

**HOBSON'S CHOICE:  
A THREE  
ACT COMEDY**

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Hobson's choice: a three act comedy by Harold Brighouse

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**HAROLD BRIGHOUSE**

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A THREE  
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HOBSON'S CHOICE

BY THE AUTHOR OF  
"HOBSON'S CHOICE."

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# HOBSON'S CHOICE

*A THREE-ACT COMEDY*

BY

HAROLD BRIGHOUSE

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
B. IDEN PAYNE

LONDON  
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1916

TO  
CHARLES FORREST





## INTRODUCTION

(Reprinted from the American edition.)

DOUBTLESS because the majority of his earlier plays were produced at the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester, and, perhaps more particularly, because *Hobson's Choice*, his first long play to be given in America, is a study of Lancashire life, the work of Harold Brighouse seems to be too closely identified with that of Miss Horniman's Repertory Company. This is regrettable only insofar as it tends to give the impression that all his plays have a local character. Actually the sixteen plays, long and short, which have already been performed cover a wide range in setting and subject, and out of this number only five have a Lancashire background, and only six have been played by Miss Horniman's Company. Again, it is a mistake to imagine that the Manchester Theatre in any way specializes in local plays. On the contrary, catholicity has always been its watchword. At its inauguration it had one prime object, the production of *good plays* irrespective of any kind or class into which they might be grouped. There was no special axe to be ground, no particular theory of production or playwriting to be exploited.

## INTRODUCTION

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While it is necessary to bring this point forward, one would not seek to minimize the value and importance of the local drama. Harold Brighouse is a Manchester man, and those of his plays which deal with Lancashire life are the most richly individualized. So, too, the most far-reaching result of Miss Horniman's Theatre has been the growth of a Lancashire drama which has made Lancashire live for thousands where before it was no more than an empty name.

It was the establishment in their midst of a theatre mainly devoted to the production of new plays which gave Manchester writers an impetus toward the drama. That their output took the form, to a great extent, of local plays is probably largely due to the fortunate chance that the theatre opened its doors at the time when the Irish Players, who gave the great stimulus to the Folk Drama, were in the meridian of their success. In any case, there can be no question that Lancashire life is so rich in individual traits and its verbal expression is rendered so colourful by its uncompromising dialect that the dramatist found in it a rich-veined mine.

One of the first to explore this mine and quite the most successful, with the possible exception of Stanley Houghton, whose work was so tragically cut short by his early death, was Harold Brighouse. His first long play, *Dealing in Futures* (produced originally by the Glasgow Repertory Theatre), is a study of industrial conditions and the century-long contest between capital and labour. The external facts would apply with almost equal exactitude to any manufacturing community, but the characters