

**THE MODERN DRAMA
SERIES; THE LONELY WAY:
INTERMEZZO: COUNTESS
MIZZIE, THREE PLAYS. [1917]**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649763696

The Modern Drama Series; The Lonely Way: Intermezzo: Countess Mizzie, Three Plays. [1917]
by Arthur Schnitzler & Edwin Björkman

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ARTHUR SCHNITZLER & EDWIN BJÖRKMAN

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THE MODERN DRAMA SERIES
EDITED BY EDWIN BJÖRKMAN

THE LONELY WAY • INTERMEZZO
COUNTESS MIZZIE • BY ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

THE LONELY WAY:
INTERMEZZO:
COUNTESS MIZZIE

THREE PLAYS BY
ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
EDWIN BJÖRKMAN



BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1917

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1917

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INTRODUCTION

HERMANN BAHR, the noted playwright and critic, tried one day to explain the spirit of certain Viennese architecture to a German friend, who persisted in saying: "Yes, yes, but always there remains something that I find curiously foreign." At that moment an old-fashioned Spanish state carriage was coming along the street, probably on its way to or from the imperial palace. The German could hardly believe his eyes and expressed in strong terms his wonderment at finding such a relic surviving in an ultra-modern town like Vienna.

"You forget that our history is partly Spanish," Bahr retorted. "And nothing could serve better than that old carriage to explain what you cannot grasp in our art and poetry."

A similar idea has been charmingly expressed by Hugo von Hofmannsthal in the poem he wrote in 1892—when he was still using the pseudonym of "Loris"—as introduction to "Anatol." I am now adding a translation of that poem to my own introduction, because I think it will be of help in reading the plays of this volume. The scene painted by Hofmannsthal might, on the whole, be used as a setting for "Countess Mizzie." For a more detailed version of that scene he refers us to "Canaletto's Vienna"—that is, to the group of thirteen Viennese views which were painted about 1760 by the Venetian Bernardo

Belotto (who, like his more famous uncle and model, Antonio Canale, was generally called Canaletto), and which are now hanging in one of the galleries of the *Kunsthistorische Hofmuseum* at Vienna. The spirit of those pictures may be described, I am told, as one of stately grace. They are full of Latin joy in life and beauty. They speak of an existence constantly softened by concern for the amenities of life. It is just what survives of their atmosphere that frequently makes foreigners speak of Vienna with a tender devotion not even surpassed by that bestowed on Paris or Rome.

An attempt to understand the atmosphere and spirit of modern Vienna will carry us far toward a correct appreciation of Schnitzler's art. And it is not enough to say that Vienna is one of the oldest cities in Europe. It is not even enough to say that it preserves more of the past than Paris or London, for instance. What we must always bear in mind is its position as the meeting place not only of South and North but also of past and present. In some ways it is a melting-pot on a larger scale than New York even. Racially and lingually, it belongs to the North. Historically and psychologically, it belongs to the South. Economically and politically, it lives very much in the present. Socially and esthetically, it has always been strongly swayed by tradition. The anti-Semitic movement, which formed such a characteristic feature of Viennese life during the last few decades, must be regarded as the last stand of vanishing social traditions against a growing pressure of economical requirements.

Like all cities sharply divided within itself and liv-

ing above a volcano of half-suppressed passions, Vienna tends to seek in abandoned gayety, in a frank surrender to the senses, that forgetfulness without which suicide would seem the only remaining alternative. Emotions kept constantly at the boiling-point must have an outlet, lest they burst their container. Add to this sub-conscious or unconscious craving for a neutral outlet, the traditional pressure of the Latin inheritance, and we have the greater part of the causes that explain Schnitzler's preoccupation with the themes of love and death. For Schnitzler is first of all Viennese.

Arthur Schnitzler was born at Vienna on May 15, 1862. His father was Professor Johann Schnitzler, a renowned Jewish throat specialist. I am told that *Professor Bernhardt* in the play of the same name must be regarded as a pretty faithful portrait of the elder Schnitzler, who, besides his large and important practice, had many other interests, including an extensive medical authorship and the editing of the *Wiener klinische Rundschau*. It is also to be noticed that *Professor Bernhardt* has among his assistants a son, who divides his time between medicine and the composition of waltz music.

The younger Schnitzler studied medicine at the Vienna University, as did also his brother, and obtained his M. D. in 1885. During the next two years he was attached to the resident staff of one of the big hospitals. It was also the period that saw the be-

ginning of his authorship. While contributing medical reviews to his father's journal, he was also publishing poems and prose sketches in various literary periodicals. Most of his contributions from this time appeared in a publication named "*An der schönen blauen Donau*" (By the Beautiful Blue Danube), now long defunct.

He was also continuing his studies, which almost from the start seem to have turned toward the psychic side of the medical science. The new methods of hypnotism and suggestion interested him greatly, and in 1889 he published a monograph on "Functional Aphonia and its Treatment by Hypnotism and Suggestion." In 1888 he made a study trip to England, during which he wrote a series of "London Letters" on medical subjects for his father's journal. On his return he settled down as a practicing physician, but continued to act as his father's assistant. And as late as 1891-95 we find him named as his father's collaborator on a large medical work entitled "Clinical Atlas of Laryngology and Rhinology."

There are many signs to indicate uncertainty as to his true calling during those early years. The ensuing inner conflict was probably sharpened by some pressure exercised by his father, who seems to have been anxious that he should turn his energies undividedly to medicine. To a practical and outwardly successful man like the elder Schnitzler, his own profession must have appeared by far the more important and promising. While there is no reason to believe that his attitude in this matter was aggressive, it must have been keenly felt and, to some extent at least, resented by the son. One of the dominant notes of the latter's work