THE
Emperor
Jones
BY
EUGENE O'NEILL

STEWART KIDD
MODERN PLAYS
EDITED BY
FRANK SHAY
Stewart Kidd Modern Plays

Edited by FRANK SHAY

To meet the immensely increased demands of the play-reading public and those interested in the modern drama, Stewart Kidd are issuing under the general editorship of Frank Shay a series of plays from the pens of the world's best contemporary writers. No effort is being spared to secure the best work available, and the plays are issued in a form that is at once attractive to readers and suited to the needs of the performer and producer. Buffalo Express: "Each play is of merit. Each is unlike the other. The group furnishes a striking example of the realistic trend of the modern drama."

From time to time special announcements will be printed giving complete lists of the plays.

SHAM, a Social Satire in One Act. By Frank G. Tompkins.
Originally produced by Sam Hume, at the Arts and Crafts Theatre, Detroit.
San Francisco Bulletin: "The lines are new and many of them are decidedly clever."
Providence Journal: "An ingenious and merry little one-act play."

THE SHEPHERD IN THE DISTANCE, a Pantomime in One Act. By Holland Hudson.
Originally produced by the Washington Square Players.
Oakland Tribune: "A pleasing pantomime of the Ancient East."

MANSIONS, a Play in One Act. By Hildegarde Flanner.
Originally produced by the Indiana Little Theatre Society.
Three Arts Magazine: "This thoughtful and well-written play of Characters and Ideals has become a favorite with Little Theatres and is now available in print."

HEARTS TO MEND, a Fantasy in One Act.
By H. A. Overstreet.
Originally produced by the Fireside Players, White Plains, N. Y.
St. Louis Star: "It is a light whimsy and well carried out."
San Francisco Chronicle: "No one is likely to hear or read it without real and legitimate pleasure."

SIX WHO PASS WHILE THE LENTILS BOIL.
By Stuart Walker.
Originally produced by the Portmanteau Players at Christodora House, New York City.
Brooklyn Eagle: "Literary without being pedantic, and dramatic without being noisy."

OTHERS TO FOLLOW. Bound in Art Paper. Each, net, .50
The Emperor Jones

By

EUGENE O'NEILL

Author of "Iles," "Bound East for Cardiff," etc.

First Performed by the Provincetown Players, November, 1920.
COPYRIGHT, 1921
STEWART KIDD COMPANY

All rights reserved
COPYRIGHT IN ENGLAND

No amateur or professional use permitted of *The Emperor Jones* without written authorization first obtained from American Play Company, Inc., 33 West 42d Street, New York City, to whom all applications should be addressed.
THE EMPEROR JONES

CHARACTERS

Brutus Jones, Emperor
Henry Smithers, a Cockney trader
An Old Native Woman
Lem, a Native Chief
Soldiers, Adherents of Sun

The Little Formless Fears
Jeff
The Negro Convicts
The Prison Guard
The Planters
The Auctioneer
The Slaves
The Congo Witch Doctor
The Crocodile God

The action of the play takes place on an island in the West Indies, as yet un-self-determined by white marines. The form of native government is, for the time being, an Empire.
The Emperor Jones

Scene One

The audience chamber in the palace of the Emperor—a spacious, high-ceilinged room with bare, white-washed walls. The floor is of white tiles. In the rear, to the left of center, a wide archway giving out on a portico with white pillars. The palace is evidently situated on high ground, for beyond the portico nothing can be seen but a vista of distant hills, their summits crowned with thick groves of palm trees. In the right wall, center, a smaller arched doorway leading to the living quarters of the palace. The room is bare of furniture with the exception of one huge chair, made of uncut wood, which stands at center, its back to rear. This is very apparently the Emperor's throne. It is painted a dazzling, eye-smitting scarlet. There is a brilliant orange cushion on the seat and another smaller one is placed on the floor to serve as a footstool. Strips of matting, dyed scarlet, lead from the foot of the throne to the two entrances.

It is late afternoon, but the sunlight still blazes yellowly beyond the portico, and there is an oppressive burden of exhausting heat in the air. As the curtain rises a native negro woman sneaks in cautiously from the entrance on the right. She is very old, dressed in cheap calico, bare-footed, a red bandana handkerchief covering all
but a few stray wisps of white hair. A bundle bound in colored cloth is carried over her shoulder on the end of a stick. She hesitates beside the doorway, peering back as if in extreme dread of being discovered. Then she begins to glide noiselessly, a step at a time, toward the doorway in the rear. At this moment Smithers appears beneath the portico.

Smithers is a tall, stoop-shouldered man about forty. His bald head, perched on a long neck with an enormous Adam's apple, looks like an egg. The tropics have tanned his naturally pasty face with its small, sharp features to a sickly yellow, and native rum has painted his pointed nose to a startling red. His little washy-blue eyes are red-rimmed, and dart about like a ferret's. His expression is one of unscrupulous meanness, cowardly and dangerous. His attitude toward Jones is that of one who will give vent to a nourished grudge against all superiority—as far as he dares. He is dressed in a worn riding suit of dirty white drill, puttees, spurs, and wears a white cork helmet. A cartridge belt with an automatic revolver is around his waist. He carries a riding whip in his hand. He sees the woman and stops to watch her suspiciously. Then, making up his mind, he steps quickly on tiptoe into the room. The woman, looking back over her shoulder continually, does not see him until it is too late. When she does, Smithers springs forward and grabs her firmly by the shoulder. She struggles to get away, fiercely but silently.
SMITHERS (tightening his grasp—roughly)
Easy! None o' that, me birdie. You can’t wriggle out now. I got me 'ooks on yer.

WOMAN (seeing the uselessness of struggling, gives away to frantic terror and sinks to the ground, embracing his knees supplicatingly).
No tell him! No tell him, Mister!

SMITHERS (with great curiosity)
Tell 'im (Then scornfully) Oh, you mean 'is bloomin' Majesty. What's the game, any 'ow? What are you sneakin' away for? Been stealin' a bit, I s'pose. (He taps her bundle with his riding whip significantly.)

WOMAN (shaking her head vehemently)
No, me no steal.

SMITHERS
Bloody liar! But tell me what’s up. There's somethin' funny goin' on. I smelled it in the air first thing I got up this mornin'. You blacks are up to some devilment. This palace of 'is is like a bleedin' tomb. Where's all the 'ands? (The woman keeps sullenly silent. Smithers raises his whip threateningly.) Ow, yer won't, won't yer? I'll show yer what's what.

WOMAN (coweringly)
I tell, Mister. You no hit. They go—all go. (She makes a sweeping gesture toward the hills in the distance.)

SMITHERS
Run away—to the 'ills?

WOMAN
Yes, Mister. Him Emperor—Great Father—
THE EMPEROR JONES

(She touches her forehead to the floor with a quick, mechanical jerk.) Him sleep after eat. Then they go—all go. Me old woman. Me left only. Now me go, too.

SMITHERS (his astonishment giving way to an immense mean satisfaction)
Ow! So that's the ticket! Well, I know bloody well wot's in the air—when they runs orf to the 'ills. The tom-tom 'll be thumping out there bloomin' soon. (With extreme vindictiveness) And I'm bloody glad of it, for one! Serve 'im right! Puttin' on airs, the stinkin' nigger! 'Is Majesty! Gawd blimey! I only 'opes I'm there when they takes 'im out to shoot 'im. (Suddenly) 'E's still 'ere all right, ain't 'e?

WOMAN
Yes. Him sleep.

SMITHERS
'E's bound to find out soon as 'e wakes up. 'E's cunnin' enough to know when 'is time's come. (He goes to the doorway on right and whistles shrilly with his fingers in his mouth. The old woman springs to her feet and runs out of the doorway, rear. Smithers goes after her, reaching for his revolver.) Stop or I'll shoot! (Then stopping indifferently.) Pop orf, then, if yer like, yer black cow! (He stands in the doorway, looking after her.)

(Jones enters from the right. He is a tall, powerfully-built, full-blooded negro of middle age. His features are typically negroid, yet there is something
decidedly distinctive about his face—an underlying strength of will, a hardy, self-reliant confidence in himself that inspires respect. His eyes are alive with a keen, cunning intelligence. In manner he is shrewd, suspicious, evasive. He wears a light-blue uniform coat, sprayed with brass buttons, heavy gold chevrons on his shoulders, gold braid on the collar, cuffs, etc. His pants are bright red, with a light-blue stripe down the side. Patent leather laced boots with brass spurs, and a belt with a long-barreled, pearl-handled revolver in a holster, complete his make-up. Yet there is something not altogether ridiculous about his grandeur. He has a way of carrying it off.)

JONES (not seeing anyone—greatly irritated and blinking sleepily—shouts)
Who dare whistle dat way in my palace? Who dare wake up de Emperor? I’ll git de hide frayled off some o’ you niggers sho’!

SMITHERS (showing himself—in a manner half-afraid and half-defiant)
It was me whistled to yer. (As Jones frowns angrily.) I got news for yer.

JONES (putting on his suavest manner, which fails to cover up his contempt for the white man)
Oh, it’s you, Mister Smithers. (He sits down on his throne with easy dignity.) What news you got to tell me?

