball, served from 1920, in the wake of the Black Sox scandal, to his death in 1944.

Coveleski ] Stanley Anthony ("Stan") Coveleski (1889-1984), South Bend, Indiana native and Cleveland Indians pitcher (1916-1924); also played for the Philadelphia Athletics (1912), the Washington Senators (1925-1927), and the New York Yankees (1928); inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1969.

Baker ] John Franklin ("Home Run" or "Frank") Baker (1886-1963), New York Yankee third baseman (1916-1922); began career with the Philadelphia Athletics (1908-1914); inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1955.

Schang ] Walter Henry ("Wally") Schang (1889-1965), New York Yankee catcher (1921-1925); played with various teams from 1913 to 1931.

Peggy Hopkins ] Peggy Hopkins Joyce (1893-1957), a showgirl, actress, and celebrity, performed in the 1917 Ziegfeld Follies, in which one of Lardner's songs was included. In 1921 she made headlines because of her very public divorce from her third husband (of an eventual six), millionaire lumberman J. Stanley Joyce. She is thought to be the inspiration for the character Lorelei Lee in Gentlemen Prefer Blondes.

Sewell ] Joseph Wheeler Sewell (1898-1990), Cleveland Indian shortstop (1920-1930); finished his career with the New York Yankees (1931-1933); inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1977; brother of catcher James Luther Sewell (1901-1987), who also played for Cleveland (1921-1932).

dame in Philadelphia ] According to "Why Authors?" (WOI 124) Lardner had originally included the following lines in this part of the play:

"CY: I know all about that old dame. She’s been flirting with ball players since the 1st. bounce was out. She was Connie Mack’s nurse.

JOE: When was he sick?"

George Sisler ] George Harold ("Gorgeous George") Sisler (1893-
1973), Saint Louis Browns first baseman (1915-1927); finished his career with the Washington Senators (1928) and the Boston Braves (1928-1930); elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1939.

124.3 Gardner ] William Lawrence ("Larry") Gardner (1886-1976), Cleveland Indian third baseman (1919-1924); began career with the Boston Red Sox (1908-1917) and the Philadelphia Athletics (1918).

124.9 450 Riverside Drive ] This address is possibly derived from one of Lardner’s former homes in Riverside, Illinois.

124.13 Cobb ] Tyrus Raymond ("Ty" or "The Georgia Peach") Cobb (1886-1961), the talented yet controversial Detroit Tigers outfielder (1905-1926); finished his career with the Philadelphia Athletics (1927-1928); inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1936.

124.14 Irvin ] Irvin Cobb (1886-1944), a popular humorist and newspaperman.

124.12-17 And another guy...Irvin. ] Lardner explains in “Why Authors?” (WOF 124) that this scene was added to the sketch by Will Rogers. It is included here because it was included, with Lardner’s presumed consent, in every published version.

124.18 O’Neill ] Stephen Francis ("Steve") O’Neill (1891-1962), Cleveland Indian catcher (1911-1923); finished career with the Boston Red Sox (1924), the New York Yankees (1925), and the Saint Louis Browns (1927-1928).

The Tridget of Greva (1)

126.1 THE TRIDGET OF GREVA ] The first of the so called nonsense plays, “Tridget” was first performed as part of a revue called The Forty-Niners, produced by George C. Tyler at the Punch and Judy Theatre in New York (7 November 1922). The actors were Denman Maley, Sidney Toler, and Roland Young. This version of the play is taken from a typescript held in the Ring Lardner Papers at the Newberry Library in Chicago. It varies significantly in length and content from the later published versions.

126.1 THE TRIDGET OF GREVA ] The meaning of this title is unknown. Undoubtedly, the words were chosen for their nonsensical appeal, but their origin cannot be determined. Neither “Tridget,” nor “Greva” appear in Lardner’s other writing.
126.2 Wymie] In the “Wake” of 23 June 1916, Lardner discusses songwriting and the need for a national hymn. At the column’s end, he remarks: “The other day a clever composer remarked that it was a shame that this country should be without a national hymn of its very own, one not borrowed from the Squinch or the Wymie” (12).

The Tridget of Greva (2)

142.1 THE TRIDGET OF GREVA (2)] This second version of the play represents its final published state. The text is from Blackouts (New York: Samuel French, 1935). It was also published in slightly different form in 24 Favorite One-Act Plays (Bennett Cerf and Van H. Cartmell, ed. NY: Doubleday, 1958. 375-378), Theatre Experiment (Benedikt, Michael, ed. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967. 52-57), and SUHE (125-127).

142.2 Squinch] See note 126.2.

Thompson’s Vacation

149.1 THOMPSON’S VACATION] This skit was published as part of the miscellany “You Know Me, Al” in Cosmopolitan (73 (September 1922): 82-83), and later collected in FL (329-332), PRL (718-720), and RLR (597-598).

Clemo Uti—“The Water Lilies”

153.1 CLEMO UTI—“THE WATER LILIES”] “Clemo Uti” first appeared in Life (2 October 1924: 8), and was collected in WOI (41-44) along with “I. Gaspiri” and “Taxidea Americana.” It was later collected in FL (367-370), PRL (749-750), RLR (599-600), and SUHE (157-159).

153.1 CLEMO UTI—“THE WATER LILIES”] Though Clemo is an Italian surname, a mountain, and bears a certain resemblance to the name of Futurist playwright Remo Chiti, no reasonable meaning has been found for the phrase “Clemo Uti.” Lardner uses neither word in the rest of his work.

154.3 waffles] Waffles and waffle parlors seem to be words or concepts that Lardner found amusing in and of themselves. A “waffle parlor” is also mentioned in “Abend di Anni Nouveau” (191.20), and the term frequently appears in Lardner’s
nonsense writing. Typical of its use is as a character name “Agnes Waffle” in the nonsense series “Crazy Kennedy” (“Wake.” 22 April 1917: sec 2: 1).

154.5 *There . . . happen.* Also note acts thrown out or otherwise deleted in “I. Gaspiri” and “Taxidea Americana.” Three acts are combined in “Abend di Anni Nouveau.” There is a parallel to be found in the French surrealist drama *If You Please* by Andre Breton and Phillipe Soupault: in it, the statement “The authors of this play do not want the fourth act printed” appears instead of the act itself. Though it is possible Lardner found amusement and thus inspiration in that odd deletion in the 1920 play, no definite link between the two can be traced.

154.7 Two . . . diseased] Cf. the poisoned rat sequence in “Cora, or Fun at a Spa” (168.10-11).

155.21 *What of it?* Though he gave credit to his friend Grantland Rice for suggesting the phrase “What of it?” as the title of his 1925 collection of miscellaneous works, culled mostly from his newspaper columns, Lardner readily admits in the preface to the book that it was already among his favorite expressions and had been for many years:

It has been my favorite phrase since back in 1913 or ’14, or whatever year it was that Hank O’Day managed the Cubs. A modern big league baseball manager is supposed to observe the social amenities, but Mr. O’Day had been an umpire so long that the chip on his shoulder had become a permanent growth.

The Cubs were making their first eastern trip of the season, and with them went their owner, Charles W. Murphy. Mr. Murphy and Mr. O’Day were standing by the desk in the Aldine Hotel at Philadelphia one evening when the hotel’s genial manager, whose name I have forgotten, joined them.

“Hello, there, Mr. -----!” said Mr. Murphy cordially. “Have you met my friend, Mr. Henry O’Day?”

“I haven’t had that pleasure,” replied Mr. -----.

“Mr. -----,” explained Mr. Murphy to Mr. O’Day, “is the manager of this hotel.”

“What of it?” said Mr. O’Day.

156.3 *queels*] The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists “queel” as an alternate spelling of “quail.” Whether Lardner was aware of this meaning or if he used it as simply a nonsense term is unknown. What is certain is that Lardner used the term often. Edmund Wilson remembers “one occasion his [Lardner’s] saying that he had just seen a ‘queel’ looking in through the window and then later—or on some other occasion—when he was leaving the Fitzgeralds brushing some queels off his own coat” (Elder 184).
I. GASPIRI

157.1 I. GASPIRI] According to Donald Ogden Stewart (By a Stroke of Luck! An Autobiography. New York: Paddington Press, 1975), “I. Gaspiri” was performed by Robert Benchley, Marc Connely, and himself for the Authors’ League annual dinner. Stewart recalls Benchley playing a mandolin during the performance while the others "conversed deadpan in sentences which had no relation to each other or to anything else" (126). From Stewart’s account of the performance, it can be determined that Stewart played the part of “Second Stranger,” and Robert Benchley played “First Stranger” Given the number of roles, each must have played several parts. Stewart credits his performance in the play with inspiring his own "impulse toward 'crazy humor'"(126).

