

**THE BIG DRUM: A
COMEDY IN
FOUR ACTS**

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The big drum: a comedy in four acts by Arthur Pinero

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ARTHUR PINERO

**THE BIG DRUM: A
COMEDY IN
FOUR ACTS**

THE BIG DRUM

THE PLAYS OF ARTHUR W. PINERO

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LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

THE BIG DRUM

A COMEDY

In Four Acts

BY ARTHUR PINERO

"The desire of fame betrays an ambitious man into indecencies that lessen his reputation; he is still afraid lest any of his actions should be thrown away in private."

ADDISON

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN
MCMXXV

PR5182

B6

1915

MAIN

*This play was produced in London, at the
St. James's Theatre, on Wednesday,
September 1, 1915*

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PREFACE

THE BIG DRUM is published exactly as it was written, and as it was originally performed. At its first representation, however, the audience was reported to have been saddened by its "unhappy ending." Pressure was forthwith put upon me to reconcile Philip and Ottoline at the finish, and at the third performance of the play the curtain fell upon the picture, violently and crudely brought about, of Ottoline in Philip's arms.

I made the alteration against my principles and against my conscience, and yet not altogether unwillingly. For we live in depressing times; and perhaps in such times it is the first duty of a writer for the stage to make concessions to his audiences and, above everything, to try to afford them a complete, if brief, distraction from the gloom which awaits them outside the theatre.

My excuse for having at the start provided an "unhappy" ending is that I was blind enough not to regard the ultimate break between Philip and Ottoline as really unhappy for either party. On the contrary, I looked upon the separation of these two

people as a fortunate occurrence for both ; and I conceived it as a piece of ironic comedy which might not prove unentertaining that the falling away of Philip from his high resolves was checked by the woman he had once despised and who had at last grown to know and to despise herself.

But comedy of this order has a knack of cutting rather deeply, of ceasing, in some minds, to be comedy at all ; and it may be said that this is what has happened in the present instance. Luckily it is equally true that certain matters are less painful, because less actual, in print than upon the stage. The "wicked publisher," therefore, even when bombs are dropping round him, can afford to be more independent than the theatrical manager ; and for this reason I have not hesitated to ask my friend Mr. Heinemann to publish *THE BIG DRUM* in its original form.

ARTHUR PINERO

LONDON,

September 1915

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

PHILIP MACKWORTH

SIR RANDLE FILSON, KNT.

BETRAM FILSON (*his son*)

SIR TIMOTHY BARRADELL, BART.

ROBERT ROOPE

COLLINGHAM GREEN

LEONARD WESTRIP (*Sir Randle's secretary*)

ALFRED DUNNING (*of Sillitoe and Dunning's Private Detective Agency*)

NOYES (*Mr. Roope's servant*)

UNDERWOOD (*servant at Sir Randle's*)

JOHN (*Mr. Mackworth's servant*)

A WAITER

OTTOLINE DE CHAUMIÉ, COMTESSE DE CHACMIÉ, *née* FILSON

LADY FILSON

HON. MRS. GODFREY ANSLOW

MRS. WALTER QUEBEC

MISS TRACER (*Lady Filson's secretary*)

PERIOD—1913