

**THE FORCING HOUSE; OR,  
THE COCKPIT  
CONTINUED. TRAGI-  
COMEDY IN FOUR ACTS**

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The Forcing House; Or, The Cockpit Continued. Tragi-Comedy in Four Acts by Israel Zangwill

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**ISRAEL ZANGWILL**

**THE FORCING HOUSE; OR,  
THE COCKPIT  
CONTINUED. TRAGI-  
COMEDY IN FOUR ACTS**



THE FORCING HOUSE

By  
ISRAEL ZANGWILL

THE WAR GOD  
PLASTER SAINTS  
CHOSEN PEOPLE  
GHETTO COMEDIES  
GHETTO TRAGEDIES  
ITALIAN FANTASIES  
THE MELTING POT  
THE NEXT RELIGION  
JINNY, THE CARRIER  
THE VOICE OF JERUSALEM  
THE KING OF SCHNORRERS  
CHILDREN OF THE GHETTO  
THE WORLD AND THE JEW  
THE WAR FOR THE WORLD  
THE PRINCIPLE OF NATIONALITIES  
THE COCKPIT

# THE FORCING HOUSE

OR

THE COCKPIT CONTINUED

*Tragi-Comedy in Four Acts*

BY

ISRAEL ZANGWILL

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1923

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TO MAURICE MAETERLINCK

MY DEAR MAETERLINCK,—

The coincidence that this play was written in your neighbourhood, and that "The Cockpit" of which it is the sequel was dedicated to your first translator, our common friend, Sutro, suggests my inscribing it to the memory of the holiday month you and I spent together twenty years ago, tramping the delectable regions you have since chosen for your dwelling-place. In those sunlit winter walks, eternalised in your exquisite essay on "The Sources of Spring," a frequent theme of our discussions was the nature of Time. You in those days favoured a fixed Eternity in which the future already existed as much as the past, so that one could imagine going backwards or forwards in it: a conception since illustrated by the cinematograph. I on the other hand was all for the essential reality of Time, with an insistence that would now be called Bergsonian, and I would have none of the fatalism involved in your conception. A tramway-collision, immediately after one of these discussions, left me injured and you unhurt but the argument anent Fate unimpaired on either side. I could wish, however, that you had been in the right and that it were possible to go back in Time, to tread over again those rocky olive-green by-ways and track together the sources of our springtide.

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The nature of the Drama was not, so far as I remember, ever debated with my fellow-Peripatetic. Possibly I acquiesced in the profound preface you had contributed to friend Sutro's first published play, "The Cave of Illusion," in which you lamented that the decay of supernatural beliefs had robbed the dramatist of that background of depth, mystery and grandeur against which the figures of the classic tragedies had been set. Possibly I sympathised with the demand in your essay on *Le Tragique Quotidien* for a Drama of the Future, which should be almost a still-life drama: inasmuch as for us cultured moderns crude external violence had almost vanished from the planet, so that "we who lived far from blood and cries and swords," whose "tears had become silent, invisible, almost spiritual," felt on visiting a theatre, as if we were "passing some hours with our ancestors." The Sage sitting by his lamp, a hand opening or closing a door, a ray of light through a casement, a shadow on a blind, these, you urged, were the only legitimate effects open to the modern dramatist, if his colour-scale was to be as subdued and subtle as life's. Assuredly your own contributions to this quietist theatre—immortal creations like "L'Intruse" or "Intérieur"—had not disposed me to question its programme—would indeed you could "recapture that first fine careless rapture!" They may even have disposed me to accept the optimism of your subsequent essay on *Le Drame Moderne*, in which, anticipating a clarification of the human conscience and a broadening of human love, you looked forward to a theatre whence not only

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external violence but even ugly internal passions should be banished, "a theatre of peace, of beauty without tears." Perhaps if I left that phase of serene faith unquestioned, it was because of your impatience with the scepticism of the race of Ecclesiastes. And yet it was the Pagan poet of an imperial people who saw that tears are not to be banished, that the texture of life, even at its peace-fullest, is irretrievably tragic: *sunt lachrymae rerum*.

Ten years after you had penned this dream of "a theatre without tears," your country was invaded. You had said that "violated virgins and imprisoned citizens" were but the outworn motifs of the obsolescent theatre of "blood, external tears and death." Alas, you now saw all Belgium as a violated virgin, your own tears fell over "ruins and sacrifices, nameless tortures and numberless dead," and in your philippic, "The Hour of Destiny," the whilom Pacifist philosopher urged revenge and destruction "root and branch," "even against our own sense of pity and generosity." I did not need your assurance to me that you had modified your view of the scope and function of the modern stage. Your play, "The Burgomaster of Stilemonde," was your own most eloquent comment on your early conception, if indeed "Monna Vanna" had not anticipated its awakening to the "external" world.

But what you had felt constructively as a poet, lesser souls had been feeling in their negative prosaic fashion. In an essay on "The War and the Drama," I pointed out that among our dramatic critics—drawn for the most part from the genteel circles of a sophis-