

# CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN DRAMA

*Committee:* Kenneth Macgowan, Chairman; Owen Davis, Jesse Lynch Williams, Alexander Woolcott.

## Fourth Group

### JAMES FORBES

*The Famous Mrs. Fair* } Included in *The Famous Mrs. Fair and*  
*The Chorus Lady* } *Other Plays.* DORAN.

James Forbes is a technician of recognized abilities; in the racy dialogue of "The Chorus Lady" he showed his greatest originality. In "The Famous Mrs. Fair" he essayed the problem play and produced a piece of delicacy and insight. He is a careful workman. What he lacks in spontaneity he achieves in technique. Mr. Forbes was born in Salem, Ontario, Canada, but is an American citizen. He has been actor, dramatic critic, and press representative. Like the other men in this group, he knows his theatre and loves it.

"In the thirteen years which elapsed between the composition of those two plays ['The Chorus Lady' and 'The Famous Mrs. Fair'], it is quite evident that Mr. Forbes considerably deepened his conception of what he means by 'character', moving from the superficial to the fundamental, from externals to internals, from mannerisms to manners. He has thus moved from a play which

suffers severely under the test of print to one which can meet the test with the assurance born of a reasoned reflection on life and human motives. One wishes that from this individual case, he could draw an analogy taking in the whole field of American drama; that he could say it is with all our playwrights as it is with Mr. Forbes."—Walter Prichard Eaton in his Introduction to *The Famous Mrs. Fair and Other Plays*.

"What first strikes the attentive reader of Mr. Forbes's handsome volume is the poverty of observation. Two of the three plays deal with the little theatrical world in which he has been busy for twenty years. Yet he has not seen that world directly at all. The superficial bits of verisimilitude are pure veneer. Nature is hard to reach even for those who see her. To Mr. Forbes her face, like that of the idol Sais, is veiled."—Ludwig Lewisohn, NATION, December 29, 1920.

#### REFERENCE:

The Plays of James Forbes. AMERICAN MAGAZINE, November, 1910.