

PLAYS OF THE SEASON

BY JOHN E. WEBBER

MORE than ordinary interest attaches to the announcement of a new play from the pen of Mr. Augustus Thomas. He is an expert craftsman; his dramaturgic skill is of the highest; his graceful lines go to the heart of his theme like winged arrows, and an intellectual interest, subsidiary, but carefully interwoven with his story, is invariably provided. Through an ability also to establish remote and underlying relations of events to one another he can often make complex that which might otherwise be simple and out of the intricacies of his own mental processes weave some new and interesting pattern of life. He has done all these things in his new play, "As a Man Thinks." Quick, incisive drawing of character, swift development of action, the skilful unfolding of a leading situation involved in minor complications characterise the opening acts. He has projected a very ordinary dramatic situation, it is true, but he projects it with uncommon skill. He has provoked discussion of an old and somewhat vexatious theme—a common standard of morality for both sexes. But the discussion quickly broadens, frees itself from the incidental and becomes a phase of modern life, with its feverish unrest and impatience of conventional standards. A background of Judaism gives a further effect of breadth and a feeling for strong contrast. Like hurrying clouds that presage a storm, we feel during the first two acts the gathering of forces big, with promise of a mighty con-

flict of race ideals: Judaism, with its inexorable moral laws, its passionate devotion to the family unit on one side, and enlightened, but highly dangerous, modern morality on the other. But these larger promises and expectations are not to be realised. The armies so skilfully marshalled are withdrawn or melt away like mists at sunrise. The conflict slowly contracts to rage within the four walls of ordinary human experience, while time-honoured dramatic expedients are invoked to bridge a casual domestic gulf. In the final adjustment, an irate husband is convinced of his wife's innocence and the paternity of his child through a melancholy alibi. The penitent, sorrowful wife, forgetting the issue she has raised of "one morality for both sexes" pleads for a Santa Claus for their child, and to the chime of Christmas bells the peace of the belligerent pair is made.

The author had no doubt in mind the possible influence of the Jew on the home life of America. His protagonist is a very estimable, high-minded and worldly-wise Jewish physician, *Doctor Seelig*. As the physician and friend of the wealthy *Clayton* family, whose domestic breach furnishes the dramatic theme, he is in the complete confidence of both. He has been aware of the husband's gaieties in Paris and of the wife's mental tortures in consequence. He is the first to know of the wife's indiscretion when in a moment of mad jealous rage she visits the apartment of a former sweetheart. He is the