SMITHERS (coming close to enjoy his discomfiture)
Don’t you notice nothin’ funny to-day?
THE EMPEROR JONES

JONES (coldly)
Funny? No, I ain’t perceived nothin’ of de kind!

SMITHERS
Then you ain’t so foxy as I thought you was.
Where’s all your court? (Sarcastically) the
Generals and the Cabinet Ministers and all?

JONES (imperturbably)
Where dey mostly runs to minute I closes my
eyes—drinkin’ rum and talkin’ big down in de
town. (Sarcastically) How come you don’t
know dat? Ain’t you sousin’ with ’em most
every day?

SMITHERS (stung, but pretending indifference—
with a wink)
That’s part of the day’s work. I got ter—ain’t
I—in my business?

JONES (contemptuously)
Yo’ business!

SMITHERS (imprudently enraged)
Gawd blimey, you was glad enough for me ter
take you in on it when you landed here first.
You didn’ ’ave no ’igh and mighty airs in them
days!

JONES (his hand going to his revolver like a flash—
menacingly)
Talk polite, white man! Talk polite, you heah
me! I’m boss heah now, is you forgettin’?
(The Cockney seems about to challenge this last
statement with the facts, but something in the
other’s eyes holds and caws him.)

SMITHERS (in a cowardly whine)
No ’arm meant, old top.
THE EMPEROR JONES

JONES (condescendingly)
I accepts yo' apology. (Lets his hand fall from his revolver.) No use'n you rakin' up ole times. What I was den is one thing. What I is now's another. You didn't let me in on yo' crooked work out o' no kind feelin' dat time. I done de dirty work fo' you—and most o' de brain work, too, fo' dat matter—and I was wu'rh money to you, dat's de reason.

SMITHERS
Well, blimey, I give yer a start, didn't I—when no one else would. I wasn't afraid to hire yer like the rest was—'count of the story about your breakin' jail back in the States.

JONES
No, you didn't have no s'cuse to look down on me fo' dat. You been in jail yo'self more'n once.

SMITHERS (furiously)
It's a lie! (Then trying to pass it off by an attempt at scorn) Garn! Who told yer that fairy tale?

JONES
Dey's some things I ain't got to be tole. I kin see 'em in folks eyes. (Then after a pause—meditatively) Yes, you sho' give me a start. And it didn't take long from dat time to git dese fool woods' niggers right where I wanted dem. (With pride) From stowaway to Emperor in two years! Dat's goin' some!

SMITHERS (with curiosity)
And I bet you got er pile o' money 'id safe someplace.
THE EMPEROR JONES

JONES (with satisfaction)
I sho' has! And it's in a foreign bank where no pusson don't ever get it out but me, no matter what come. You don't s'pose I was holdin' down dis Emperor job for de glory in it, did you? Sho'! De fuss and glory part of it, dat's only to turn de heads o' de low-flung bush niggers dat's here. Dey wants de big circus show for deir money. I gives it to 'em an' I gits de money. (With a grin.) De long green, dat's me every time! (Then rebukingly) But you ain't got no kick agin me, Smithers. I'se paid you back all you done for me many times. Ain't I pertected you and winked at all de crooked tradin' you been doin' right out in de broad day? Sho' I has—and me makin' laws to stop it at de same time! (He chuckles.)

SMITHERS (grinning)
But, meanin' no 'arm, you been grabbin' right and left yourself, ain't you? Look at the taxes you've put on 'em! Blimey! You've squeezed 'em dry.

JONES (chuckling)
No dey ain't all dry yet. I'se still heah, ain't I?

SMITHERS (smiling at his secret thought)
They're dry right now, you'll find out. (Changing the subject abruptly) And as for me breaking laws, you've broke 'em all yerself just as fast as yer made 'em.

JONES
Ain't I de Emperor? De laws don't go for him. (Judiciously) You heah what I tells you,
Smithers. Dere's little stealin' like you does, and dere's big stealin' like I does. For de little stealin' dey gits you in jail soon or late. For de big stealin' dey makes you Emperor and puts you in de Hall o' Fame when you croaks. *(Reminiscently)* If dey's one thing I learns in ten years on de Pullman ca's listenin' to de white quality talk, it's dat same fact. And when I gits a chance to use it I winds up Emperor in two years.

**SMITHERS** *(unable to repress the genuine admiration of the small fry for the large)*

Yes, you turned the bleedin' trick, all right. Blimey, I never seen a bloke 'as 'ad the bloomin' luck you 'as.

**JONES** *(severely)*

Luck? What you mean—luck?

**SMITHERS**

I suppose you'll say as that swank about the silver bullet ain't luck—and that was what first got the fool blacks on yer side the time of the revolution, wasn't it?

**JONES** *(with a laugh)*

Oh, dat silver bullet! Sho' was luck! But I makes dat luck, you heah? I loads de dice! Yessuh! When dat murderin' nigger ole Lem hired to kill me takes aim ten feet away and his gun misses fire and I shoots him dead, what you heah me say?

**SMITHERS**

You said yer'd got a charm so's no lead bullet 'd kill yer. You was so strong only a silver bullet
could kill yer, you told 'em. Blimey, wasn't that swank for yer—and plain, fat-'eaded luck?

JONES (proudly)
I got brains and I uses 'em quick. Dat ain't luck.

SMITHERS
Yer knew they wasn't 'ardly liable to get no silver bullets. And it was luck 'e didn't 'it you that time.

JONES (laughing)
And dere all dem fool bush niggers was kneelin' down and bumpin' deir heads on de ground like I was a miracle out o' de Bible. Oh, Lawd, from dat time on I has dem all eatin' out of my hand. I cracks de whip and dey jumps through.

SMITHERS (with a sniff)
Yankee bluff done it.

JONES
Ain't a man's talkin' big what makes him big —long as he makes folks believe it. Sho' I talks large when I ain't got nothin' to back it up, but I ain't talkin' wild just de same. I knows I kin fool 'em—I knows it—and dat's backin' enough fo' my game. And ain't I got to learn deir lingo and teach some of dem English befo' I kin talk to 'em? Ain't dat wuk? You ain't never learned ary word er it, Smithers, in de ten years you been heah, dough yo' knows it's money in yo' pocket tradin' wid 'em if you does. But yo' too shift-less to take de trouble.
THE EMPEROR JONES

SMITHERS (flushing)
Never mind about me. What’s this I’ve ’eard about yer really ’avin’ a silver bullet moulded for yourself?

JONES
It’s playin’ out my bluff. I has de silver bullet moulded and I tells ’em when de time comes I kills myself wid it. I tells ’em dat’s ’cause I’m de on’y man in de world big enuff to git me. No use’n deir tryin’. And dey falls down and bumps deir heads. (He laughs.) I does dat so’s I kin take a walk in peace widout no jealous nigger gunnin’ at me from behind de trees.

SMITHERS (astonished)
Then you ’ad it made—’onest?

JONES
Sho’ did. Heah she be. (He takes out his revolver, breaks it, and takes the silver bullet out of one chamber.) Five lead an’ dis silver baby at de last. Don’t she shine pretty? (He holds it in his hand, looking at it admiringly, as if strangely fascinated.)

SMITHERS
Let me see. (Reaches out his hand for it.)

JONES (harshly)
Keep yo’ hands whar dey b’long, white man. (He replaces it in the chamber and puts the revolver back on his hip.)

SMITHERS (snarling)
Gawd blimey! Think I’m a bleedin’ thief, you would.
THE EMPEROR JONES

JONES
No. 'Tain't dat. I knows you'se scared to steal from me. On'y I ain't 'lowin' nary body to touch dis baby. She's my rabbit's foot.

SMITHERS (sneering)
A bloomin' charm, wot? (Venomously) Well, you'll need all the bloody charms you 'as before long, s'elp me!

JONES (judicially)
Oh, I'se good for six months yit 'fore dey gits sick o' my game. Den, when I sees trouble comin', I makes my get-a-way.

SMITHERS
Ho! You got it all planned, ain't yer?

JONES
I ain't no fool. I knows dis Emperor's time is sho't. Dat why I make hay when de sun shine. Was you thinkin' I'se aimin' to hold down dis job for life? No, suh! What good is gittin' money if you stays back in dis raggedy country? I wants action when I spends. And when I sees dese niggers gittin' up deir nerve to tu'n me out, and I'se got all de money in sight, I resigns on de spot and beats it quick.

SMITHERS
Where to?

JONES
None o' yo' business.

SMITHERS
Not back to the bloody States, I'll lay my oath.

JONES (suspiciously)
Why don't I? (Then with an easy laugh) You
THE EMPEROR JONES

mean 'count of dat story 'bout me breakin' from jail back dere? Dat's all talk.

SMITHERS (skeptically)
Ho, yes!

JONES (sharply)
You ain't 'sinuatin' I'se a liar, is you?

SMITHERS (hastily)
'No, Gawd strike me! I was only thinkin' o' the bloody lies you told the blacks 'ere about killin' white men in the States.

JONES (angered)
How come dey're lies?