The nonsense play was first published by Ben Hecht in his Chicago Literary Times (15 February 1924: 3.) and brought shortly thereafter by Donald Ogden Stewart to Ford Maddox Ford who published it in The Transatlantic Review (2.1 (August 1924): 103-104.). It was also reprinted in Laurence Stallings’ column “The First Reader” in July of 1924 before being selected for inclusion, along with “Clemo Uti” and “Taxidea Americana” in WOI (45-47). It has since been collected in FL (363-366), PRL (746-748), RLR (618-620), and SUHE (161-162).

157.1 Gaspiri] Though the word is an Italian surname, no connection with Lardner can be reasonably made. Lardner corrected the title in WOI to include the period after the “I,” thus making it possible to read it as “First Gaspiri,” possibly a pun on “first gasp,” as opposed to “last gasp.”

157.4 Bukovinian] Bukovina is a Romanian region situated in the northern part of Moldavia.

157.9 Herbert Swope] Herbert Bayard Swope (1882-1958), a friend and neighbor of Lardner’s in Great Neck. Swope was a Pulitzer Prize winning reporter (1917) and later executive editor for the New York World. He was noted by Lardner and F. Scott Fitzgerald for his nearly continuous parties, some of which would spread to the Lardner home.

157.19-158.4 Where . . . there.] These lines are drawn from “The Tridget of Greva” (137.13-20).

159.7 “My Man”] A hit song (also known as “Mon Homme”) sung by Fannie Brice in the Ziegfeld Follies of 1921; English lyric by Channing Pollak, music by Maurice Yvain.
Taxidea Americana

160.1  TAXIDEA AMERICANA ] First published in *The Wisconsin Literary Magazine* (24 (DEC 1924): 1), it has been collected in *WOI* (48-52), *FL* (371-373), *PRL* (753-756), *RLR* (621-623), and *SUHE* (163-165). There are no known performances of this play.

160.1  TAXIDEA AMERICANA ] The title is derived from the scientific name for the badger, Wisconsin's mascot.

160.5  FRED RULLMAN ] A New York publisher.


161.3  SENATOR LA FOLLETTE ] See note 89.1.

161.9-10 PAT and MIKE ] See note 90.17-18.

162.3  Wilmerding ] Wilmerding, Pennsylvania, is the home of George Westinghouse. It is one of many town names that struck Lardner as comical. He used it in pieces such as a poem he wrote to Neysa McMein in the “Wake” (7 February 1917: 11):

I also wonder (my wondering
Won’t do you a bit of harm)
If you’re from Yonkers or Wilmerding
Or Chattanooga or Ishpeming,
Or born on a poultry farm.

162.6-9  Far . . . Nassau. ] Cf. “On Wisconsin”: “On Wisconsin, On Wisconsin, plunge right through that line. / Run the ball clear down the field, a touchdown sure this time. / On Wisconsin, On Wisconsin, fight on for her fame. / Fight, fellows, fight, fight, fight, we'll win this game.”

163.3  Stoughton ] A small town near Madison, Wisconsin.

Cora, or Fun at a Spa

164.1 CORA, OR FUN AT A SPA ] May have been written for a Lambs Club Gambol. It first appeared in print in *Vanity Fair* (24 June 1925): 42 and was later reprinted in *FL* (358-362), *PRL* (742-745), *RLR* (615-617), and *SUHE* (149-152).

164.7 PLAGUE ] Plague also appears as the name of a character, Ralph Plague, in the short play “Delays are Dangerous,” which appeared in the “Wake” on 22 March 1914.

164.10 Heywood Broun ] Heywood Campbell Broun (1888-1939) journalist and social activist who lost his job with the *New York World* because of his stance on the Sacco-Vanzetti verdict in 1928. Broun and Lardner were friends throughout the 1920s and until Lardner’s death.

165.6 “Don’t bacilli.” ] Jokes and puns on the word “bacilli” can be found throughout Lardner’s writing, from the “Wake” when he starts a poem, “Now I was just a little kid—ma says not more than three— / When the baseball bacilli first showed signs of life in me” (30 June 1913), to the “Weekly Letter” (18 October 1924), in which he uses the expression “Yes, I have no bacilli.”

165.11-15 Well . . . is ] This joke also appears in the first version of “The Tridget of Grevya” and in Will Rogers’ weekly column on 21 February 1926. In the latter, Rogers quotes some notes Lardner gave him in Clearwater Florida. In them, Lardner introduces George Morse, “Gold Champion of Vermont”: “You might use this gag of mine, which went big in a Lambs Club Gambol Sketch I wrote. Mr. Morse hails from the state that gave us President Coolidge. I asked him once to give me a letter of introduction to the President, but he said he didn’t know him well enough. I said, ‘That is funny. I heard you and Coolidge are very close.’ ‘He is!’ was Mr. Morse’s reply “ (Rogers, Will. *Will Rogers’ Weekly Articles*. Volume 2: The Coolidge Years: 1925-1927. Ed. James M. Smallwood. Stillwater, OK: Oklahoma State University Press, 1980. 156.)

165.20 David Belasco ] (1853-1931), an oftentimes flamboyant actor, manager, playwright, and producer.

168.10 poisoned rat ] See also “Clemo Uti” (154.6-9): “Two rats have got in there by mistake. One of them seems diseased. The other looks at him. They go out. Both rats come in again and wait for a laugh. They don’t get it, and go out.”
The Gelska Cup

169.1 THE GELSKA CUP ] First published in the humor magazine Life (4 June 25: 16, 39-40), the playlet was not reprinted for more than fifty years. It appeared with an introduction by Ring Lardner, Jr., in Theater (9.2 (Spring 1978): 126-127). It has never been performed.

Dinner Bridge

178.1 DINNER BRIDGE ] This play was first published in the Dutch Treat Year Book 1927 (New York: Dutch Treat Club, 1927. 40-49.), a program for the club’s annual dinner at which the play was performed, as “Dinner & Bridge.” It was later published with the current title in The New Republic (51 (20 July 1927): 227-229) and collected in FL (348-357), PRL (733-741), RLR (608-615), and SUHE (141-147).

The Dutch Treat edition includes illustrations by E. A. Wilson and George Illian and a portrait of Lardner which precedes the play by Herb Roth. It also includes the following introductory piece:

Note: This piece was written by Mr. Lardner with one hand while suffering from a broken collar bone acquired at a typical Great Neck social gathering. If Mr. Lardner could have used both hands the piece might have been broader but not so long. (24)

178.2 CHARACTERS ] The Dutch Treat Year Book lists the cast as follows:

CROWLEY, the foreman.........................Will Irwin
AMOROSI, an Italian laborer....................Henry Clapp Smith
TAYLOR, a Negro laborer.......................Robert Benchley
CHAMALES, a Greek laborer....................Percy Hammond
HANSEN, a Scandinavian laborer.............Rea Irvin
LLANUZA, a Mexican laborer...............Percy Waxman
THE INQUISTEME WAITER.....................George S. Kaufman
THE DUMB WAITER..........................Robert Sherwood

179.2 Wallachian ] Wallachia is a region in Transylvania, Romania.

179.5 Alexander Woollcott ] (1887-1943) One of America’s foremost critics.

182.5 trumpet medium ] See “The Other World” for more gags about a trumpet medium.
Yes ... Swiss-ess. ] These lines are a paraphrase of an exchange in “Not Guilty” (101.17-20).

Did ... together. ] These lines are a paraphrase of an exchange in “Not Guilty” (103.3-4).

It seems ... eleven.” ] Cf. “Not Guilty” 104.2-10.


Abend di Anni Nouveau

ABEND DI ANNI NOUVEAU ] This short play first appeared in Lardner’s short-lived column, Ring’s Side, in the entertainment and sports newspaper, the New York Morning Telegraph (30 December 1928: 1). It was collected in FL (363-366), PRL (746-748), RLR (618-620), SUHE (153-155), and Theatre Experiment (Benedikt, Michael, ed. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967. 58-61).

ST. JOHN ERVINE ] St John Greer Ervine (1883-1971), playwright and critic from Belfast.

WALTER WINCHELL ] (1897-1972), a powerful and irreverent gossip columnist and radio personality who focused his attention on Broadway and its stars in the 1920s and on Hollywood and its stars in the 1930s.

HEYWOOD BROUN ] See note 165.10.

DOROTHY THOMPSON ] (1894-1961), a journalist and foreign correspondent who was, at the time (1928-1942), married to Sinclair Lewis.

THEODORE DREISER ] Theodore (Herman Albert) Dreiser (1871-1945), author of many novels, including Sister Carrie (1904) and An American Tragedy (1925). In 1931, Time quoted Lardner as saying Dreiser was the “prince of all bad writers,” something Lardner later says was a misquote. Early in 1932, Lardner wrote to Dreiser apologizing, and Dreiser accepted. The two never met.

CARL LAEMMLE ] Carl Laemmle, Sr. (1867-1939), an aggressive movie producer and founder of Universal Pictures.

