Bought and Paid For, by Mr. George Broadhurst, is the best play of the present autumn season in New York, because it seems the most plausible while it is being witnessed in the theatre, and because it most successfully endures a subsequent thinking-over in comparison with life. It tells a story that the auditor may readily believe; it sets forth a quartette of characters drawn with rare fidelity to nature; and it is written in an easy, natural vernacular that has the tang of actual conversation.

"Bought and Paid For"

A millionaire named Robert Stafford falls in love with a telephone-girl named Virginia Blaine and asks her to marry him. She is not certain that she loves him; but he is a man of indubitable ability and unusual personal charm, and she accepts him. Her marriage results not only in her own advancement but also in that of her sister and her prospective brother-in-law. The latter is a shipping-clerk who has been worrying along on a salary of fourteen dollars a week. He is devoid of any business ability, but deludes himself with the belief that he is endowed potentially with a genius for finance and is destined to enjoy a rosy future. Stafford, who sees that he is worthless, creates for him a gratuitous position with a salary of a hundred dollars a week; and, thus endowed, the shipping-clerk is enabled to marry the sister of Virginia.

Virginia herself is fairly happy in her married life for a year or two; but her husband has a habit of convivial drinking at midnight, and, when intoxicated, annoys her with unwelcome amorous advances. One evening, being drunk, he approaches her with a violence of amatory passion against which she disgustedly rebels; and when she repels him, he insults her by telling her that she is helplessly his because she has been bought and paid for. She flees to her own bed-room and locks the door. Her thwarted and infuriated husband smashes a panel of the door and makes his way to her. This scene has apparently been borrowed from Brieux's *Maternity;* but it is none the less real in Mr. Broadhurst's representation.

The next morning the husband is humbly penitent for his brutality; but, in a sincere and well-studied dialogue which recalls the last act of *A Doll's House*, Virginia tells him that she can no longer live beneath his roof, but must go back to the working world alone. In the last act she is living with her sister and her brother-in-law—the latter of whom has, of course, lost his artificially created position and is again toiling restively for a very meagre salary. In this setting, Stafford, after several months of consistent and continuous repentance, comes to reclaim his wife; and Virginia, convinced at last that his love for her is genuine, rejoins him.

This play attains its climax at the end of the second of four acts, instead of at the termination of the third, as in the usual well-made four-act play. The third act lets down the action to a logical conclusion; and the fourth act can be regarded only as an epilogue. But this technical defect of structure is covered up by the reality of Mr. Broadhurst's characterisation. His people are alive. The hero and the heroine are both drawn with that intimate understanding that is synonymous with sympathy; but it is, perhaps, the part of the shallow-minded and ambitious shipping-clerk that most emphatically convinces the audience of absolute reality. This subsidiary character is very fully drawn, and constitutes a genuine contribution to the growing portrait-gallery of our American drama.