SMITHERS
You'd 'ave been in jail if you 'ad, wouldn't yer then? (With venom) And from what I've 'eard, it ain't 'ealthy for a black to kill a white man in the States. They burn 'em in oil, don't they?

JONES (with cool deadliness)
You'd 'lynchin' 'd scare me? Well, I tells you, Smithers, maybe I does kill one white man back dere. Maybe I does. And maybe I kills another right heah 'fore long if he don't look out.

SMITHERS (trying to force a laugh)
I was on'y spoofin' yer. Can't yer take a joke? And you was just sayin' you'd never been in jail.

JONES (in the same tone—slightly boastful)
Maybe I goes to jail dere for gettin' in an argument wid razors ovah a crap game. Maybe I gits twenty years when dat colored man die. Maybe I gits in 'nother argument wid de prison guard who was overseer ovah us when
THE EMPEROR JONES

we’re walkin’ de roads. Maybe he hits me wid a whip an’ I splits his head wid a shovel an’ runs away an’ files de chain off my leg an’ gits away safe. Maybe I does all dat an’ maybe I don’t. It’s a story I tells you so’s you knows I’se de kind of man dat if you evah repeats one word of it, I ends yo’ stealin’ on dis yearth mighty damn quick!

SMITHERS (terrified)
Think I’d peach on yer? Not me! Ain’t I always been yer friend?

JONES (suddenly relaxing)
Sho’ you has—and you better be.

SMITHERS (recovering his composure—and with it his malice)
And just to show yer I’m yer friend, I’ll tell yer that bit o’ news I was goin’ to.

JONES
Go ahead! Shoot de piece. Must be bad news from de happy way you look.

SMITHERS (warningly)
Maybe it’s gettin’ time for you to resign—with that bloomin’ silver bullet, wot? (He finishes with a mocking grin.)

JONES (puzzled)
What’s dat you say? Talk plain.

SMITHERS
Ain’t noticed any of the guards or servants about the place to-day, I ’aven’t.

JONES (carelessly)
Dey’re all out in de garden sleepin’ under de trees. When I sleeps, dey sneaks a sleep, too,
and I pretends I never suspicions it. All I got
to do is to ring de bell an’ dey come flyin’,
makin’ a bluff dey was wukin’ all de time.

**SMITHERS** *(in the same mocking tone)*
Ring the bell now an’ you’ll bloody well see
what I means.

**JONES** *(startled to alertness, but preserving the same
careless tone)*
Sho’ I rings. *(He reaches below the throne and
pulls out a big common dinner bell which is
painted the same vivid scarlet as the throne. He
rings this vigorously—then stops to listen. Then
he goes to both doors, rings again, and looks
out.)*

**SMITHERS** *(watching him with malicious satisfac-
tion—after a pause—mockingly)*
The bloody ship is sinkin’ an’ the bleedin’
rats ’as slung their ’ooks.

**JONES** *(in a sudden fit of anger flings the bell clatter-
ingly into a corner)*
Low-flung, woods niggers! *(Then catching
Smithers’ eye on him, he controls himself and
suddenly bursts into a low, chuckling laugh.)*
Reckon I overplays my hand dis once! A man
can’t take de pot on a bob-tailed flush all de time.
Was I sayin’ I’d sit in six months mo’? Well,
I’se changed my mind, den. I cashes in and
resigns de job of Emperor right dis minute.

**SMITHERS** *(with real admiration)*
Blimey, but you’re a cool bird, and no mistake.

**JONES**
No use’n fussin’. When I knows de game’s up
I kisses it good-bye widout no long waits. Dey’ve all run off to de hills, ain’t dey?

SMITHERS
Yes—every bleedin’ manjack of ’em.

JONES
Den de revolution is at de post. And de Emperor better git his feet smokin’ up de trail. *(He starts for the door in rear.)*

SMITHERS
Goin’ out to look for your ’orse? Yer won’t find any. They steals the ’orses first thing. Mine was gone when I went for ’im this mornin’. That’s wot first give me a suspicion of wot was up.

JONES *(alarmed for a second, scratches his head, then philosophically)*
Well, den I hoofs it. Feet, do yo’ duty! *(He pulls out a gold watch and looks at it.)* Three-thuty. Sundown’s at six-thuty or dereabouts. *(Puts his watch back—with cool confidence.)* I got plenty o’ time to make it easy.

SMITHERS
Don’t be so bloomin’ sure of it. They’ll be after you ’ot and ’eavy. Ole Lem is at the bottom o’ this business an’ ’e ’ates you like ’ell. ’E’d rather do for you than eat ’is dinner, ’e would!

JONES *(scornfully)*
Dat fool no-count nigger! Does you think I’s scared o’ him? I stands him on his thick head more’n once befo’ dis, and I does it again if he come in my way—*(fiercely).* And dis time I leave him a dead nigger fo’ sho’!
SMITHERS
You'll 'ave to cut through the big forest—an' these blacks 'ere can sniff and follow a trail in the dark like 'ounds. You'd 'ave to 'ustle to get through that forest in twelve hours even if you knew all the bloomin' trails like a native.

JONES (with indignant scorn)
Look-a-heah, white man! Does you think I'm a natural bo'n fool? Give me credit fo' havin' some sense, fo' Lawd's sake! Don't you s'pose I'se looked ahead and made sho' of all de chances? I'se gone out in dat big forest, pretendin' to hunt so many times dat I knows it high an' low like a book. I could go through on dem trails wid my eyes shut. (With great contempt) Think dese ig'nerent bush niggers dat ain't got brains enuff to know deir own names even can catch Brutus Jones? Huh! I s'pects not! Not on yo' life! Why, man, de white men went after me wid bloodhounds where I come from an' I jes' laughs at 'em. It's a shame to fool dese black trash around heah, dey're so easy. You watch me, man. I'll make dem look sick, I will. I'll be 'cross de plain to de edge of de forest by time dark comes. Once in de woods in de night, dey got a swell chance o' findin' dis baby! Dawn tomorrow I'll be out at de oder side and on de coast whar dat French gunboat is stayin'. She picks me up, take me to the Martinique when she go dar, and dere I is safe wid a mighty big bankroll in my jeans. It's easy as rollin' off a log.
SMITHERS (maliciously)

But s’posin’ somethin’ ’appens wrong an’ they do nab yer?

JONES (decisively)

Dey don’t. Dat’s de answer.

SMITHERS

But just for argyment’s sake—what’d you do?

JONES (frowning)

I’se got five lead bullets in dis gun good enuff fo’ common bush niggers—an’ after dat I got de silver bullet left to cheat ’em out o’ gittin’ me.

SMITHERS (jeeringly)

Ho, I was fergettin’ that silver bullet. You’ll bump yourself orf in style, won’t yer? Blimey!

JONES (gloomily)

Yo’ kin bet yo’ whole roll on one thing, white man. Dis baby plays out his string to de end and when he quits, he quits wid a bang de way he ought. Silver bullet ain’t none too good for him when he go, dat’s a fac’! (Then shaking off his nervousness—with a confident laugh) Sho’!

What is I talkin’ about? Ain’t come to dat yit an’ I never will—not wid trash niggers like dese yere. (Boastfully) Silver bullet bring me luck, anyway. I kin outguess, outrun, outfight, an’ outplay de whole lot o’ dem all ovah de board any time o’ de day er night! Yo’ watch me!

(From the distant hills comes the faint, steady thump of a tom-tom, low and vibrating. It starts at a rate exactly corresponding to normal pulse-
beat—72 to the minute—and continues at a gradually accelerating rate from this point uninterruptedly to the very end of the play.) Jones starts at the sound; a strange look of apprehension creeps into his face for a moment as he listens. Then he asks, with an attempt to regain his most casual manner:)

What's dat drum beatin' fo'? SMITHERS (with a mean grin)
For you. That means the bleedin' ceremony 'as started. I've 'eard it before and I knows. JONES Cer'mony? What cer'mony?
SMITHERS The blacks is 'oldin' a bloody meetin', 'avin' a war dance, gettin' their courage worked up b'fore they starts after you. JONES Let dem! Dey'll sho' need it!
SMITHERS And they're there 'oldin' their 'eathen religious service—makin' no end of devil spells and charms to 'elp 'em against your silver bullet. (He guffaws loudly.) Blimey, but they're balmy as 'ell. JONES (a tiny bit awed and shaken in spite of himself)
Huh! Takes more'n dat to scare dis chicken! SMITHERS (scenting the other's feeling—maliciously) Ternight when it's pitch black in the forest, they'll 'ave their pet devils and ghosts 'oundin'
after you. You’ll find yer bloody ’air ’ll be standin’ on end before to-morrow mornin’.
(Seriously) It’s a bleedin’ queer place, that stinkin’ forest, even in daylight. Yer don’t know what might ’appen in there, it’s that rotten still. Always sends the cold shivers down my back minute I gets in it.