Quadroon

QUADROON ] This short play, the last of the nonsense plays, first appeared in the New Yorker (18 December 1931: 17-18). It was collected in FL (363-366), PRL (746-748), RLR (618-620), and SUHE (135-140). The play is a parody of sorts of Eugene O'Neill's Mourning Becomes Electra, which opened at the Guild Theatre on 26 October. Lardner explains the source of much of the play in a letter to his nephew, Dick Tobin: “In one of the next two or three New Yorkers will appear a comical parody on ‘Mourning Becomes Elektra,’ It was a tough thing to write as two-thirds of it is menu cards which I copied from the program” (Letters 249-250).

Alexander Woollcott ] See note 179.5.

Alice Brady ] (1892-1939), actress who played Lavinia in Mourning Becomes Electra; daughter of William A. Brady and Grace George.

Thomas Chalmers ] (1887-1968), actor who played Captain Adam Brant in Mourning Becomes Electra.

Goldie or Alice ] Florenz Ziegfeld’s secretaries.

Percy Hammond ] A theater critic and former co-worker from Lardner’s Chicago newspaper days.

Vincent Millie Youmans ] Vincent Millie Youmans (1899-1946), composer of such hits as “Tea for Two”; friend of Lardner and composer of the music for the 1930 Ziegfeld production Smiles, to which Lardner contributed some lyrics.


Paul Lannin ] A former baseball man and composer; Lardner and Lannin were friends and eventual collaborators on projects like Lardner’s ill-fated musical comedy All at Sea.

Vic Arden ] A solo pianist in his own right, Arden (1893-1962) gained fame as a duo-pianist with Phil Ohman (note 194.6); George Gershwin featured the pianists in such musicals as Lady, Be Good!, Funny Face, and Oh, Kay.
194.6 Phil Ohman ] Pianist (1896-1954) and partner of Vic Arden (note 194.5).

194.13 Claudette Colbert ] Born Lily Claudette Chauchoin in France, Colbert (1905-1996) was known as the glamour girl of screwball comedies; made her silent film debut in 1927; won an Oscar for best supporting actress for *It Happened One Night* in 1934.

194.14 Marchmont Schwartz ] Known as "Marchy," Marchmont (1909-Present) was a star Notre Dame halfback (1929-1931); later worked as an assistant coach at Notre Dame and the University of Chicago, Athletic Director at Creighton University, and Head Coach at Stanford University.

194.20 William A. Brady ] A producer, husband of Grace George, and father of Alice Brady.

195.3-4 Walter Winchell ] See Note 188.5.

195.16 Christine ] A character played by Alla Nazimova in the original production of *Mourning Becomes Electra*.

195.16 Alla Nazimova ] Born Adelaide Leventon in Russia, Alla Nazimova (1879-1945) emigrated to the United States (1905) and became one of the most popular serious stage actresses. She played Christine in the original production of *Mourning Becomes Electra*.

195.17 Lavinia ] A character, played by Alice Brady in the original production of *Mourning Becomes Electra*.

195.18 Casey Jones ] John Luther Jones (1864-1900), an engineer whose death in a train wreck was immortalized in a popular folk ballad of the same name.

196.16 Frankie and Johnnie ] Ill-fated lovers; the subject of a popular folk ballad of the same name.

196.19 Hedda Gabler ] A play by Henry Ibsen. In a regular feature in the "Wake," "The Best Play I Ever Saw," which was usually dedicated to moments in sports, Lardner once wrote that "The best play I ever saw was 'Hedda Gabler,' with Mrs. Fiske doing the Gabling" (16 July 1913).

196.20 William Anthony McGuire ] (1881-1940), playwright, screen writer, and producer from Chicago.

197.1 Mrs. Fiske ] Minnie Maddern (Davey) Fiske (1865-1932), a serious
actor, known for her work in Ibsen plays. She gave a memorable performance as Hedda in *Hedda Gabler* in 1904. Her chief acting rival at the beginning of the century was Alla Nazimova (see note 195.16), who also gave a memorable performance as Hedda in 1906.

Elizbeth Arden ] Born Florence Nightingale Graham, Elizabeth Arden (1884-1966) was the “Creator of Beauty,” inventing and marketing a line of beauty products and reaching a level of unparalleled success in business for a woman of her time.

LYNN FONTANNE, *A Mrs. Lunt,* ] Lynn Fontanne (1887-1983) was a comic actress, married to and often partnered with Alfred Lunt.

Grace George ] (1879-1961) actress, wife of William A. Brady and mother of Alice Brady.

Bert Lahr ] Born Irving Lahrheim, Bert Lahr (1895-1967) was a burlesque and vaudeville performer who won stardom in the Broadway play *Hold Everything* (1928); known to contemporary audiences as “The Cowardly Lion” in *The Wizard of Oz.*

Frank Case ] Manager and owner of the Algonquin Hotel who popularized the spot as a meeting place for show business and literary luminaries.

Jimmy Walker ] (1881-1946), popular Mayor of New York (1926-1932) who enjoyed the company of show business celebrities; began his career as a songwriter and ended it as a record executive.

New York . . . exclusively. ] These three statements appear in the *Theatre Guild Program* for *Mourning Becomes Electra* under the heading “Advertising Fundamentals in New York City.”

Morris Gest ] A theatrical producer who saw promise in Lardner’s dramatic work while Lardner was still living in Chicago. Lardner moved from Chicago to the East Coast in 1919, in part, because of a contract for four plays he signed with Gest. None of these contracted plays were ever produced.
WORKS CITED


---. "Delays are Dangerous." "In the Wake of the News." *The Chicago Tribune* 22 March 1914: sec. 3: 1.


---. “In the Wake of the News.” *The Chicago Tribune* 8 August 1917: 11.


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---. "Why Authors?" *What of It?* New York: Scribner’s, 1925. 121-129.


Appendix A

Complete Listing of Ring Lardner’s Newspaper Dialogues and Short Plays
All plays and dialogues Ring Lardner wrote for his newspaper columns “In the Wake of the News” and “Ring’s Side” as well as one play written for the Boston American are included in this listing. Lardner wrote no plays in his column “Lardner’s Weekly Letter.” The distinction is made between a play and a dialogue based on format: a dialogue includes the names of the speakers followed by their spoken lines, but does not include any other dramatic conventions, such as a listing of characters, division into acts or scenes, and acting or stage directions; a play includes at least some of these dramatic conventions. Dialogues presented in short story form or short exchanges presented as a simple joke are not included in this listing. The date of the play or dialogue is listed in the right column. The title of the play or dialogue and a brief description of its content follows the date in the right column.

**Boston American**

30 July 1911  “In the Press Box: A Tragedy in One Act.”
Play. Various newspapermen speak in rhyme and have a difficult time following the game going on before them. In perhaps the strangest of any of Lardner’s song parodies, one of the characters, a stylish songbird, Eddie, interrupts the reporters’ conversations to sing to a girl. Parodying a popular song, “Come Josephine,” (“Come Josephine, in my flying machine. / Going up, she goes! Up she goes!”) Eddie sings the lines “Come Josephine, take a jab of morphine, going up, she goes, up she goes” and “Come, Mary Jane, take a sniff of cocaine, Going up, she goes, up she goes.”

“In the Wake of the News” (Chicago Tribune 1913-1919).

24 Aug. 1913  “Crossing the Street: Tragedy in One Act.”
Play. Charles Comiskey, Ed Walsh, Lardner (as “Wake”), and a
hustler discuss a dismal game as it progresses; they continually seek refuge across the street where they drink.

16 Oct. 1913 “Pals.”
Dialogue. England and the National League, personified, discuss their failures in the world of sports.

17 Oct. 1913 “In the Stand (In Three Acts).”
Play. Mike Doolan comes to bat three times; each time the Lady, who can never remember who he is, and her escort discuss him, concluding that he belongs on the “nickel stage” in Vaudeville.

19 Oct. 1913 “At the Station (Time-Tonight).”
Dialogue. Fans yell unwelcome advice to White Sox players as they leave on a road trip.

22 Oct. 1913 “On the Elevated”
Dialogue. A “Ball Scribe” and “Casual Aquaintence” illustrate what must have been for Lardner common and irritating conversation. See full text in this volume.

2 Nov. 1913 “The P.G.”
Dialogue. Chicago White Sox players Lord, Weaver, Gleason, Fournier, Bodie, Scott, and Easterly play poker and exchange insults.

9 Nov. 1913 “Bodie Pulls a Boner.”
Dialogue. Continuation of the card game started in “The P.G.” on 2 November 1913.

16 Nov 1913 “The Little Game.”
Dialogue. Chicago White Sox players Bodie, Benz, Walsh, White, and a reporter play poker.

7 Dec. 1913 “On to Washington.”
Dialogue. Chicago White Sox players Lord, Scott, Bodie, Gleason, Fournier, and Weaver play poker and quiz each other about geography to bring out Bodie’s ignorance.

