

CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN DRAMA

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

Ninth Group

The poetic drama — poets turned prose dramatists — has had several excellent exponents in America. Among those whose biographies are not included here should be mentioned: Sidney Howard, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Arthur Davison Ficke, Hermann Hagedorn, Olive Tilford Dargan.

CALE YOUNG RICE

David. In *Collected Poems and Plays*.
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE.
A Night in Avignon. In the same collection.

In spite of the discouragement which meets the way of the poetic dramatist, this American poet has steadily produced poetic plays throughout his career. They are filled with dignity of action and beauty of line. This is perhaps not the age in which a dramatist of his particular genre finds large audiences, but his is a noble and a dignified output.

Cale Young Rice was born at Dixon, Kentucky, in 1872, was educated at Cumberland University and at Harvard, and has followed the profession of letters throughout his life. He is a member of the National Institute of Social Sciences.

"Among the recent group of dramatic poets, Mr. Cale Young Rice . . . has done excellent work, particularly worthy of comment on its architectonic side. Mr. Rice has an instinctive sense of dramatic

relations; his dramas move by first intent and unity of word and action is admirably maintained. His work is not without its immaturities." — PUTMAN'S, June, 1907.

"Though brief, and slight in detail, as a one-act play must necessarily be, it [*A Night in Avignon*] is nevertheless so vivid and the fusion is so complete between the dialogue and action that it embraces in small compass all the essentials of the drama." — Jessie B. Rittenhouse, NEW YORK TIMES, April 6, 1907.

"Viewing Mr. Rice's plays as a whole, I should say his prime virtue is fecundity or affluence, the power to conceive and combine events resourcefully, and an abundance of pointed phrases which recalls and half restores the tradition of the great Elizabethans. His aptitude for structure is great, too great, indeed, for the chastened contours of poetic drama; he tends to structural ingenuities and virtuosities, which make the third act of 'Charles di

Tosca' exotic and the corresponding act in 'David' even puerile. His blank verse seems tentative and inchoate; crude indeed, but livingly crude, showing both the rudeness and the tingle that accompany experiment. There is as yet no real success in characterization." — O. W. Firkins, NATION, July 29, 1915.

"It is good to find such sincere and beautiful work as in the two volumes of 'Collected Poems and Plays' that gather together the earlier small books by Cale Young Rice. Here is a writer content to write of what seems to him worthy and with no wish to purchase fame at the price of eccentricity of form or subject. He lives up to his theory that the path of American literature lies not in distinctively local lines but will be more and more cosmopolitan since America is built of all civilizations. . . 'David', the drama of the shepherd king's career, is intensely interesting and vivid; more living tho not more picturesque than the Renaissance plays. In a collection one may trace the gain in workmanship as between 'Charles di Tosca' and 'Porzia' for instance, but for sustained power, compression and tragic meaning 'A Night in Avignon' is as yet Mr. Rice's finest work." — INDEPENDENT, May 17, 1915.

REFERENCES:

- Recent Volumes of Verse. O. W. Firkins, NATION, July 29, 1915.
Sketch of Cale Young Rice. A. S. Henry, ILLUSTRATED BOOK NEWS, October, 1909.