JONES (with a contemptuous sniff)
I ain’t no chicken-liver like you is. Trees an’ me, we’s friends, an’ dar’s a full moon comin’ bring me light. And let dem po’ niggers make all de fool spells dey’se a min’ to. Does yo’ s’pect I’se silly enuff to b’lieve in ghosts an’ ha’nts an’ all dat ole woman’s talk? G’long, white man! You ain’t talkin’ to me.
(With a chuckle) Doesn’t you knows dey’s got to do wid a man who was member in good standin’ o’ de Baptist Church. Sho’ I was dat when I was porter on de Pullman, an’ befo’ I gits into my little trouble. Let dem try deir heathen tricks. De Baptist Church done pertect me an’ land dem all in hell. (Then with more confident satisfaction) An’ I’se got little silver bullet o’ my own, don’t forgit.

SMITHERS
Ho! You ’aven’t give much ’eed to your Baptist Church since you been down ’ere. I’ve ’eard myself and ’ad turned yer coat an’ was takin’ up with their blarsted witch-doctors, or whatever the ’ell yer calls the swine.

JONES (vehemently)
I pretends to! Sho’ I pretends! Dat’s part o’
my game from de fust. If I finds out dem niggers believes dat black is white, den I yells it out louder 'n deir loudest. It don’t git me nothin’ to do missionary work for de Baptist Church. I’se after de coin, an’ I lays my Jesus on de shelf for de time bein’. (Stops abruptly to look at his watch—alertly.) But I ain’t got de time to waste no mo’e fool talk wid you. I’se gwine away from heah dis secon’. (He reaches in under the throne and pulls out an expensive Panama hat with a bright multi-colored band and sets it jauntily on his head.) So long, white man! (With a grin) See you n jail some time, maybe!

SMITHERS

Not me, you won’t. Well, I wouldn’t be in yer bloody boots for no bloomin’ money, but ’ere’s wishin’ yer luck just the same.

JONES (contemptuously)

You’re de frightenedest man evah I see! I tells you I’se safe ’s’f I was in New York City. It take dem niggers from now to dark to git up de nerve to start somethin’. By dat time I’se got a head start dey never kotch up wid.

SMITHERS (maliciously)

Give my regards to any ghosts yer meets up with.

JONES (grinning)

If dat ghost got money, I’ll tell him never ha’nt you less’n he wants to lose it.

SMITHERS (flattered)

Garn! (Then curiously) Ain’t yer takin’ no luggage with yer?
THE EMPEROR JONES

JONES
I travels light when I wants to move fast. And I got tinned grub buried on de edge o' de forest. (Boastfully) Now say dat I don't look ahead an' use my brains! (With a wide, liberal gesture) I will all dat's left in de palace to you an' you better grab all you kin sneak away wid befo' dey gits here.

SMITHERS (gratefully)
Righto—and thanks ter yer. (As Jones walks toward the door in rear—cautioningly) Say! Look 'ere, you ain't goin' out that way, are yer?

JONES
Does you think I'd slink out de back door like a common nigger? I'se Emperor yit, ain't I? And de Emperor Jones leaves de way he comes, and dat black trash don't dare stop him—not yit, leastways. (He stops for a moment in the doorway, listening to the far-off but insistent beat of the tom-tom.) Listen to dat roll-call, will yo'? Must be mighty big drum carry dat far. (Then with a laugh) Well, if dey ain't no whole brass band to see me off, I sho' got de drum part of it. So long, white man. (He puts his hands in his pockets and with studied carelessness, whistling a tune, he saunters out of the doorway and off to the left.)

SMITHERS (looks after him with a puzzled admiration)
'E's got 'is bloomin' nerve with 'im, s'elp me! (Then angrily) Ho—the bleedin' nigger—puttin' on 'is bloody airs! I 'opes thev nabs 'im an'
THE EMPEROR JONES

gives 'im what's what! (Then putting business before the pleasure of his thought, looking around him with cupidity.) A bloke ought to find a 'ole lot in this palace that 'd go for a bit of cash. Let's take a look, 'Arry, me lad. (He starts for the doorway on right as)

The Curtain Falls

SCENE TWO: NIGHTFALL

(The end of the plain where the Great Forest begins. The foreground is sandy, level ground, dotted by a few stones and clumps of stunted bushes cowering close against the earth to escape the buffeting of the trade wind. In the rear the forest is a wall of darkness dividing the world. Only when the eye becomes accustomed to the gloom can the outlines of separate trunks of the nearest trees be made out, enormous pillars of deeper blackness. A somber monotone of wind lost in the leaves moans in the air. Yet this sound serves but to intensify the impression of the forest's relentless immobility, to form a background throwing into relief its brooding, im-placable silence.)

(Jones enters from the left, walking rapidly. He stops as he nears the edge of the forest, looks around him quickly, peering into the dark as if searching for some familiar landmark. Then,
apparently satisfied that he is where he ought to be, he throws himself on the ground, dog-tired.)

Well, heah I is. In de nick o' time, too! Little mo' an' it'd be blacker'n de ace of spades heahabouts. (He pulls a bandana handkerchief from his hip pocket and mops off his perspiring face.) Sho! Gimme air! I'se tuckered out sho' 'nuf. Dat soft Emperor job ain't no trainin' fo' a long hike ovah dat plain in de brilin' sun (Then with a chuckle) Cheah up, nigger, der worst is yet to come. (He lifts his head and stares at the forest. His chuckle peters out abrupdy. In a tone of awe): My goodness, look at dem woods, will you? Dat no-count Smithers said dey'd be black an' he sho' called de turn. (Turning away from them quickly, and looking down at his feet, he snatches at a chance to change the subject—solicitously:) Feet, yo' is holdin' up yo' end fine an' I sutinly hopes you ain't blisterin' none. It's time you git a rest. (He takes off his shoes, his eyes studiously avoiding the forest. He feels of the soles of his feet gingerly.) You is still in de pink—only a little mite feverish. Cool you' self. Remember yo' done got a long journey yit befo' yo'. (He sits in a weary attitude, listening to the rhythmic beating of the tom-tom. He grumbles in a loud tone to cover up a growing uneasiness.) Bush niggers! Wonder dey wouldn't git sick o' beatin' dat drum. Sound louder, seem like. I wonder if dey's startin' after me? (He scram-
bles to his feet, looking back across the plain.) Couldn’t see dem now, nohow, if dey was hundred feet away. (Then shaking himself like a wet dog to get rid of these depressing thoughts.) Sho’, dey’s miles an’ miles behind. What yo’ gittin’ fidgetty about? (But he sits down and begins to lace up his shoes in great haste, all the time muttering reassuringly.) You know what? Yo’ belly is empty, dat’s what’s de matter wid you. Come time to eat! Wid nothin’ but wind on yo’ stomach, o’ course yo’ feels jiggedy. Well, we eats right heah an’ now soon’s I gits dese pesky shoes laced up. (He finishes lacing up his shoes.) Dere! Now le’s see! Gets on his hands and knees and searches the ground around him with his eyes.) White stone, white stone, where is yo’? (He sees the first white stone and crawls to it—with satisfaction.) Heah yo’ is! I knowed dis was de right place. Box of grub, come to me. (He turns over the stone and feels in under it—in a tone of dismay) Ain’t heah! Gorry, is I in de right place or isn’t I? Dere’s ’nother stone. Guess dat’s it. (He scrambles to the next stone and turns it over.) Ain’t heah, neither! Grub, whar is yo’? Ain’t heah. Gorry, has I got to go hungry into dem woods—all de night? (While he is talking he scrambles from one stone to another, turning them over in frantic haste. Finally he jumps to his feet excitedly.) Is I lost de place? Must have! But how dat happen when I was followin’ de trail across de plain in broad daylight? (Almost
plaintively) I’se hungry, I is! I gotta git my feed. Whar’s my strength gonna come from if I doesn’t? Gorry, I gotta find dat grub high an’ low somehow! Why it come dark so quick like dat? Can’t see nothin’. (He scratches a match on his trousers and peers about him. The rate of the beat of the far-off tom-tom increases perceptibly as he does so. He mutters in a bewildered voice.) How come all dese white stones come heah when I only remembers one? (Suddenly, with a frightened gasp, he flings the match on the ground and stamps on it.) Nigger, is yo’ gone crazy mad? Is you lightin’ matches to show dem whar you is? Fo’ Lawd’s sake, use yo’ haid. Gorry, I’se got to be careful! (He stares at the plain behind him apprehensively, his hand on his revolver.) But how come all dese white stones? And whar’s dat tin box o’ grub I hid all wrapped up in oilcloth?

(While his back is turned, the Little Formless Fears creep out from the deeper blackness of the forest. They are black, shapeless; only their glittering little eyes can be seen. If they have any describable form at all it is that of a grub-worm about the size of a creeping child. They move noiselessly, but with deliberate, painful effort, striving to raise themselves on end, failing and sinking prone again. Jones turns about to face the forest. He stares up at the tops of the trees, seeking vainly to discover his whereabouts by their conformation.)
THE EMPEROR JONES

Can’t tell nothin’ from dem trees! Gorry, nothin’ ’round heah look like I evah seed it befo’. I’se done lost de place sho’ ’nuff! (With mournful foreboding) It’s mighty queer! It’s mighty queer! (With sudden forced defiance—in an angry tone) Woods, is yo’ tryin’ to put some-thin’ ovah on me?