11 Dec. 1913 “1913.” and “1914.”
Dialogue. Magnates elect John Tener as National League President in “1913” and praise him as a leader; in “1914” the same magnates criticize Tener’s decisions and consider replacing him with John D. Rockefeller.
14 Dec. 1913  "The Rules."
Dialogue. Chicago White Sox players Gleason, Lord, Bodie, Fournier, Scott, Weaver, Easterly, and a porter play poker.

18 Dec. 1913  "Executive Session."
Dialogue. Baseball directors and the club president from the Cincinnati Reds, all affecting German accents, discuss possible trades with the St. Louis Cardinals.

21 Dec. 1913  "This Happened, Too."

26 Dec. 1913  "Back in 1908."

27 Dec. 1913  "Back in 1908."
Dialogue. A continuation of the card game begun on 26 December 1913.

28 Dec. 1913  "The Follies of 1913: In Two Acts and Fifteen Scenes."
Play. The first short play to foreshadow the odd scenes and quick shifts in space and time of the nonsense plays, "The Follies" is a recap of the year's biggest sports stories in musical revue form. See the full text in this volume.

2 Jan. 1914  "New Year's Eve."
Dialogue. Tom, Dick, Harry, and "the Blonde" talk at various times in the evening as they get drunker and less gracious. All begin as friends generously buying rounds of drinks; as the night progresses, jealousy interferes with the friendship and accusations fly about who has bought the fewest drinks.

4 Jan. 1914  "Birmingham-1910."
Dialogue. Chicago Cubs players Overall, Zim, Brown, Pfiester, Kroh, and Steinfeldt play poker with very little money.

11 Jan. 1914  "A Stranger Butts In."
Dialogue. Chicago White Sox players Altrock, Dougherty, Hahn, Atz, Smith, and Sullivan play cards with a stranger.
Play. C.W. Murf (Charles Murphy, the Cubs owner) tries to sign 
Vic Saier, who is also sought after by the St. Louis Federal League 
team.

18 Jan. 1914  “Bluffs.”
Dialogue. Chicago White Sox players Gleason, Lord, Weaver, Bodie, 
and Block play poker.

25 Jan. 1914  “Mr. Zeider, Peacemaker.”
Dialogue. Chicago White Sox players Lord, Bodie, Zeider, Weaver, 
and Fournier play poker and exchange ethnic insults.

1 Feb. 1914  “Riding Morris.”
Dialogue. Chicago White Sox players Zeider, Weaver, Lord, Rath, 
and Gleason play poker and question the wisdom of the magnates.

Play. Three scenes with a magnate and reporters, the magnate 
changing his opinion of a prospect as the circumstances change—
considering him a star when he thinks he will get him, not talented 
when the player goes to the Federal League, and talented again when 
his lawyers tell him his claim on the player is valid.

8 Feb. 1914  “The Boston Bunch.”
Dialogue. Former Boston Braves players Doc Miller, Billie Burke, 
Charley Herzog, Peaches Graham, Chick Evans, and Bill Parsons play 
poker.

12 Feb. 1914  “Charles the First.”
Play. The short play is one of two (King Henry the First being the 
other) written in mock-Shakespearean style about the managerial 
turmoil in the Chicago Cubs organization. See the full text in this 
volume.

15 Feb. 1914  “King Henry the First.”
Play. The short play is one of two (Charles the First being the other) 
written in mock-Shakespearean style about the managerial turmoil in 
the Chicago Cubs organization. See the full text in this volume.

22 Feb. 1914  “Getting the Dope.”
Play. Reporters try to get information, or “dope,” from two young 
pitchers in Florida and find themselves with nothing “newsworthy”;
reveals the ludicrousness of what passes for news during Spring Training and of the pursuit for such news.

1 Mar. 1914  
“A Rotten Deal.”  
Play. A player is injured at Spring Training and eventually loses his job.

8 Mar. 1914  
“A Friend of Frank’s.”  
Play. Two Cubs fans, George Pest and Joe Bug, go to spring training and pester Frank Schulte and Heine Zimmerman, later arriving back home to brag to their friends about how they got to know the players.

15 Mar. 1914  
“The Fox.”  
Play. Maneuvering between a major league magnet and a Federal League manager over a recruit.

22 Mar. 1914  
“Delays are Dangerous.”  
Play. Ralph Plague, a Chicago Bug, irritates Kid Gleason.

12 Apr. 1914  
“The Reporter’s Revenge; or, the Thirst for Knowledge.”  

1 May 1914  
“Moving Day.”  
Play. A husband, wife, and baby try to pack and move.

9 May 1914  
“Anything Else.”  
Play. A doorman keeps information about a baseball player from a man from the East.

15 May 1914  
“Gloom.”  
Play. Early in the season, Chicago White Sox players Kid Gleason and Buck Weaver find themselves already bored with their entertainment options on the road.

17 May 1914  
“1913” and “1914.”  
Play. A magnate insults a player and refuses him a contract in 1913, then tries to lure him to the club in 1914 after the player has become successful.

23 July 1914  
“The Last Four Innings (Part 1).”  
Play. Detroit Tigers players chat and exchange insults while sitting on the bench during a game with the Chicago White Sox.
24 July 1914  “The Last Four Innings (Part 2).”
Play. A continuation of the play begun 23 July 1914.

25 July 1914  “The Last Four Innings (Part 3).”
Play. A continuation of the play begun 23 July 1914.

6 Aug. 1914  “Last Monday (The Sox Second).”
Play. Chicago White Sox players chat and exchange insults while sitting on the bench during a game with the Philadelphia Athletics.

7 Aug. 1914  “Last Monday (The Sox Sixth).”
Play. A continuation of the play begun 6 August 1914.

8 Aug. 1914  “Last Monday (The Athletic Eighth).”
Play. A continuation of the play begun 6 August 1914.

7 Oct. 1914  “A Verse is Torn Up.”
Play. A dramatization of a frustrating day at the office of the Wake editor [Lardner].

Play. U. S. League and Universal League presidents discuss their financial troubles truthfully with the press; the press is unable to print what it hears because it is too truthful to believe.

3 Nov. 1914  “Going West.”
Play. University of Michigan football players are alternately chastised and comforted by Coach Yost after a loss to Harvard.

21 Nov. 1914  “Introduction in Thirst Parlor.”
Dialogue. People are introduced to one another in a bar and almost immediately forget each other’s names.

9 Jan. 1915  “Robert takes a Lesson.”
Play. The naive Illinois coach tries to get a game with college football giant Harvard, represented by a snobbish Professor Haughton, and is shown the exit.

8 May 1915  “Casual Encounters.”
Play. A ridiculous “faithful account” of a meeting between the president of the American League and president of the St. Louis Feds of the Federal League, in which the two want an end to the “baseball war” between the leagues and seem to be preoccupied by ice cream.
4 Sep. 1915  “What Do You Want? (Play in One Act).”
Play. A visitor asks a favor of the sporting editor [Lardner], and then asks for another favor when the first is accomplished.

6 Jan. 1916  “Fifteen Cents’ Worth.”
Dialogue between a know-it-all barber and his “victim.”

8 Jan. 1916  “Doc’s Breakfast.”
A doctor’s breakfast is perpetually interrupted.

14 Jan. 1916  “Big Victory for Western Springs.”
A short dialogue in which various people from different neighborhoods compare cold temperatures, each trying to top the others.

Dialogue. Chicago Cubs manager Joe Tinker, using elevated Shakespearean language interviews a baseball neophyte about his favorite things. When the neophyte answers that all of his favorite things are related to Armour products or Wrigley gum (William Wrigley and J. Ogden Armour being owners of the club), he is hired without regard to his baseball skill.

19 May 1916  “A Friendly Game.”
Dialogue. Five men play cards.

24 June 1916  “Overheard Anywheres.”
Dialogue. Common people offer their opinions about politics and baseball.

1 Nov. 1916  “Fame: A Drama in Three Acts.”
Play. All three acts are letters between a scout and an athlete.

20 Dec. 1916  “Shall They Have the Vote?”
Play. A woman tries to buy tickets to a theatre and then tries to buy a record, illustrating her apparent inability to make quick decisions.

10 Jan. 1917  “Small Talk at Breakfast.”
Lardner’s sons John and Jim have breakfast conversation with “Their Dad”.

20 Jan. 1917  “Small Talk at Breakfast.”
Play. Lardner’s sons John and Jim talk with “We,” their father.
7 Mar. 1917  “La Follette of 1917.”
   Play. Senators debate grammar and patriotism instead of the weighty
   issues of war. See the full text in this volume.

3 May 1917  “Fish: Play in seven scenes.”
   Play. Smith reads the paper and then shares his uninformed opinion of
   the Kaiser with those he meets during his day.

10 July 1917  “Long Distance.”
   Dialogue. Lardner’s son Bill (Ring, Jr.) affects a German accent and
   tries to reach Himmel on the phone.

