

**IN MIZZOURA,
PLAY IN
FOUR ACTS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649349272

In Mizzoura, Play in Four Acts by Augustus Thomas

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

AUGUSTUS THOMAS

**IN MIZZOURA,
PLAY IN
FOUR ACTS**

IN MIZZOURA

Play in Four Acts

BY

AUGUSTUS THOMAS

Revised 1916 by AUGUSTUS THOMAS

Copyright, 1916, by AUGUSTUS THOMAS

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

CAUTION.—All persons are hereby warned that "IN MIZZOURA," being fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States, is subject to royalty, and anyone presenting the play without the consent of the owners or their authorized agents will be liable to the penalties by law provided. Application for amateur acting rights must be made to SAMUEL FRENCH, 28-30 West 38th Street, New York. Application for the professional acting rights must be made to the AMERICAN PLAY COMPANY, 33 West 42nd Street, New York.

NEW YORK
SAMUEL FRENCH
PUBLISHER
28-30 WEST 38TH STREET

LONDON
SAMUEL FRENCH, Ltd.
26 SOUTHAMPTON STREET
STRAND

Especial notice should be taken that the possession of this book without a valid contract for production first having been obtained from the publisher, confers no right or license to professionals or amateurs to produce the play publicly or in private for gain or charity.

In its present form this play is dedicated to the reading public only, and no performance of it may be given, except by special arrangement with Samuel French.

SECTION 28.—That any person who wilfully or for profit shall infringe any copyright secured by this act, or who shall knowingly and wilfully aid or abet such infringement, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction thereof shall be punished by imprisonment for not exceeding one year, or by a fine of not less than one hundred dollars nor more than one thousand dollars, or both, in the discretion of the court. Act of March 4, 1909.

PREFACE

This preface is one of a number * trying to show each for its particular play, the manner of the play's conception, whether starting from a theme, a character, or a situation; the difficulty of the start and the larger problems of the story's development, together with the ways considered and chosen to answer them. It has been thought that such accounts might be of interest, and in some instances, perhaps, helpful to others beginning on the same kind of work.

In the spring of 1891 Mr. Nat Goodwin was one of the most popular and successful, as well as one of the most skillful, of American actors. He had played lively and slight farces almost exclusively; but having the ability for serious work as well, he was ambitious to try it. In a comedy by Brander Matthews and George H. Jessop, called "A Gold Mine" he had given one or two dramatic scenes most convincingly; and one sentimental soliloquy with a rose in exquisite tenderness. In person he is under the average height; and then, was slight, graceful, and with a face capable of conveying the subtlest shades of feeling. The forehead was ample; the eyes were large and blue, clear and steady. The nose was mildly Roman; the hair was the color of new hay. His voice was rich and modulated. These points are reported because they helped form the equipment of the star, who wanted a serious play in which he should be the hero. The order was without other conditions; the play might be of any period and of any land.

My own ignorance fixed certain limitations. At that time I had acquaintance with no other countries than the United States and Canada. These I knew

* The Witching Hour; Mrs. Leffingwell's Boots; The Earl of Pawtucket; The Harvest Moon; Oliver Goldsmith.

(RECAP)

5559
L. 27
3149

fairly well. I had traveled them with one night theatrical companies; and also in newspaper assignments; and over restricted districts I had worked in the employment of a railroad company. I didn't care to write from books; so my Goodwin hero was to be perforce an American. It seemed best to make him an American of 1891. Other times and places were excluded and dismissed from mind.

Now, a blond hero five feet seven inches tall and weighing under one hundred and fifty-pounds—a Roman nose, and a steady, steel blue gaze!

I stood the Goodwin photograph on my table and looked at it until it talked to me. The slight physique couldn't explain the solid confidence of that look except there was behind it a gun. We were doing more man to man shooting in the country then than now; and my Western friendships made me more tolerant of the gun than some others were. Goodwin and a gun sent me searching mentally over the West from Colorado to the Coast, and through all occupations from bandit to fighting parson; and then my potential gallery, quite apart from any conscious effort of my own, divided itself into two kinds of gunpackers; the authorized and the others. I concluded that there would be less trouble; less "lost motion"—that was a phrase learned, and an idea applied in the old-fashioned composing room—less lost motion, in portraying a lawful gun toter than in justifying an outlaw; and the Goodwin part was therefore to be either a soldier or a sheriff. I have said that he was thin, graceful—and he was, but he wasn't particularly erect. He was especially free from any suggestion of "setting-up": sheriff was the way of least resistance.

My hero was a sheriff. You see how that clears the atmosphere. When you must, or may, write for a star, it is a big start to have the character agreeably and definitely chosen.