(From the formless creatures on the ground in front of him comes a tiny gale of low mocking laughter like a rustling of leaves. They squirm upward toward him in twisted attitudes. Jones looks down, leaps backward with a yell of terror, yanking out his revolver as he does so—in a quavering voice.)

What’s dat? Who’s dar? What’s you? Git away from me befo’ I shoots yo’ up! Yo’ don’t?

(He fires. There is a flash, a loud report, then silence, broken only by the far-off quickened throb of the tom-tom. The formless creatures have scurried back into the forest. Jones remains fixed in his position, listening intently. The sound of the shot, the reassuring feel of the revolver in his hand have somewhat restored his shaken nerve. He addresses himself with renewed confidence:)

Dey’re gone. Dat shot fix ’em. Dey was only little animals—little wild pigs, I reckon. Dey’ve maybe rooted out yo’ grub an’ eat it. Sho’, yo’ fool nigger, what yo’ think dey is—ha’nts?
THE EMPEROR JONES

(Excitedly) Gorry, you give de game away when yo' fire dat shot. Dem niggers heah dat fo' su’tin! Time yo’ beat it in de woods widout no long waits. (He starts for the forest—hesitates before the plunge—then urging himself in with manful resolution.) Git in, nigger! What yo’ skeered at? Ain’t nothin’ dere but de trees! Git in! (He plungeres boldly into the forest.)

SCENE THREE

(Nine o’clock. In the forest. The moon has just risen. Its beams drifting through the canopy of leaves make a barely perceptible, suffused eerie glow. A dense low wall of underbrush and creepers is in the nearer foreground fencing in a small triangular clearing. Beyond this is the massed blackness of the forest like an encompassing barrier. A path is dimly discerned leading down to the clearing from left, rear, and winding away from it again toward the right. As the scene opens nothing can be distinctly made out. Except for the beating of the tom-tom, which is a trifle louder and quicker than in the previous scene, there is silence, broken every few seconds by a queer, clicking sound. Then gradually the figure of the negro Jeff can be discerned crouching on his haunches at the rear of the triangle. He is middle-aged, thin, brown in color, is dressed in a Pullman porter’s uniform, cap, etc. He is throwing a pair of dice on the ground before him, picking them up, shaking them, cast-
ing them out with the regular, rigid, mechanical movements of an automaton. The heavy, plodding footsteps of some one approaching along the trail from the left are heard, and Jones’ voice, pitched in a slightly higher key and strained in a cheering effort to overcome its own tremors.)

De moon’s rizen. Does yo’ heah dat, nigger? Yo’ gits more light from dis out. No mo’ buttin’ yo’ fool head agin’ de trunks an’ scratchin’ de hide off yo’ legs in de bushes. Now yo’ sees whar yo’se gwine. So cheer up! From now on yo’ has a snap. (He steps just to the rear of the triangular clearing and mops off his face on his sleeve. He has lost his Panama hat. His face is scratched, his brilliant uniform shows several large rents.) What time’s it gittin’ to be, I wonder? I dassent light no match to find out. Phoo’. It’s wa’m, an’ dat’s a fac’! (Wearily) How long I been makin’ tracks in dese woods? Must be hours an’ hours. Seems like fo’evah! Yit can’t be, when de moon’s jes’ riz. Dis am a long night fo’ yo’, yo’ Majesty! (With a mournful chuckle) Majesty! Der ain’t much majesty ’bout dis baby now. (With attempted cheerfulness) Never min’. It’s all part o’ de game. Dis night come to an end like everythin’ else. An’ when yo’ gits dar safe an’ has dat bankroll in yo’ hands, yo’ laughs at all dis. (He starts to whistle, but checks himself abruptly.) What yo’ whistlin’ for, yo’ po’ dope? ‘Want all de worl’ to heah
yo'? (He stops talking to listen.) Heah dat ole drum! Sho' gits nearer from de sound. Dey're packin' it along wid 'em. Time fo' me to move. (He takes a step forward, then stops—worriedly.) What's dat odder queer clicketty sound I heah? Der it is! Sound close! Sound like—fo' God sake, sound like some nigger was shakin' crap! (Frightenedly) I better beat it quick when I gits dem notions. (He walks quickly into the clear space—then stands transfixed as he sees Jeff—in a terrified gasp.) Who dar? Who dat? Is dat yo', Jeff? (Starting toward the other, forgetful for a moment of his surroundings and really believing it is a living man that he sees—in a tone of happy relief.) Jeff! I'se sho' mighty glad to see yo'! Dey tol' me yo' done died from dat razor cut I gives you. (Stopping suddenly, bewilderedly) But how come you to be heah, nigger? (He stares fascinatedly at the other, who continues his mechanical play with the dice. Jones' eyes begin to roll wildly. He stutters) Ain't you gwine—look up—can't you speak to me? Is you—is you—a ha'nt? (He jerks out his revolver in a frenzy of terrified rage.) Nigger, I kills yo' dead once. Has I got to kill yo' agin? You take it, den. (He fires. When the smoke clears away Jeff has disappeared. Jones stands trembling—then with a certain reassurance) He's gone, anyway. Ha'nt or no ha'nt, dat shot fix him. (The beat of the far-off tom-tom is perceptibly louder and more rapid. Jones becomes conscious of it—with a start, look-
THE EMPEROR JONES

ing back over his shoulder.) Dey's gittin' near! Dey're comin' fast! An' heah I is shootin' shots to let 'em know jes' what I is. Oh, Gorry, I'se got to run. (Forgetting the path, he plunges wildly into the underbrush in the rear and disappears in the shadow.)

SCENE FOUR

(Eleven o'clock. In the forest. A wide dirt road runs diagonally from right, front, to left, rear. Rising sheer on both sides the forest walls it in. The moon is now up. Under its light the road glimmers ghastly and unreal. It is as if the forest had stood aside momentarily to let the road pass through and accomplish its veiled purpose. This done, the forest will fold in upon itself again and the road will be no more. Jones stumbles in from the forest on the right. His uniform is ragged and torn. He looks about him with numbed surprise when he sees the road, his eyes blinking in the bright moonlight. He flops down exhaustedly and pants heavily for a while. Then, with sudden anger:)

I'm meltin' wid heat! Runnin' an' runnin' an' runnin'! Damn dis heah coat! Like a strait-jacket! (He tears off his coat and flings it away from him, revealing himself stripped to the waist.) Dere! Dat's better! Now I kin breathe! (Looking down at his feet, the spurs catch his eye.) An' to hell wid dese high-fanged spurs. Dey're
what's been a-trippin' me up an' breakin' my neck. (He unstraps and flings them away disgustedly.) Dere! I gits rid o' dem frippety Emperor trappin's an' I travels lighter. Lawd! I'se tired! (After a pause, listening to the insistent beat of the tom-tom in the distance.) I must 'a put some distance between myself an' dem—runnin' like dat—an' yet—dat damn drum sound jes' de same—nearer, even. Well, I guess I a'most holds my lead, anyhow. Dey won't never kotch up. (With a sigh) If on'y my fool legs stands up. Oh, I'se sorry I evah went in for dis. Dat Emperor job is sho' hard to shake. (He looks around him suspiciously.) How'd dis road evah git heah? Good, level road, too. I never remembers seein' it befo'. (Shaking his head apprehensively.) Dese woods is sho' full o' de queerest things at night. (With sudden terror) Lawd God, don't let me see no more o' dem ha'nts. Dey gits my goat! (Then trying to talk himself into confidence.) Ha'nts! Yo' fool nigger, dey ain't no such things! Don't de Baptist parson tell you dat many time? Is yo' civilized, or is yo' like dese ign'rent black niggers heah? Sho'! Dat was all in yo' own head. Wasn't nothin' there! Wasn't no Jeff! Know what? Yo' jus' get seein' dem thing 'cause yo' belly's empty an' you's sick wid hunger inside. Hunger 'fects yo' head an' yo' eyes. Any fool know dat. (Then pleading fervently) But bless God, I don't come across no more o' dem, whatever dey is!
(Then cautiously) Rest! Don’t talk! Rest! You needs it. Den yo’ gits on yo’ way again.  
(Looking at the moon) Night’s half gone a’most. Yo’ hits de coast in de mawning! Den you’se all safe.

(From the right forward a small gang of negroes enter. They are dressed in striped convicts suits, their heads are shaven, one leg drags limpingly, shackled to a heavy ball and chain. Some carry picks, the others shovels. They are followed by a white man dressed in the uniform of a prison guard. A Winchester rifle is slung across his shoulders and he carries a heavy whip. At a signal from the guard they stop on the road opposite to where Jones is sitting. Jones, who has been staring up at the sky, unmindful of their noiseless approach, suddenly looks down and sees them. His eyes pop out, he tries to get to his feet and fly, but sinks back, too numbed by fright to move. His voice catches in a choking prayer.)

Lawd Jesus!