   Dialogue. New York Giants McGraw, Kauff, Zimmerman, McCarty,
   Fletcher, and Robertson in the club house after their game six deciding
   World Series loss to the Chicago White Sox (15 October 1917); Heine
   Zimmerman, a former Chicago Cub, attacks the other players for their
   poor performances.

28 Nov. 1917  “Mr. Yost as Umpire.”
   Play. Very short scene in which Michigan football coach Yost as an
   umpire, has a short conversation with an “indignant player” and a
   referee.

   Play. A woman mail carrier and a woman to whom she is delivering
   mail have a conversation, in which the mail carrier lingers at the house,
   stereotypically distracted by gossip and knitting.

30 Dec. 1917  “Follies of 1917.”
   Play. The sports year in review in eight scenes.

   Play. A husband makes excuses for not heating the house, not
   shaving, and not calling a plumber.

23 Jan. 1918  “More Speed! Cry Senators.”
   Dialogue. Preceded by a short news story about the spirit of
   bipartisanship that the Senate has adopted in order to make the war
   effort more effective, this dialogue, between a Democratic Senator and
   a Republican Senator, consists of nothing but childish bickering.

30 Jan. 1918  “Horrors of War.”
Play. A drunk talks to an army private on the “L.” He gets increasingly nonsensical and insulting.

16 Feb. 1918 “Repartee at the Breakfast Table.”
Play. Lardner’s three sons literally argue over spilled milk.

23 Feb. 1918 “The Truth About Russia.”
Dialogue. A conversation “Eavesdropped on the L.” between two citizens, recording their uninformed opinions about the war.

26 Feb. 1918 “Water Meters.”
Play. A family discusses their various uses of non-water liquids for purposes normally associated with water (beer for the fish bowl, gravy for coffee, etc.) in light of a water shortage. The word “seen” is used for “saw” by the children and often corrected by the mother.

15 Mar. 1918 “Sprightly Conversation.”
Play. Sailors have awkward conversations with women at a dance at the Casino Club.

12 Apr. 1918 “The Tide of Battle (On the L).”
Dialogue. Two citizens, Jarvis and Loyola discuss the progress of the war.

1 Oct. 1918 “The Outcasts.”
Play. Brown, a New York baseball reporter, quarrels with his wife.

10 Oct 1918 “At the Local Board.”
Play. A dumb registrant is interviewed by a military official.

17 Oct. 1918 “If the Flu Doesn’t Interfere.”
Play. The University of Chicago Maroons lose player after player to the armed forces.

22 Oct. 1918 “Well!”
Play. A husband and wife can’t figure out what to do in the evening; after considering many alternatives, the two decide to stay home and dust books.

21 Nov. 1918 “Getting Acquainted.”
Play. Lardner and another man have an awkward conversation with a coroner.
13 Dec. 1918  “La Bovina.”
Play. A mock opera in which Fred, a steer, is to be separated from his
love, Bossy, and sent to a Chicago slaughterhouse. Bossy goes with
Fred to Chicago and both are killed by a tack hammer.

14 Dec. 1918  “La Bovina.”

Play. A mock opera in which characters such as Il Turkey, Il Plum, Lo
Gravy, La Mashed Potato, various eating utensils, and Choruses
of Olives, Celery, Bibs, and Napkins, sing of the tragedy which
is Christmas dinner. Typical of the mock dramatic tone is an aria
sung by La Yam:
My loved one, trouble is brewing:
Our love will be our undoing.
I just got a good long flash
At White Potato, thy former mash.
She loves thee still. Beware
The curse of the pomme de terre!


8 Jan. 1919  “Breakfast.”
Play. The Lardner children discuss various topics around the breakfast
table; Jim tells tales of German soldiers in “his” country, and John
recites his poems.

4 Feb. 1919  “Sunday Breakfast.”
Play. The Lardners discuss various topics around the breakfast table;
Bill tells tales that get wilder when the truth of them is called into
question.

14 Feb. 1919  “Breakfast.”
Play. The Lardners discuss various topics around the breakfast table.

22 Feb. 1919  “In a Smoking Compartment.”
Play. A stranger bores naval officers with his stories of when he
almost joined the Navy.

26 Feb. 1919  “The Lost Poem.”
Play. An aspiring writer bothers Lardner by asking him his opinion of
some poems he has written. Lardner reads two and gets rid of the writer just as he begins discussing his novel.

28 Feb. 1919  “Breakfast.”
Play. The Lardners discuss moles, the Kaiser, and dessert around the breakfast table.

6 Mar. 1919  “Unanimous.”
Play. A variety of men who have just returned from France are asked the same questions about what they saw when they were there.

23 Mar. 1919  “Neckties.”
Play. Lardner’s son John gets three ties from Lardner, and then the other boys want ties as well.

29 Mar. 1919  “Interviewing Jess.”
Play. Lardner’s attempts to interview heavyweight champion Jess Willard are foiled by a never-ending string of visitors to their table. The visitors all have nonsense names like Fluh, Kloob, and Spluh.

30 Mar. 1919  “The New Brother.”
Play. The Lardners discuss the newest addition to their family.

13 Apr. 1919  “Supper.”
Play. Lardner’s sons John, Jim and Bill, along with a cast which includes “parents, foods, table linen, etc.” at supper.

15 Apr. 1919  “Julius Caesar.”
Play. Modern Shakespeare adaptation with a stereotypical black servant.

20 Apr. 1919  “Giants.”
Play. Lardner’s sons Jim and Bill talk about giants while a “Listening Parent” stands by.

27 Apr. 1919  “Tradewind.”
Play. William Gleason, James Burke, managers of the Chicago White Sox and the Saint Louis Browns, respectively, discuss a ridiculous trade idea.

9 May 1919  “In the Bleachers.”
Play. “Africans” gamble in the stands of a baseball game.
11 May 1919  “Birthdays.”
Play. Lardner’s sons John, Jim, and Bill talk about birthdays with “Le Pere.”

13 May 19  “Casey in the Field.”
Play. Baseball fans insult Casey Stengle as he plays against the Chicago Cubs.

14 May 1919  “Little Shavers.”
Lardner’s sons Jim and Bill talk to “Le Pere” about shaving.

1 June 1919  “On the Bench.”
Play. Lardner discusses the game in progress with Chicago White Sox players.

8 June 1919  “Then and Now.”
Play. A person trades in his old car for a new one in 1914 and gets a great deal from an eager salesman; in 1919, the man tries to do the same, but is offered no deals by a salesman who is so unenthusiastic, he often falls asleep.

Ring’s Side (New York Morning Telegraph 1928-1929)

A celebrity-filled nonsense play. See full text in this edition.

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Appendix Two

Listing of Ring Lardner’s Plays Intended for Performance
Zanzibar: A Comic Opera in Two Acts

Lardner wrote the lyrics and music for this local minstrel show, though he also may have had some influence on the rest of the script as well. The book was by his friend Harry Schmidt. It was performed by the American Minstrels on 14 April 1903, at the Opera House in Niles, Michigan. The play is printed in full, but without the musical numbers in a program printed for the show (Zanzibar. Niles, MI: Fred D. Cook, 1903).

Cast:
Seyyid Barghash, Sultan of Zanzibar...............Harry Schmidt
Uddu, Prime Minister, afterwards chef.............Bert Brown
General Sokum, Commander of the army...........Harry Graves
Joko, Court Jester..........................................Harry Mansfield
Indoro, Secretary of the Interior....................Clarence Oberlin
Outdoro, Secretary of the Exterior..................Carl Schmidt
Willie Wise, from the N. Y. Stock Exchange........Fred Eaglesfield
Bertie Flashem, from the Stock Exchange...........Rex Lardner
Reggie Stocksenbonds, from the Stock Exchange...Ed Wurz
Mr. McBribe..................................................Paul Foerster
Kalulu, Lord High Dooitallinaminute...............George Dougan
Princess Lulu................................................Ralph King
Princess Ujji................................................Worth Landon
Padlock, Valet to Wise.................................Tom M. Swain
Shylock, Valet to Flashem..............................Ring Lardner

The Army:
Private Rippum...........................................Pud Strong
Private Terrum............................................Allen Arthur
Private Sluggum..........................................Barnard Deagon
Private Slashen..........................................George Morris
Private Mashen...........................................Roy. Merrit
Private Crashen..........................................John Wohlrab
Private Choppit...........................................Frank Deniston
Private Stoppit..........................................Raymond Platt
Private Droppit..........................................Moses Harris

Also Courtiers, Court Belles, Pages, etc.

Note: The program also lists "The Original Cast of Characters," which credits Lute Tong in the role of Joko, Paul Foerster as Indoro, Ed Wurz as Bertie Flashem, Rex Lardner as Reggie Stocksenbonds, Azra Williams as Private Rippum, Herman Selden as Private Terrum, Carson Parker as Private Sluggem, and Moses Harris as Private Maulem (a character not named in the
current cast). The Parts of Mr. McBride, Private Slashen, Private Mashen, Private Crashen, Private Choppit, Private Stoppit, and Private Droppit, are not included in the list. The production to which this “original” list refers is unknown.

