

D. H. LAWRENCE



TOUCH AND GO

D. H. LAWRENCE



TOUCH AND GO

D. H. Lawrence

Touch and Go

A Play in Three Acts

EAN 8596547051138

DigiCat, 2022

Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info



TABLE OF CONTENTS

[PREFACE](#)

[CHARACTERS](#)

[TOUCH AND GO](#)

[ACT I](#)

[ACT II](#)

[ACT III](#)

PREFACE

[Table of Contents](#)

A nice phrase: "A People's Theatre." But what about it? There's no such thing in existence as a People's Theatre: or even on the way to existence, as far as we can tell. The name is chosen, the baby isn't even begotten: nay, the would-be parents aren't married, nor yet courting.

A People's Theatre. Note the indefinite article. It isn't The People's Theatre, but A People's Theatre. Not the theatre of Plebs, the proletariat, but the theatre of A People. What people? Quel peuple donc?—A People's Theatre. Translate it into French for yourself.

A People's Theatre. Since we can't produce it, let us deduce it. Major premise: the seats are cheap. Minor premiss: the plays are good. Conclusion: A People's Theatre. How much will you give me for my syllogism? Not a slap in the eye, I hope.

We stick to our guns. The seats are cheap. That has a nasty proletarian look about it. But appearances are deceptive. The proletariat isn't poor. Everybody is poor except Capital and Labour. Between these upper and nether millstones great numbers of decent people are squeezed.

The seats are cheap: in decency's name. Nobody wants to swank, to sit in the front of a box like a geranium on a window-sill—"the cynosure of many eyes." Nobody wants to profiteer. We all feel that it is as humiliating to pay high prices as to charge them. No man consents in his heart to pay high prices unless he feels that what he pays with his right hand he will get back with his left, either out of the

pocket of a man who isn't looking, or out of the envy of the poor neighbour who IS looking, but can't afford the figure. The seats are cheap. Why should A People, fabulous and lofty giraffe, want to charge or pay high prices? If it were THE PEOPLE now.—But it isn't. It isn't Plebs, the proletariat. The seats are cheap.

The plays are good. Pah!—this has a canting smell. Any play is good to the man who likes to look at it. And at that rate Chu Chin Chow is extra-super-good. What about your GOOD plays? Whose good? PFUI to your goodness!

That minor premiss is a bad egg: it will hatch no bird. Good plays? You might as well say mimsy bomtittle plays, you'd be saying as much. The plays are—don't say good or you'll be beaten. The plays—the plays of A People's Theatre are—oh heaven, what are they?—not popular nor populous nor plebian nor proletarian nor folk nor parish plays. None of that adjectival spawn.

The only clue-word is People's for all that. A People's—Chaste word, it will bring forth no adjective. The plays of A People's Theatre are People's plays. The plays of A People's Theatre are plays about people.

It doesn't look much, at first sight. After all—people! Yes, People! Not THE PEOPLE, *i.e.* Plebs, nor yet the Upper Ten. People. Neither Piccoli nor Grandi in our republic. People.

People, ah God! Not mannequins. Not lords nor proletariats nor bishops nor husbands nor co-respondents nor virgins nor adultresses nor uncles nor noses. Not even white rabbits nor presidents. People.

Men who are somebody, not men who are something. Men who HAPPEN to be bishops or co-respondents, women

who happen to be chaste, just as they happen to freckle, because it's one of their innumerable odd qualities. Even men who happen, by the way, to have long noses. But not noses on two legs, not burly pairs of gaiters, stuffed and voluble, not white meringues of chastity, not incarnations of co-responsibility. Not proletariats, petitioners, president's, noses, bits of fluff. Heavens, what an assortment of bits! And aren't we sick of them!

People, I say. And after all, it's saying something. It's harder to be a human being than to be a president or a bit of fluff. You can be a president, or a bit of fluff, or even a nose, by clockwork. Given a role, a PART, you can play it by clockwork. But you can't have a clockwork human being.

We're dead sick of parts. It's no use your protesting that there is a man behind the nose. We can't see him, and he can't see himself. Nothing but nose. Neither can you make us believe there is a man inside the gaiters. He's never showed his head yet.

It may be, in real life, the gaiters wear the man, as the nose wears Cyrano. It may be Sir Auckland Geddes and Mr. J. H. Thomas are only clippings from the illustrated press. It may be that a miner is a complicated machine for cutting coal and voting on a ballot-paper. It may be that coal-owners are like the *petit bleu* arrangement, a system of vacuum tubes for whooshing Bradburys about from one to the other.

It may be that everybody delights in bits, in parts, that the public insists on noses, gaiters, white rabbits, bits of fluff, automata and gewgaws. If they do, then let 'em. Chu Chin Chow for ever!

In spite of them all: A People's Theatre. A People's Theatre shows men, and not parts. Not bits, nor bundles of bits. A whole bunch of roles tied into one won't make an individual. Though gaiters perish, we will have men.

Although most miners may be pick-cum-shovel-cum-ballot implements, and no more, still, among miners there must be two or three living individuals. The same among the masters. The majority are suction-tubes for Bradburys. But in this Sodom of Industrialism there are surely ten men, all told. My poor little withered grain of mustard seed, I am half afraid to take you across to the seed-testing department!

And if there are men, there is A People's Theatre.

How many tragic situations did Goethe say were possible? Something like thirty-two. Which seems a lot. Anyhow, granted that men are men still, that not all of them are bits, parts, machine-sections, then we have added another tragic possibility to the list: the Strike situation. As yet no one tackles this situation. It is a sort of Medusa head, which turns—no, not to stone, but to sloppy treacle. Mr. Galsworthy had a peep, and sank down towards bathos.

Granted that men are still men, Labour v. Capitalism is a tragic struggle. If men are no more than implements, it is non-tragic and merely disastrous. In tragedy the man is more than his part. Hamlet is more than Prince of Denmark, Macbeth is more than murderer of Duncan. The man is caught in the wheels of his part, his fate, he may be torn asunder. He may be killed, but the resistant, integral soul in him is not destroyed. He comes through, though he dies. He goes through with his fate, though death swallows him. And it is in this facing of fate, this going right through with it,

that tragedy lies. Tragedy is not disaster. It is a disaster when a cart-wheel goes over a frog, but it is not a tragedy, not the hugest; not the death of ten million men. It is only a cartwheel going over a frog. There must be a supreme STRUGGLE.

In Shakespeare's time it was the people *versus* king storm that was brewing. Majesty was about to have its head off. Come what might, Hamlet and Macbeth and Goneril and Regan had to see the business through.

Now a new wind is getting up. We call it Labour *versus* Capitalism. We say it is a mere material struggle, a money-grabbing affair. But this is only one aspect of it. In so far as men are merely mechanical, the struggle is one which, though it may bring disaster and death to millions, is no more than accident, an accidental collision of forces. But in so far as men are men, the situation is tragic. It is not really the bone we are fighting for. We are fighting to have somebody's head off. The conflict is in pure, passionate antagonism, turning upon the poles of belief. Majesty was only *hors d'oeuvres* to this tragic repast.

So, the strike situation has this dual aspect. First it is a mechanico-material struggle, two mechanical forces pulling asunder from the central object, the bone. All it can result in is the pulling asunder of the fabric of civilisation, and even of life, without any creative issue. It is no more than a frog under a cart-wheel. The mechanical forces, rolling on, roll over the body of life and squash it.

The second is the tragic aspect. According to this view, we see more than two dogs fighting for a bone, and life hopping under the juggernaut wheel. The two dogs are