(The prison guard cracks his whip—noiselessly—and at that signal all the convicts start to work on the road. They swing their picks, they shovel, but not a sound comes from their labor. Their movements, like those of Jeff in the preceding scene, are those of automatons—rigid, slow, and mechanical. The prison guard points sternly at Jones with his whip, motions him to take his place among the other shovelers. Jones gets to
his feet in a hypnotized stupor. He mumbles subserviently:)

Yes, suh! Yes, suh! I’se comin’!

(As he shuffles, dragging one foot, over to his place, he curses under his breath with rage and hatred.)

God damn yo’ soul, I gits even wid yo’ yit, sometime.

(As if there was a shovel in his hands, he goes through weary, mechanical gestures of digging up dirt and throwing it to the roadside. Suddenly the guard approaches him angrily, threateningly. He raises his whip and lashes Jones viciously across the shoulders with it. Jones winces with pain and cowers abjectly. The guard turns his back on him and walks away contemptuously. Instantly Jones straightens up. With arms upraised, as if his shovel were a club in his hands, he springs murderously at the unsuspecting guard. In the act of crashing down his shovel on the white man’s skull, Jones suddenly becomes aware that his hands are empty. He cries desparingly:)

Whar’s my shovel? Gimme my shovel ’till I splits his damn head! (Appealing to his fellow convicts) Gimme a shovel, one o’ yo’ fo’ God’s sake!

(They stand fixed in motionless attitudes, their eyes on the ground. The guard seems to wait
THE EMPEROR JONES

expectantly, his back turned to the attacker. Jones bellows with baffled terrified rage, tugging frantically at his revolver.)

I kills you, you white debil, if it’s de last thing I evah does! Ghost or debil, I kill you agin!

(He frees the revolver and fires pointblank at the guard’s back. Instantly the walls of the forest close in from both sides, the road and the figures of the convict gang are blotted out in an enshrouding darkness. The only sounds are a crashing in the underbrush as Jones leaps away in mad flight and the throbbing of the tom-tom, still far distant, but increased in volume of sound and rapidity of beat.)

SCENE FIVE

(One o’clock. A large circular clearing, enclosed by the serried ranks of lofty, gigantic trunks of tall trees whose tops are lost to view. In the center is a big dead stump, worn by time into a curious resemblance to an auction block. The moon floods the clearing with a clear light. Jones forces his way in through the forest on the left. He looks wildly about the clearing with hunted, fearful glances. His pants are in tatters, his shoes cut and misshapen, flapping about his feet. He slinks cautiously to the stump in the center and sits down in a tense position, ready for instant flight. Then he holds his head in his hands and
rocks back and forth, moaning to himself miserably.)

Oh, Lawd, Lawd! Oh Lawd, Lawd! (Suddenly he throws himself on his knees and raises his clasped hands to the sky—in a voice of agonized pleading.) Lawd, Jesus, heah my prayer! I’se a poor sinner, a poor sinner! I knows I done wrong, I knows it! When I cotches Jeff cheatin’ wid loaded dice my anger overcomes me an’ I kills him dead! Lawd, I done wrong! When dat guard hits me wid de whip, my anger overcomes me, and I kills him dead. Lawd, I done wrong! An’ down heah whar dese fool bush niggers raises me up to the seat o’ de mighty, I steals all I could grab. Lawd, I done wrong! I knows it! I’se sorry! Forgive me, Lawd! Forgive dis po’ sinner! (Then beseeching terrifiedly) An’ keep dem away, Lawd! Keep dem away from me! An’ stop dat drum soundin’ in my ears! Dat begin to sound ha’nted, too. (He gets to his feet, evidently slightly reassured by his prayer—with attempted confidence) De Lawd’ll preserve me from dem ha’nts after dis. (Sits down on the stump again.) I ain’t skeered o’ real men. Let dem come. But dem odders— (He shudders—then looks down at his feet, working his toes inside the shoes—with a groan) Oh, my po’ feet! Dem shoes ain’t no use no more ’ceptin’ to hurt. I’se better off widout dem. (He unlaces them and pulls them off—holds the wrecks of the
THE EMPEROR JONES

shoes in his hand and regards them mournfully.) You was real A-one patin’ leather, too. Look at yo’ now. Emperor, you’s gittin’ mighty low!

(He sighs dejectedly and remains with bowed shoulders, staring down at the shoes in his hands as if reluctant to throw them away. While his attention is thus occupied, a crowd of figures silently enter the clearing from all sides. All are dressed in Southern costumes of the period of the fifties of the last century. There are middle-aged men who are evidently well-to-do planters. There is one spruce, authoritative individual—the Auctioneer. There are a crowd of curious spectators, chiefly young belles and dandies who have come to the slave market for diversion. All exchange courtly greetings in dumb show and chat silently together. There is something stiff, rigid, unreal, marionettish about their movements. They group themselves about the stump. Finally a batch of slaves are led in from the left by an attendant—three men of different ages, two women, one with a baby in her arms, nursing. They are placed to the left of the stump, beside Jones.

The white planters look them over appraisingly as if they were cattle, and exchange judgments on each. The dandies point with their fingers and make witty remarks. The belles titter bewitchingly. All this in silence save for the ominous throb of the tom-tom. The Auctioneer holds up his hand, taking his place at the stump. The
groups strain forward attentively. He touches Jones on the shoulder peremptorily, motioning for him to stand on the stump—the auction block. Jones looks up, sees the figures on all sides, looks wildly for some opening to escape, sees none, screams and leaps madly to the top of the stump to get as far away from them as possible. He stands there, cowering, paralyzed with horror. 

The Auctioneer begins his silent spiel. He points to Jones, appeals to the planters to see for themselves. Here is a good field hand, sound in wind and limb, as they can see. Very strong still, in spite of his being middle-aged. Look at that back. Look at those shoulders. Look at the muscles in his arms and his sturdy legs. Capable of any amount of hard labor. Moreover, of a good disposition, intelligent and tractable. Will any gentleman start the bidding? The planters raise their fingers, make their bids. They are apparently all eager to possess Jones. The bidding is lively, the crowd interested. While this has been going on, Jones has been seized by the courage of desperation. He dares to look down and around him. Over his face abject terror gives way to mystification, to gradual realization—stutteringly:)

What yo’ all doin’, white folks? What’s all dis? What yo’ all lookin’ at me fo’? What yo’ doin’ wid me, anyhow? (Suddenly convulsed with raging hatred and fear) Is dis a auction? Is yo’ sellin’ me like dey uster befo’ de war? (Jerkng out his revolver just as the Auctioneer
knocks him down to one of the planters—glaring from him to the purchaser) An’ you sells me? An’ you buys me? I shows you I’se a free nigger, damn yo’ souls! (He fires at the Auctioneer and at the planter with such rapidity that the two shots are almost simultaneous. As if this were a signal, the walls of the forest fold in. Only blackness remains and silence broken by Jones as he rushes off, crying with fear—and by the quickened, ever louder beat of the tom-tom.)

SCENE SIX

(Three o’clock. A cleared space in the forest. The limbs of the trees meet over it, forming a low ceiling about five feet from the ground. The interlocked ropes of creepers reaching upward to entwine the tree trunks give an arched appearance to the sides. The space this encloses is like the dark, noisome hold of some ancient vessel. The moonlight is almost completely shut out and only a vague, wan light filters through. There is the noise of some one approaching from the left, stumbling and crawling through the undergrowth. Jones’ voice is heard between chattering moans.)

Oh, Lawd, what I gwine do now? Ain’t got no bullet left on’y de silver one. If mo’ o’ dem ha’nts come after me, how I gwine skeer dem away? Oh, Lawd, on’y de silver one left—an’ I gotta save dat fo’ luck. If I shoots dat one I’m a goner sho’! Lawd, it’s black heah!
Whar's de moon? Oh, Lawd, don't dis night evah come to an end? (By the sounds he is feeling his way cautiously forward.) Dere! Dis feels like a clear space. I gotta lie down an' rest. I don't care if dem niggers does catch me. I gotta rest.

(He is well forward now where his figure can be dimly made out. His pants have been so torn away that what is left of them is no better than a breech cloth. He flings himself full length, face downward on the ground, panting with exhaustion. Gradually it seems to grow lighter in the enclosed space, and two rows of seated figures can be seen behind Jones. They are sitting in crumpled, despairing attitudes, hunched facing one another, with their backs touching the forest walls as if they were shackled to them. All are negroes, naked save for loin cloths. At first they are silent and motionless. Then they begin to sway slowly forward toward each other and back again in unison, as if they were laxly letting themselves follow the long roll of a ship at sea. At the same time, a low, melancholy murmur rises among them, increasing gradually by rhythmic degrees, which seem to be directed and controlled by the throb of the tom-tom in the distance, to a long, tremendous wail of despair that reaches a certain pitch, unbearably acute, then falls by slow gradations of tone into silence and is taken up again. Jones starts, looks up, sees the figures, and throws himself down again to shut out the sight. A shudder
of terror shakes his whole body as the wail rises up about him again. But the next time, his voice, as if under some uncanny compulsion, starts with the others. As their chorus lifts he rises to a sitting posture similar to the others, swaying back and forth. His voice reaches the highest pitch of sorrow, of desolation. The light fades out, the other voices cease, and only darkness is left. Jones can be heard scrambling to his feet and running off, his voice sinking down the scale and receding as he moves farther and farther away in the forest. The tom-tom beats louder, quicker, with a more insistent, triumphant pulsation.)