Summary:
The argument, printed in the program, summarizes the play well:
“The story opens just after the death of the Sultan of Zanzibar. His son and successor, Seyyid Barghash, has been educated in foreign countries and is expected home to take the throne. Shylock and Padlock, whose former homes were in Buchanan, Mich., appear as valets to two young New Yorkers. Shylock is mistaken for the young Sultan. He at once assumes the throne, but being better acquainted with American government, he changes his title to Mayor, appoints Padlock City Clerk and the members of his court aldermen. In the second act the real Sultan appears and adds complications to the plot. Shylock explains that he was merely keeping the throne warm for the Sultan, and all ends happily.”

1917

Unknown baseball play for George Cohan.
According to Donald Elder, Lardner wrote a full-length baseball play which he brought to George Cohan in April 1917. Cohan eventually rejected the script, citing “too much baseball” as the primary reason he thought it would fail. (Ring Lardner. Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1956. 251).

1919

“A Soldier’s Mother”
On 19 April 1919 Lardner announced in his column “In the Wake of the News” that a short play of his, “A Soldier’s Mother” would be performed as part of a Liberty Bonds benefit. The play was produced by Donald Robertson, and performed at the Majestic theater and the Palace in Chicago. On 22 April 1919, Lardner mentions in his column that a second company will perform “A Soldier’s Mother” on Thursday at the South Shore Country club.

Characters / Cast:
Madge Martin..................Rees Davis
Pauline Ingram...............Nina Johnson
Blanche Harger.............Hazeltine Owen

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1920

Unknown sketch for the 1920 *Joy Belles*

According to Donald Elder, Lardner was asked by an old friend from Chicago, Charles Washburn to help him write a sketch for the comedy team Gallagher and Shean which was to appear in a revue called *Joy Belles*. Lardner wrote about half of the scene and then helped Washburn re-write the opening which had failed. The sketch was successful, but Lardner refused Washburn’s offer of half of his payment (*Ring Lardner*. Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1956. 251-252). The sketch has not been located.

1921

The Banker

Lardner submitted a one-act play, “The Banker” for review to A. L. Erlanger on 29 April 1921. All that is known about the play is derived from an Erlanger Play Review Department form, dated 30 April 1921, found in the Ring Lardner Papers at the Newberry Library in Chicago. According to the “remarks” portion of the form, the play is “screamingly funny” and “would make a good curtain raiser or an act for vaudeville.”

Characters / Cast:
Charles Means, President of the Bank.
His lawyer.
His daughter.
His daughter’s friend.
An Office Boy.
The Cashier.
Bank Directors.

Summary:
A bank president is dressed in rags and owes taxes. He asks his bank’s board of directors, also dressed in rags, for money for a suit, but doesn’t get what he wants. All of the other characters in the play, from the office boy to a fireman are dressed well and seem affluent. The bank president decides to go to jail, where he can at least get his hair cut.
Unknown vaudeville skit for Capt. Adrian C. "Pop" Anson
According to Joe Laurie, Jr., Lardner wrote a vaudeville skit for baseball great Capt. Adrian C. "Pop" Anson and his daughters in 1921 (Vaudeville: From the Honky-Tonks to the Palace. New York: Henry Holt, 1953. 126). No other information about the skit has been located.

Unknown play written with Gene Buck for Florenz Ziegfeld
According to Donald Elder, Lardner and Gene Buck wrote a show for Fannie Brice and submitted to Ziegfeld, but never produced. In a letter to Lardner from Brice (Ring Lardner Papers. Newberry Library, Chicago), she mentions receiving the "Russia" song from Lardner but not getting the script from Buck. She also mentions that she has read in the New York papers that "the show," is to be titled "Laughing Lena."

1922

Beautiful Katie, formerly titled Going South
Lardner wrote this three-act play with Gene Buck. It was never produced, and exists only in typescript (with many penciled corrections) in the Ring Lardner Papers at the Newberry Library, Chicago. According to Donald Elder, the play was pitched to Ziegfeld and rejected. Ziegfeld became interested in the script in 1925 and wanted to re-write it as a musical comedy (260-261). In a letter to F. Scott Fitzgerald, Lardner stated that neither Ziegfeld nor Buck liked the songs he had written for the play, and implied that he wasn’t happy about the liberties both wanted to take with his play. Eventually, Ziegfeld cancelled the contract with Lardner and Buck. Lardner was happy the whole episode was over (Letters of Ring Lardner. Ed. Clifford M. Caruthers. Washington: Orchises, 1995. 190-191).

Characters/Cast:
(ACT I)
Jack Wheeler.
Bessie Wheeler, his wife.
Kate Rice, Bessie's sister.
The Wheelers' Guests:
   Frank Adams
   Minnie Adams
   Tom Logan
   Edith Logan
   Jim Preston
   May Preston
   Jim Browning

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Grace Browning
Louie Hatch
Laura Hatch
Willard Hold, a friend of the Hatches'

(ACTS II, III)
The Wheelers.
Kate Rice.
Willard Holt.
Walter Trumbull, a wealthy young New Yorker.
Carl Sawyer, a Californian.
Harry Hammond.
Mrs. Paul Potter of Chicago.
Paul Potter II, her son.
Ed Fisher, proprietor of the Florida Club.
Watcher, Wheelenmen, Gamblers and Society People in the Florida Club.
Society People, Headwaiter and Waiters in the Coconut Grove.

Summary:
Based on Lardner's book *Gullible's Travels*, the play centers around the Wheeler's quest to find a suitable husband for Kate Rice, Bessie Wheeler's sister. They travel from Chicago to Palm Beach where they hope to find a proper suitor. In the end, Kate marries a millionaire.

This play is most notable for Lardner's definition of "wise boob" which appears in his notes on the characters. The character type is common in Lardner's fiction and is defined as someone who, like himself, moved to Chicago from a small town. The "wise boob" also reads all the papers and popular magazines, likes the status quo, socializes with "regular" people, speaks in less than proper English, and has "a faculty for crystallizing any subject he discusses into a few lines."

"The Bull Pen"
See the play and content notes in this edition.

"Rip Van Winkle, Jr."
Written for and performed in *The Ziegfeld Follies of 1922*. New Amsterdam Theatre, New York. 5 June 1922. The show had a run of 541 performances.

Characters/Cast:
Henry Wtz (Rip), a typographical error............. Brandon Tynan
Butler................................................................. Al Shean

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Note: Lulu McConnell, and Andrew Tombes were also in this sketch, but their roles cannot be determined.

Summary:
Henry Wtz has insomnia, takes a sleeping pill, sleeps for twenty years, and awakes in 1943 to find everything different.

“Not Guilty”
See the play and the content notes in this edition.

“The Other World”
See the play and content notes in this edition.

Unknown Sketch for The Ziegfeld Follies of 1922
In “Why Authors?” Lardner describes another sketch he had written for the Follies which involved a mechanical cow. The validity of this story can not be determined.

“The Tridget of Greva”
See the play and content notes in this edition.

1924

“I. Gaspiri”
See the play and content notes in this edition.

1925

Carmen
All that can be determined about this play is that Lardner worked on it sometime between 1922 and 1928. According to Jonathan Yardley, it was performed once for a private showing in 1976 (Ring: A Biography of Ring Lardner. New York: Random House, 1977. 251) It was never produced. The completed typescript is held in the Ring Lardner Papers at the Bentley Historical Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan. The play was published from this typescript in Pages 1 (Matthew J. Bruccoli, ed. Detroit: Gale Research, 1976. 134-155).
Characters/Cast:
Dan Josephs, a Policeman.
Moran, a Captain of Police.
Carmen, a Working Girl.
Miss Michaels, a Girl from Upstate.

Summary:
The story of Carmen is followed quite closely, but the setting is Jazz Age
Great Neck, New York, with flappers, bootleggers, a cop, and a bad girl

Cinderella
All that can be determined about this musical comedy is that it was written
sometime between 1922 and 1928. It was never completed or produced. The
first act can be found in two versions in the Ring Lardner Papers at the
Newberry Library, Chicago.

Characters/Cast:
Joe Means, Cinderella’s father.
Cinderella.
Mrs. Means, Joe’s second wife and Cinderella’s stepmother.
Millie Hollis and Tillie Hollis, her daughters by a former marriage.
The Prince.
The Thompsons; Miles, Joyce and Marian.
The Waldrons.
Francois.
The Chiropodist.
Fairy Godmother.
Taxi Driver.

Summary:
From the first act, it appears as if the general story of Cinderella is followed,
though modernized and Americanized.

“The Operating Room”
Though no date can be determined for this sketch, it closely resembles
Lardner’s short story “Zone of Quiet,” which was written in 1925. It was
never produced. It exists only in typescript in the Ring Lardner Papers at the
Newberry Library, Chicago.

