

tagious verve and vigour, and the dialogue is written with a real feeling for that particular type of humour that has been recognised as definitively American since the days of Benjamin Franklin.

"WHAT HAPPENED AT 22"

In *What Happened at 22*, Mr. Paul Wilstach marred an interesting melodrama by beginning his play too early in the sequence of events which made up his narrative material. The last act was undeniably dramatic; but it was preceded by two acts of preparation that seemed laborious and dull.

A notorious forger secures employment as a valet in the house of a famous lawyer who has been retained to track him down. The author deemed it necessary to devote two entire acts to an explanation of the circumstances which made it possible for the forger thus to spy upon his enemy; and this technical decision was fatal to the play.

When the lawyer is about to discover the identity of the criminal, the valet kills him. In the last act of the melodrama, the valet contrives to cast suspicion of the murder on the dead man's son, until, by a sudden subterfuge of the heroine's, he is betrayed into an involuntary gesture which reveals his own guilt. This last act was skilfully constructed; but its interest was discounted by the fact that the audience had been kept waiting for it through two acts which were not interesting in themselves.

"THE PRODIGAL HUSBAND"

The Prodigal Husband, by Dario Niccodemi and Michael Morton, is a singularly inefficient play. When the curtain falls upon the first act, no reasons have been afforded to make the audience desire to see the second; and the second act is equally deficient in finger-pointing passages to make the audience look forward to the third. The structure of the play is full of gaps and holes.

A prodigal husband, who is separated from his wife, finds a little girl thrust upon his hands by the death of her

"IT PAYS TO ADVERTISE"

It is apparent from *It Pays to Advertise*, which was written by Mr. Megrue in collaboration with Walter Hackett, that Mr. Megrue is determined to overturn the technical tradition that it is dangerous, and usually fatal, to deceive the audience. In this play, time and time again, the audience is led to form an opinion of the motives which actuate the characters in a given situation, only to have that opinion suddenly overturned by some subsequent and unexpected revelation. It must be admitted that this insistence on the interest of sheer surprise is entirely successful in *It Pays to Advertise*; but it should also be noted that the play is a farce, and that untraditional antics which are entertaining in a farce are not thereby proved available for more serious and earnest types of drama.

A word must be appended in praise of the rich Americanism of the humour of *It Pays to Advertise*. There is nothing novel in its story of an inexperienced son who sets out to defeat his wealthy father in a business campaign and succeeds by the sheer audacity with which he advertises a product that he is unprepared to manufacture without his father's assistance; but this story is told with a con-

mother, who has been his concierge. He adopts the child and brings her up; but, when the girl has grown to be a woman, he finds himself accused of harbouring her as his mistress. This suggestion so works upon his nerves that he proposes to elope with her. The girl takes fright and runs away to seek shelter with his wife. Pursuing the girl, the prodigal husband meets his wife for the first time in many years; and, finding her more beautiful than he had remembered, he becomes reconciled with her and resumes his erstwhile fatherly relation with the daughter of the concierge.

In this story, there is material for two or three different plays, any of which might have been worked out rigorously in a compacted pattern; but the narrative as set forth by the authors is loose and incoherent.