SCENE SEVEN

(Five o'clock. The foot of a gigantic tree by the edge of a great river. A rough structure of boulders like an altar is by the tree. The raised river bank is in the nearer background. Beyond this the surface of the river spreads out brilliant and un-ruffled in the moonlight, blotted out and merged into a veil of bluish mist in the distance. Jones' voice is heard from the left, rising and falling in the long, despairing wail of the chained slaves, to the rhythmic beat of the tom-tom. As his voice sinks into silence he enters the open space. The expression of his face is fixed and stony, his eyes have an obsessed glare, he moves with a strange deliberation like a sleep-walker or one in a trance. He looks around at the tree, the rough stone altar, the moonlit surface of the river beyond, and passes
his hand over his head with a vague gesture of puzzled bewilderment. Then, as if in obedience to some obscure impulse, he sinks into a kneeling, devotional posture before the altar. Then he seems to come to himself partly, to have an uncertain realization of what he is doing, for he straightens up and stares about him horrifyingly—in an incoherent mumble.

What—what is I doin'? What is—dis place? Seems like—seems like I know dat tree—an’ dem stones—an’ de river. I remember—seems like I been heah befo’. (Tremblingly) Oh, Gorry, I’se skeered in dis place! I’se skeered! Oh, Lawd, perfect dis sinner!

(Crawling away from the altar, he cowers close to the ground, his face hidden, his shoulders heaving with sobs of hysterical fright. From behind the trunk of the tree, as if he had sprung out of it, the figure of the Congo witch-doctor appears. He is wizened and old, naked except for the fur of some small animal tied about his waist, its bushy tail hanging down in front. His body is stained all over a bright red. Antelope horns are on each side of his head, branching upward. In one hand he carries a bone rattle, in the other a charm stick with a bunch of white cockatoo feathers tied to the end. A great number of glass beads and bone ornaments are about his neck, ears, wrists, and ankles. He struts noiselessly with a queer prancing step to a position in the clear ground between Jones and
the altar. Then with a preliminary, summoning stamp of his foot on the earth, he begins to dance and to chant. As if in response to his summons the beating of the tom-tom grows to a fierce, exultant boom whose throbs seem to fill the air with vibrating rhythm. Jones looks up, starts to spring to his feet, reaches a half-kneeling, half-squatting position, and remains rigidly fixed there, paralyzed with awed fascination by this new apparition. The witch-doctor sways, stamping with his foot, his bone rattle clicking the time. His voice rises and falls in a weird, monotonous croon, without articulate word division. Gradually his dance becomes clearly one of a narrative in pantomime, his croon is an incantation, a charm to allay the fierceness of some implacable deity demanding sacrifice. He flees, he is pursued by devils, he hides, he flees again. Ever wilder and wilder becomes his flight, nearer and nearer draws the pursuing evil, more and more the spirit of terror gains possession of him. His croon, rising to intensity, is punctuated by shrill cries. Jones has become completely hypnotized. His voice joins in the incantation, in the cries; he beats time with his hands and sways his body to and fro from the waist. The whole spirit and meaning of the dance has entered into him, has become his spirit. Finally the theme of the pantomime halts, on a howl of despair, and is taken up again in a note of savage hope. There is a salvation. The forces of evil demand sacrifice. They must be appeased. The witch-doctor points with his wand to the
sacred tree, the river beyond, to the altar, and finally to Jones with a ferocious command. Jones seems to sense the meaning of this. It is he who must offer himself for sacrifice. He beats his forehead abjectly to the ground, moaning hysterically.) Mercy, Oh Lawd! Mercy! Mercy on dis po' sinner!

(The witch-doctor springs to the river bank. He stretches out his arms and calls to some god within its depths. Then he starts backward slowly, his arms remaining out. A huge head of a crocodile appears over the bank and its eyes, glittering greenly, fastens upon Jones. He stares into them fascinatedly. The witch-doctor prances up to him, touches him with his wand, motions with hideous command toward the waiting monster. Jones squirms on his belly nearer and nearer, moaning continually:)

Mercy, Lawd! Mercy!

(The crocodile heaves more of his enormous hulk onto the land. Jones squirms toward him. The witch-doctor’s voice shrills out in furious exultation, the tom-tom beats madly. Jones cries out in fierce, exhausted spasms of anguished pleading:)

Lawd, save me! Lawd Jesus, heah my prayer!

(Immediately, in answer to his prayer, comes the thought of the one bullet left him. He snatches at his hip, shouting defiantly:)
De silver bullet! Yo' don't git me yit!

(He fires at the green eyes in front of him. The head of the crocodile sinks back behind the river bank, the witch-doctor springs behind the sacred tree and disappears. Jones lies with his face to the ground, his arms outstretched, whimpering with fear as the throb of the tom-tom fills the silence about him with a somber pulsation, a baffled but revengeful power.)

SCENE EIGHT

(Dawn. Same as Scene Two, the dividing line of forest and plain. The nearest tree trunks are dimly revealed, but the forest behind them is still a mass of glooming shadow. The tom-tom seems on the very spot, so loud and continuously vibrating are its beats. Lem enters from the left, followed by a small squad of his soldiers, and by the Cockney trader, Smithers. Lem is a heavy-set, ape-faced old savage of the extreme African type, dressed only in a loin cloth. A revolver and cartridge belt are about his waist. His soldiers are in different degrees of rag-concealed nakedness. All wear broad palm leaf hats. Each one carries a rifle. Smithers is the same as in Scene One. One of the soldiers, evidently a tracker, is peering about keenly on the ground. He grunts and points to the spot where Jones entered the forest. Lem and Smithers come to look.)

SMITHERS (after a glance, turns away in disgust.)
That's where 'e went in right enough. Much
good it’ll do yer. ’E’s miles orf by this an’ safe
to the coast, damn ’is ’ide! I tole yer ye’d lose
’im, didn’t I?—wastin’ the ’ole bloomin’ night
beatin’ yer bloody drum and castin’ yer silly
spells! Gawd blimey, wot a pack!

LEM (gutterally)
We kotch him. You see. (He makes a motion
to his soldiers, who squat down on their haunches
in a semi-circle.)

SMITHERS (exasperatedly)
Well, ain’t yer goin’ in an’ ’unt ’im in the
woods? What the ’ell’s the good of waitin’?

LEM (imperturbably—squatting down himself)
We kotch him.

SMITHERS (turning away from him contemptuously)
Aw! Garn! ’E’s a better man than the lot o’
you put together. I ’ates the sight o’ ’im, but
I’ll say that for ’im.

(A sound of snapping twigs comes from the
forest. The soldiers jump to their feet, cocking
their rifles alertly. Lem remains sitting with an
imperturbable expression, but listening intently.
The sound from the woods is repeated. Lem
makes a quick signal with his hand. His fol-
lowers creep quickly but noiselessly into the forest,
scattering so that each enters at a different spot.)

SMITHERS (in the silence that follows—in a con-
temptuous whisper)
You ain’t thinkin’ that would be ’im, I ’ope?

LEM (calmly)
We kotch him.
SMITHERS
Blarsted fat 'eads! (Then after a second's thought—wonderingly) Still an' all, it might happen. If 'e lost 'is bloody way in these stinkin' woods 'e'd likely turn in a circle without 'is knowin' it. They all does.

LEM (peremptorily)
S-s-s-h-h!

(The report of several rifles sounds from the forest, followed a second later by savage, exultant yells. The beating of the tom-tom abruptly ceases. Lem looks up at the white man with a grin of satisfaction.)

We kotch him. Him dead.

SMITHERS (with a snarl)
'Ow d'yer know it's 'im an' 'ow d'yer know 'e's dead?

LEM
My men's dey got 'um silver bullets. Dey kill him shore.

SMITHERS (astonished)
They got silver bullets?

LEM
Lead bullet no kill him. He got um strong charm. I took um money, make um silver bullet, make um strong charm, too.

SMITHERS (light breaking upon him)
So that's wot you was up to all night, wot? You was scared to put after 'im till you'd molded silver bullets, eh?
LEM (simply stating a fact)
Yes. Him got strong charm. Lead no good.
SMITHERS (slapping his thigh and guffawing)
Haw-haw! If yer don’t beat al ’ell! (Then recovering himself—scornfully) I’ll bet you it ain’t ’im they shot at all, yer bleedin’ looney!
LEM (calmly)
Dey come bring him now.
(The soldiers come out of the forest, carrying Jones’ limp body. There is a little reddish-purple hole under his left breast. He is dead. They carry him to Lem, who examines his body with great satisfaction. Smithers leans over his shoulder—in a tone of frightened awe:)
Well, they did for yer right enough, Jonesy, me lad! Dead as a ’erring! (Mockingly) Where’s yer ’igh an’ mighty airs now, yer bloomin’ Majesty? (Then with a grin) Silver bullets! Gawd blimey, but yer died in the ’eight o’ style, any’ow!
(Lem makes a motion to the soldiers to carry the body out left. Smithers speaks to him sneeringly)
SMITHERS
And I s’pose you think it’s yer bleedin’ charms and yer silly beatin’ the drum that made ’im run in a circle when ’e’d lost ’imself, don’t yer? (But Lem makes no reply, does not seem to hear the question, walks out left after his men. Smithers looks after him with contemptuous scorn.) Stupid as ’ogs, the lot of ’em! Blarsted niggers!
CURTAIN FALLS
54
America’s Greatest Playwright

EUGENE O’NEILL

Mr. O’Neill’s position as the most distinguished American playwright seems so indisputably secure that the announcement of a new volume of his plays is considered a notable event in literary and dramatic circles.