Characters/Cast:
The Nurse (Comedy Girl).
The Interne (Straight Man).
The Patient.
Summary:
An interne and a nurse are preparing a patient for surgery. They try to anaesthetize the patient with ether. The nurse strokes the patient's face with her poison-ivy-infected hands: "I guess I'm lucky it's on my hands and not my face." The interne warns her to keep her hands away from her face. The interne puts the mask over the patient's face. The nurse and interne talk about common friends, former patients who have died, and the nurse's boyfriend. The patient is still awake. The nurse advises the interne to "empty the bottle on him," but the interne says a little more "would kill him." The relief nurse calls and says she won't be able to come to work. The nurse will have to stay with the current patient. The patient grabs the ether bottle and drinks it down.

Orpheus in the Underworld
Proposed by Morris Gest, this unproduced and unfinished (two acts of a planned four) play adapts the original "Orpheus in the Underworld" music by Jacques Offenbach to 1920s Tin Pan Alley. It has never been produced. The only known version is held in the Ring Lardner Papers, at the Newberry Library, Chicago.

Lardner's play was later adapted by Edward Enger in the 1953 play "To Hell with Orpheus, performed at the St. John Terrell's Music Circus in Lambertville, New Jersey.

Characters/Cast:
Orpheus (comedy part, jazz singer).
Henry Bane (comedy part, very dumb, a pest).
Jupiter (comedy lead).
Pluto (comedy).
The Prince of Calisalia (Juvenile).
Eurydice.
Diana.
Juno.
Venus.
Hebe.
Morpheus.
Mars (tough guy).
Neptune (sap comedy bit).
Mercury.
Minerva, Cybele and other goddesses and gods.
Jailer (Comedy bit).
A Servant.
Guides, shepherds, nymphs and imps.
Members of Orpheus' ukelele class.
Summary:
Orpheus is a Tin Pan Alley song writer and tune stealer; Eurydice is his long-suffering wife who wants to and does leave him for a prince. Eurydice is taken to Hell and Bane tells Orpheus he must follow her there.

“In Conference”
This skit was performed at the Dutch Treat Club Dinner, held at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York, 27 March 1925. It had previously been published as a short story in Liberty (I (16 August 1924): 3-4), and was collected in What of It? (New York: Scribner’s 1925. 77-87).

1927

“All at Sea: Musical Play in Two Acts
Book by George Abbott, Joseph Santley and Ring Lardner. Lyrics by Ring Lardner. Music by Paul Lannin. It is an unproduced play, found only in the Ring Lardner Papers at the Newberry Library, Chicago. Though George Abbott is listed as a writer, he says in a letter to Elder that "nothing happened beyond a few conferences" (Ring Lardner Papers. Newberry Library, Chicago). In a letter to Donald Elder, Joseph Santley states that he and Ring had a "rough draft" of All at Sea, but neither had discussed it with a Broadway producer. He says he was on the "Coast" to direct and discussed the idea of All at Sea with Robert Woolsey (of Wheeler and Woolsey). Woolsey suggested rewriting the play to fit their team; Ring agreed to the idea. The play was submitted to RKO (makers of the Wheeler and Woolsey movies), and they bought it. Wheeler and Woolsey were booked with work, so the idea lingered. Meanwhile, Cole Porter’s Anything Goes was produced in New York and there was too much a similarity between the two projects, so All at Sea was abandoned (Ring Lardner Papers. Newberry Library, Chicago).

Characters/Cast:
Martin Kilgour, a wealthy, retired manufacturer of horse medicine from Michigan.
Mrs. Kilgour, his wife, about 50, something of a climber.
Ann Kilgour, their daughter, young, flirtatious, giddy.
Bob Arnold, a young New York reporter.
Allan Grier, juvenile lead.
Caroline Garrett, leading girl.
Lefty Rivers, low comedy lead, a Chicago gunman, but not rough.
Louie Berg, a New York racketeer and night club owner.
Lola Lowe, typical motion picture actress from Hollywood.
Tony, assistant purser.
Mike Brady, Chicago racketeer.
Jim, doorman at Wildcat Club.
Combs, a mysterious tourist.
The Three Girls.
Bodyguards, policemen, reporters, photographers, stewards, natives of all the countries visited, sailors, guides, deckhands, taxi drivers, peddlers, beggars.

Summary:
The ganster Louie Berg is wanted for murder. A young millionaire, Allan Grier, is suffering from amnesia and is mistaken for Berg. All are on a boat, traveling around the globe. Grier is pursued by gangsters. All works out in the end. Though the music cannot be located, the lyrics to the play are contained in the typescript and include such memorable lines as the following:

I feel just like poor Hamo-let
Who said, "To be or not to?"
To kill oneself is wrong, and yet
I b'lieve I've almost got to.
The girl I love is so unkind!
When I am gone, she'll rue it.
So I will die if I can find
A pleasant way to do it.

2nd refrain:
A shot would make my eardrums ache
And wake my niece, who's teething;
A rope would wreck my classic neck
And interfere with breathing;
I can't take gas because, alas,
The odor's unendurable.
O Lord above, please tell me of
A death that ain't incurable.

Elmer the Great (originally titled Hurry Kane)
Written with George Cohan and performed at the Lyceum Theatre, New York, on 24 September 1928. The play is based on Lardner's short story "Hurry Kane."
Summary:
Elmer is eating and enjoying life in Indiana. He refuses to join the New York Yankees who recruit him, because he doesn't want to leave his girl. His girl dumps him so he will go. Gamblers get him to try to fix games. He secretly turns them into the police and saves the day for baseball. Elmer, who has been led astray by a big-city girl, comes to his senses in the end and returns to his hometown sweetheart.

1929

June Moon

Characters/Cast:
Fred Stevens..............Norman Foster
Edna Baker.................Linda Watkins
Paul Sears..................Frank Otto
Lucille........................Jean Dixon
Eileen........................Lee Patrick
Maxie Schwartz............Harry Rosenthal
Goldie......................Florence D. Rice
A Window Cleaner...........Frank Conlan
A Man Named Brainard.....Emil Hoch
Benny Fox....................Philip Loeb
Mr. Hart.....................Leo Kennedy
Miss Rixey..................Margaret Lee

Summary:
A young man from the Midwest goes to New York to make it big in the music business. He writes inane lyrics and finds some degree of success because of it. Tin Pan Alley is lampooned throughout the play.
“Game Called Off.”
This radio play was performed on 6 October 1929 on the CBS program “Majestic Theatre of the Air.” No other information about the play can be located.

1930

Unknown sketch for *Ruth Selwyn’s Nine Fifteen Revue*
Appendix C

Collation of the Tridget of Greva
The following is a representation of the changes to the text of "The Tridget of Greva." The base text is taken from the version in the Ring Lardner Papers at the Newberry Library in Chicago. Additions to the base text made in Blackouts (New York: Samuel French, 1935) are in bold type; deletions in Blackouts are positioned crossed out. The revisions to the script of "Tridget" appear to be for the purpose of changing it from a vaudeville-type sketch, with many obvious puns and slapstick humor, to something which more resembles the later nonsense plays. It is possible that Lardner wrote this sketch for another venue before using it in The 49ers. Such designations as "Comedy Lead" and the nature of the humor itself would seem more appropriate for vaudeville than for the more sophisticated revue in which it eventually appeared.

THE TRIDGET OF GREVA

Translated from the Squinch-Wymie

Characters

Louis Barhooter, The Tridget (Comedy-Lead).

Desire’ Corby, a Corn Vitter (Comedy-Lead).

Basil Laffler, a Wham Salesman (Straight-Lead).

(Translator’s note: Virtually the entire population of Greva suffers from vertigo.

An-interior-set. At the rise of the curtain, Barhooter, Corby, and Laffler are seated in three flat-bottom boats, the ears of which are either resting in the boats or dragging on the stage. One boat is at one side of the stage, another in the
middle, and the third at the other side. Laffler is in the middle boat. The three men are "fishing" with regulation poles and lines. Corby’s and Laffler’s hooks are baited with small fish. Barhooter’s hook is bare. The men occasionally change their lines from one side of the boat to the other. The lines become tangled once in a while and are separated again with difficulty. Every little while one of the “fishermen” manipulates an oar as if changing the position of his boat; also every little while, one of them reels in his line and looks to see if there is anything on it, or if his bait is all right. The men are all elaborately rigged out in fishing costumes and each boat is equipped with a pail, tackle boxes and other fishing paraphernalia. They are fishing.

Laffler

Well, boys, any luck?

(He looks from one to the other. Neither makes any reply, merely glaring at him as if annoyed pays attention)

Corby

(After a pause, to Barhooter)

How’s your wife, Louis?

Barhooter

She’s in pretty bad shape.

Corby

(Who has paid no attention to the reply)

That’s fine.
Barhooter

By the way, she and I had a little argument last night about your mother.