There must be love interest, of course.

A sheriff would presumably be a bit of the rough diamond; *contrast* wherein "lieth love's delight" prompted a girl apparently of a finer strain than himself; and *conflict* necessitated a rival. The girl should be delicate and educated, the *rival* should be attractive but unworthy; and to make him doubly opposed to Goodwin I decided to have him an out-law—someone whom it would be the sheriff's duty and business—*business* used in the stage sense—to arrest.

Four or five years before the Goodwin contract I had been one of the Post-Dispatch reporters on the "Jim Cummings" express robbery. That celebrated and picturesque case was of a man who presented to an Express messenger at the side door of his express car, just as the train was pulling from the St. Louis station, a forged order to carry the bearer, dead-head, to a certain distant point on the run. The messenger helped the dead-head into his car and chummed with him, until about an hour later, when, as he was on his knees arranging some of his cargo, he found a pistol muzzle against his cheek, and his smiling visitor prepared to bind and gag him. Having done this, the stranger packed one hundred and twenty thousand dollars into a valise; and dropped off into the dark, when the train made its accustomed stop at a water-tank. The whole enterprise was so gentle, that the messenger was arrested and held as an accomplice, while the Pinkertons looked for the man with the money.

The robber was a kind-hearted person; and being really grieved over the detention of an innocent man, wrote several exculpatory letters to the papers enclosing rifled express envelopes to prove his peripatetic identity. These letters were signed "Jim Cummings," a *nom de guerre* borrowed from an older and an abler offender of the Jesse James vintage.

After he was arrested and in his cell in the St.

Louis jail, "Jim Cummings" and I became friends as criminals and newspaper men sometimes do, and as criminals and I always have done, everywhere, most easily. The details of his arrangements, both before and after his draft on the company were minutely in my mind, and were so very vital that with the first need for a drama criminal I took him. Goodwin's rival should be Jim Cummings; a glorified and beautiful and *matinée* Cummings, but substantially he.

This adoption rescued the girl and the sheriff from the hazy geography of the mining camps, and fixed the trio in Missouri.

After Cummings had dropped from the express car, he had walked some fifteen miles to the Missouri River near St. Charles, and had then gone north on a train through Pike County. I had more than once made the same trip on freight trains; and I had a liking for the county as the home district of Champ Clark, a politico-newspaper comrade of several legislative sessions and conventions. Newspaper experience in those days before the "flimsy" and the "rewrite" emphasized the value of going to the place in order to report the occurrence; and I knew that, aside from these three characters and their official and sentimental relationships, the rest of my people and my play were waiting for me in Bowling Green.

In those days Mrs. Thomas and I used to hold hands on our evening promenades; but I think it was really our foolish New York clothes that made the blacksmith smile. At any rate, we stopped at his door and talked with him. He knew Champ Clark and Dave Ball—another Missouri statesman—and had the keenest interest in the coming convention for the legislative nomination. It was fine to hear him pronounce the state name *Missowra*, as it was originally spelt on many territorial charts, and as we were permitted to call it in the public schools

until we reached the grades where imported culture ruled. The blacksmith's helper, who was finishing a wagon shaft with a draw knife, was younger and less intelligent and preferred to talk to Mrs. Thomas. It is distracting to listen at the same time to three persons; but I learned that "You kin make anything that's made out o' wood with a draw knife;" and over the bench was the frame for an upholstered chair. A driver brought in a two-horse, side seated, depot wagon on three wheels and a fence rail. The fourth wheel and its broken tire were in the wagon; and the blacksmith said he'd weld the tire at five-thirty the next morning.

We went without breakfast to see him do it. He was my heroine's father by that time; a candidate for the legislature; and I was devising for him a second comedy daughter, to play opposite to the boy with a draw knife. That day I also found the drugstore window and the "lickerish" boxes that Cummings should break through in his attempted escape; and I recovered the niggers, the "dog fannell," the linen dusters, and the paper collars which, in my recent prosperity, I'd forgotten. I also nominated Goodwin for the legislature, which increased his importance and gave him something to sacrifice for the girl's father. But it was all so poverty stricken as I glimpsed it through the blacksmith shop and the little house I'd chosen for its consort. I yearned for some money, not much, but enough to afford "a hired girl," and for some means of bringing the money into the story. When we left Bowling Green I had given Goodwin a substantial reward for the robber's capture; but he wouldn't accept it. That was a mere dramatists device; and my quiet sheriff was already above it; besides, he wasn't sure that he'd hold the fellow. His wish to please the girl was already debating the matter with his duty.

On the way back to St. Louis, the conductor, who