*Just published:*

**THE EMPEROR JONES**
(in eight scenes)
A study of the psychology of fear and of race superstition.

**DIFF’RENT** (in two acts)
The story of a sex-starved woman.

**THE STRAW** (in three acts)
To be produced in the fall of 1921, this play is unlike anything else Mr. O’Neill has written.

The above remarkable plays, all in one volume (about 300 pages).

$2.00 everywhere.

*In uniform binding:*

**BEYOND THE HORIZON**
(in three acts)

$1.75

**THE MOON OF THE CARIBBEES**

and six other plays of the sea; Bound East for Cardiff, The Long Voyage Home, In the Zone, Ile, Where the Cross Is Made, The Rope.  

$1.75

*In preparation:*

**GOLD:** A play in four acts

101 West 40th Street

BONI & LIVERIGHT  MODERN LIBRARY NEW YORK
European Theories of the Drama

By BARRETT H. CLARK

An Anthology of Dramatic Theory and Criticism from Aristotle to the present day, in a series of selected texts, with Commentaries, Biographies and Bibliographies.

A book of paramount importance. This monumental anthology assembles for the first time the epoch-making theories and criticisms of the drama from the beginnings in Greece to the present, and each excerpt is chosen with reference to its effect on subsequent dramatic writing. The texts alone are immensely valuable, and the comments constitute a history of dramatic criticism.

It is the most important body of doctrine on the drama to be obtained, appeals to all who are interested in the theatre and is indispensable to students.

The introduction to each section of the book is followed by an exhaustive bibliography. Each writer whose work is represented is made the subject of a brief biography. The entire volume is rendered doubly valuable by the index, which is worked out in great detail.

Contributors to the Success of this Volume:

Aristotle Moliere Goethe
Horace Racine Schlegel
Donatus Boileau Hebbel
Dante Saint-Evremond Wagner
Daniello Dryden Freytag
Minturno Milton Hugo
Scaliger Rymer Dumas fils
Sebillet Congreve Zola
De la Taille Farquhar Brunetiere
Cervantes Addison Maeterlinck
Lope de Vega Johnson Coleridge
Tirso de Molina Goldsmith Lamb
Sidney Goldoni Hazlitt
Jonson Lessing Pinero
Ogier Voltaire Jones
Chapelain Diderot Shaw
Abbe d’Aubignac Beaumarchais Archer
Corneille Schiller

Large 8vo, 500 pages . . . . . . . Net $5.00
3/4 Brown Turkey Morocco . . . . Net $12.00
Fifty Contemporary One-Act Plays
Edited by
FRANK SHAY and PIERRE LOVING

THIS volume contains FIFTY REPRESENTATIVE ONE-ACT PLAYS of the MODERN THEATER, chosen from the dramatic works of contemporary writers all over the world and is the second volume in the Stewart Kidd Dramatic Anthologies, the first being European Theories of the Drama, by Barrett H. Clark, which has been so enthusiastically received.

The editors have scrupulously sifted countless plays and have selected the best available in English. One-half the plays have never before been published in book form; thirty-one are no longer available in any other edition.

The work satisfies a long-felt want for a handy collection of the choicest plays produced by the art theaters all over the world. It is a complete repertory for a little theater, a volume for the study of the modern drama, a representative collection of the world's best short plays.

CONTENTS

AUSTRIA
Schnitzler (Arthur)—Literature

BELGIUM
Maeterlinck (Maurice)—The Intruder

BOLIVIA
More (Federico)—Interlude

FRANCE
Ancy (George)—M. Lamblin
Porto-Riche (Georges)—Francoise's Luck

GERMANY
Ettinger (Karl)—Altruism
von Hofmannsthal (Hugo)—Madonna Dianora
Wedekind (Frank)—The Tenor

GREAT BRITAIN
Bennett (Arnold)—A Good Woman
Calderon (George)—The Little Stone House.
Cannan (Gilbert)—Mary's Wedding
Dowson (Ernest)—The Pierrot of the Minute.
Ellis (Mrs. Havelock)—The Subjection of Kezia
Hankin (St. John)—The Constant Lover

INDIA
Mukerji (Dhan Gopal)—The Judgment of Indra

IRELAND
Gregory (Lady)—The Workhouse Ward

HOLLAND
Speenhoff (J. H.)—Louise

HUNGARY
Biro (Lajos)—The Grandmother

ITALY
Giocosa (Giuseppe)—The Rights of the Soul

RUSSIA
Andreyev (Leonid)—Love of One's Neighbor
Tchékoff (Anton)—The Boor

SPAIN
Benevente (Jacinto)—His Widow's Husband
Quinteros (Serafina and Joaquin Alverez)—A Sunny Morning

SWEDEN
Strindberg (August)—The Creditor
Wied (Gustave)—Autumn Fires

UNITED STATES
Beach (Lewis)—Brothers
Cowan (Sada)—In the Morgue
Crocker (Rosworth)—The Baby Carriage
Cronyn (George W.)—A Death in Fever Flat
Davies (Mary Carolin)—The Slave with Two Faces
Day (Frederick L.)—The Slump
Flanner (Hildegarde)—Mansions
Gaspell (Susan)—Trifles
Gerstenberg (Alice)—The Pot Boiler
Helburn (Theresa)—Enter the Hero
Hudson (Holland)—The Shepherd in the Distance
Kemp (Harry)—Boccaccio's Untold Tale
Langner (Lawrence)—Another Way Out
MacMillan (Mary)—The Shadowed Star
Millay (Edna St. Vincent)—Aro da Capo
Moeller (Philip)—Helena's Husband
O'Neill (Eugene)—Ile
Stevens (Thomas Wood)—The Nursery Maid of Heaven
Stevens (Wallace)—Three Travelers Watch a Sunrise
Tompkins (Frank G.)—Sham
Walker (Stuart)—The Medicine Show
Wellman (Rita)—For All Time
Wilde (Percival)—The Finger of God

YIDDISH
Ash (Sholom)—Night
Pinsky (David)—Forgotten Souls

Large 8vo, 585 pages. Net, $5.00

Send for Complete Dramatic Catalogue

STEWART KIDD COMPANY
PUBLISHERS,
CINCINNATI, U. S. A.
# STEWART KIDD DRAMATIC PUBLICATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Truth About the Theater</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>$1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Theories of the Drama</td>
<td>Barrett H. Clark</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary French Dramatists</td>
<td>Barrett H. Clark</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Plays of the Free Theater</td>
<td>Barrett H. Clark</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Provincetown Plays</td>
<td>Geo. Cram Cook &amp; Frank Shay</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Two Cromwells</td>
<td>Liddell DeLasseline</td>
<td>$1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plays and Players</td>
<td>Walter Prichard Eaton</td>
<td>$3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Antigone of Sophocles</td>
<td>Prof. Jos. Edward Harry</td>
<td>$1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Changing Drama</td>
<td>Archibald Henderson</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Dramatists</td>
<td>Archibald Henderson</td>
<td>$3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Bernard Shaw: His Life and Works</td>
<td>Archibald Henderson</td>
<td>$7.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifty Contemporary One Act Plays</td>
<td>Compiled by Pierre Loving &amp; Frank Shay</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Plays</td>
<td>Mary MacMillan</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Short Plays</td>
<td>Mary MacMillan</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gift</td>
<td>Margaret Douglas Rogers</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comedies of Words and Other Plays</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur Schnitzler, Translated by Pierre Loving</td>
<td>August Strindberg</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucky Peer</td>
<td>August Strindberg</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easter</td>
<td>August Strindberg</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hamlet Problem and its Solution</td>
<td>Emerson Venable</td>
<td>$1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portmanteau Plays</td>
<td>Stuart Walker, net</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Portmanteau Plays</td>
<td>Stuart Walker, net</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portmanteau Adaptations</td>
<td>Stuart Walker, net</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Stewart Kidd Modern Plays**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mansions</td>
<td>Hildegarde Flanner</td>
<td>$.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Shepherd in the Distance</td>
<td>Holland Hudson</td>
<td>$.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearts to Mend</td>
<td>H. A. Overstreet</td>
<td>$.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sham</td>
<td>Frank G. Tompkins</td>
<td>$.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil</td>
<td>Stuart Walker</td>
<td>$.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Others to Follow