What was your mother's name before she was married?

Corby

I didn't know her then.

Laffler

Do they allow people to fish at the aquarium?

(Barhooter and Corby ignore him)

Barhooter

(To Corby)

Well, then, what was your mother's You sure must know her first name?

Corby

I don't know.

Barhooter

Do you mean to say that you don't know your mother's first name?

Corby

Why, no. I always called her mother.

Barhooter

But your father must have called her something.

Corby

I should say he did! Everything he could think of! That's a hot one.
Laffler's and Barhooter's fishlines become tangled. Barhooter gets out of his boat, untangles the lines and resumes his place in the boat)

Barhooter

(To Corby)

I wanted to ask you something about your sister, too.

Corby

What about her?

Barhooter

Just anything. For instance, what's the matter with her?

Corby

Who?

Barhooter

Your sister.

Corby

I'm not married.

(After a pause, Barhooter and Corby both laugh)

Barhooter

(To Laffler)

Do you know what we were laughing at?

Laffler

No—what? I have no idea.
Barhooter

I thought you might know. I wish I knew who to ask.

Corby

(To Barhooter)

Which way is the wind from?

Barhooter

(He moistens his finger and holds it up)

It's The wind's from offstage.

(He draws in his line, discovers that the bait is gone)

He That fellow got my bait.

(Re-baits his hook and throws the line in again He throws his line "in" again without baiting the hook)

Corby

(To Barhooter)

Where is your brother now?

Barhooter

He's in the states. I had a letter from him yesterday.

Corby

(Laughs shortly)

That's a hot one!

Barhooter

What do you mean?
Corby

Trying to make me believe you've got a brother that can write.

Barhooter

I never said he wrote it himself. And besides, the letter said he'd been too

drunk to write.

Corby

Drunk! In the United States! I thought they didn't sell liquor there any more.

Barhooter

Who?

Corby

I hear understand you're an uncle.

Barhooter

Yes, my sister is expecting a baby.

Corby

On what train?

Barhooter

Yes, and do you want to hear what happened?

Corby

No.

Barhooter

Well, I'll tell you, two days before the baby was born, Big Bertha—

that's my sister—she and her husband —that's her husband— were out driving and
they were going up a steep hill manhole and Harry tried to change into first second speed, but he made a mistake and got it in reverse and the car went clear to the bottom of the hill in reverse.

Corby

Anybody hurt? Who is Harry?

Barhooter

The fellow who was driving—He was Big Berth's husband at the time. He shifted into reverse by mistake and the car went clear to the bottom of the hill.

Corby

In reverse?

Barhooter

Yes, and No, but the baby is very backward.

Laffler

Boys, I believe we are going to have a storm.

(If others pay no attention to him)

Corby

(To Barhooter)

It seems to me there's is something the matter wrong with all your sister's children. Look at Julia!

(Barhooter and Laffler both looks in all directions, as if trying to locate Julia)

Laffler

Where?
Barhooter

(To Corby)

Can you imitate birds?

Corby

No. Can you? I don’t know. I never tried.

Barhooter

I wish you’d ask somebody—somebody you can rely on. No.

(After a pause)

I guess neither of us can imitate birds.

(To Laffler)

Hey, you! Can you imitate birds?

Laffler

No. Why?

Barhooter

Can you imitate fish? I’m always afraid I’ll be near somebody that can imitate birds.

Laffler

No.

Corby

I can. What kind of fish do you want me to imitate?

Barhooter

You do the imitation and I’ll guess what kind of fish it is.
Corby

All right.

(Sits on the side of the boat)

What kind of fish is this?

Barhooter

A perch.

Corby

(Resumes his seat)

And what is this?

(Tries to get up from his seat, but trembles all over like an old man)

Barhooter

A weakfish. Now I'll give you one.

(Takes the oars and "rows" violently)

Corby

Shad roe.

Laffler

Now watch me. I'll imitate one.

(He does some business, but the other two ignore him)

Corby

(To Barhooter)

Louis, have you ever saved a life?
Barhooter

(Hesitatingly)

Well, yes, I have, but I don't like to talk about it.

Corby

Of course, you don't. I'm sorry I mentioned it. Forget all about it.

Barhooter

No. As long as you brought it up, you might as well get it straight. It happened last--

Corby

(Interrupting)

Never mind! I know you don't want to tell it!

Barhooter

(Insisting)

It happened last summer. I was walking across a railroad bridge over the Niagara River. Suddenly I heard a cry. A little girl was running toward me. There was a mad dog chasing her.

Corby

How do you know he was mad?

Barhooter

He was calling her names. Well, I had read in a book that mad dogs have hydrophobia. That means they hate water.
Corby

Who doesn't!

Barhooter

Mad dogs won't go where water is. So I shouted, "Never fear, little girl; I'll save you." And I pushed her off the bridge.

Corby

That reminds me of a question I've wanted to ask you a long time. When you shave, what do you do with your old whiskers? Louis—Do you shave yourself?

Barhooter

Who would I shave?

Corby

Well, when you shave, what do you do with your old whiskers?

Barhooter

Why, I don't do anything with them.

Corby

Will you save them for me?

Barhooter

What do you do with them?

Corby

I play with them.
Barhooter

(With no apparent interest)

You're scream, Corby. **Where were you born?**

Laffler

**Has either of you gentlemen ever been abroad?**

Corby

I go four or five times a year.

Laffler

Don't you love it!

Barhooter

I don't. I get sick every time I cross.

Laffler

**How often have you crossed?**

Barhooter

Just once.

Corby

(To Barhooter)

What ship did you come over on, Louis?

Barhooter

**The Steerage.**

Corby

I came over on the Mastodonic. They called it a floating palace.
Laffler

Well, was it?

Corby

No. It didn't even float.

Laffler

Do you mean that it sank?

Corby

I do.

Laffler

Where?

Corby

In the ocean. Where do ships generally sink, in church?

Laffler

But what did you do?

Corby

What was there to do! We had to wait for the next ship.

Laffler

What time did the next ship come along?

Corby

Three in the morning. We had to stay up to catch it.

Barhooter

By the way, Corby, where were you born?
Corby

In Bbed. Where were you born?

Barhooter

Me? I was born out of wedlock.

Corby

That's a mighty pretty country around there.

Laffler

Are you married, Mr.??

Corby

Yes, twice.

Laffler

Is your first wife still living?

Corby

No/

Laffler

What did she die of?

Corby

She got her throat caught between my fingers.

Barhooter

Are you still living in town, Corby?

Corby

Yes.
Barhooter

That’s silly. Why don’t you be like me and live on a farm and raise pigs?

Gorby

Do you have much luck with your pigs?

Barhooter

Oh, we never play for money.

Gorby

We were expecting you at the house Saturday night.

Barhooter

Yes, and I wanted to come. But I had to go and call on my aunt. She’s got eczema.

Gorby

I bet she was itching to see you. By the way, did she ever get married to that Pearson or whatever his name was?

Barhooter

No. She found out he had falling arches. So she left him flatfooted. Did you ever meet him?

Gorby

Yes, you introduced him to me. It was the night you borrowed that nickel off me.

Barhooter

Haven’t you forgot that yet?
Corby

Well, you never paid it back.

Barhooter

I know, but a nickel! The way you keep crabbing about it, anybody would think it was a dime!

(He lifts his fishline from wherever it was and tosses it into the orchestra pit)

Laffler

(To Corby)

Mr. Corby—

Corby

Well?

Laffler

I've got to run down to Washington next week. I'm going to try to see the President.

Corby

What of it?

Laffler

Well, I never met him and I wondered if you'd give me a letter to him.

Corby

Me?

Laffler

Why, yes—Aren't you and the President pretty close?
Barhooter

(excited)

Boys, I’ve got a strike.

(The others share his excitement. His line comes up from the orchestra pit; hooked onto the end of it is the bottom of a shoe. Barhooter tries to “land” it)

Laffler

What is it? A flounder?

Corby

It’s a sole!

(As Barhooter is about to swing the “fish” into the boat, the sole of the shoe drops off, leaving him only the heel)

Barhooter

(dissapointed)

No—It isn’t a sole—Only a ‘eel.

Curtain.

Laffler

[To Corby] Mr. Corby--

Corby

Well?
LAFFLER

I often wonder how you spell your name.

CORBY

A great many people have asked me that. The answer is, I don’t even try. I just let it go.

LAFFLER

I think that’s kind of risky.

BARHOOTER

[To LAFFLER] If I were you, I’d wait till some one asked me what I thought. You’re just making a fool of yourself.

LAFFLER

I’m getting hungry. I wish we could catch some fish.

BARHOOTER

I’m hungry, too, but not for fish.

CORBY

I can’t eat fish either. I’ve got no teeth. [Opens his mouth and shows his teeth] About all I can eat is broth.

BARHOOTER

Well, let’s go to a brothel.

LAFFLER

Let’s—

BLACK OUT