

# Barrie, Saddened by the War, Writes Little Now

Famous Author of 'Peter Pan' Is More Shy and Elusive Than Ever Since the Struggle Began—Supports a Hospital in France

By Joyce Kilmer.

**W**HEN Sir James Matthew Barrie was last in this country (he came here to see Charles Frohman in 1914) he was dissatisfied with his suite in the Knickerbocker and changed to rooms in another part of the hotel. His reason for doing this was that from the window of the quarters first assigned to him he could not get a good view of the electrical scoreboard on the Times Building. The world's series was being played, and the author of "Peter Pan" spent many hours breathlessly watching the ball of light speed across the mimic diamond.

This revelation of Barrie as a baseball "fan" is one of many interesting intimate views of the great Scotch writer obtained by one of the very few Americans who have penetrated beyond the barriers of Barrie's shyness—Isaac F. Marcossou, the biographer of Charles Frohman. No one in this country (with the possible exception of Frohman) knew why the distinguished visitor changed his rooms or that he was interested in baseball. Except for a visit to Colonel Roosevelt at Oyster Bay, and his business conferences, Barrie succeeded in living an almost hermit-like life in the very heart of New York City.

And in London and in his native Scotland Barrie has always been as shy and elusive as he was in New York. When he was in the United States, according to a story he told Mr. Marcossou, only one interview with him appeared in a newspaper, and that interview he himself wrote without seeing a reporter. That newspaper was THE NEW YORK TIMES. In London it is impossible to interview him; it is difficult for his friends and for people who have business dealings with him to find his whereabouts, or, having located him, to get by his formidable Scotch butler.

Mr. Marcossou took from a file a number of almost illegible notes.

"You know," he said, with a smile, "there was keen competition between Barrie and Charles Frohman as to which wrote the more illegible hand. But with patience and practice it is possible to decipher most of Barrie's letters. Let me read this one, which shows how the war has affected him:

"I have been a week in bed and am not sure when I shall be right again, not that it much matters (for if we are not fighting we are mere cumberers of the ground.) This is just to say that I should be proud to have my words on Mr. Frohman printed, as you say. Also possibly I might add something if I saw the latter part before the book appeared. My admiration and affection for him increase as the days go by, and your early chapters add to these feelings—they are very true and real. Phone to me to see you here, and I hope to see you in the same chair again."

I asked Mr. Marcossou how he found Sir James had been affected by the long tragedy through which his country is passing.

"I found him much saddened," he said. "Barrie is not writing much—in fact, none of the great English authors are producing much work these days. They, like all the rest of England, are roused to the tremendous meaning and significance of the great struggle. It has bitten into their very souls. Men like Pinero are recruiting regiments; Sir Gilbert Parker is the official press agent of the British cause; Arnold Bennett is doing publicity work for the war loan.

"Barrie is supporting a hospital in France, but so great is his dislike for personal advertisement that his name is not even associated with it. So far as the public is concerned, it goes under the name of E. V. Lucas of Punch. Since the war Barrie has only written two important things: 'Der Tag,' a fantastic one-act play which appeared in THE TIMES and a delicate farce called 'A Kiss for Cinderella,' which Miss Adams is to do in this country next month. He wrote

this last work mainly to distract his mind from the horrors he had seen in France. He also wrote an amusing skit on 'Macbeth' for the films, which was shown at a war benefit in London.

"If anything, the war has made Barrie more shy, more elusive, more self-effacing.

"Last Summer, when I was in England getting material for a series of magazine articles about 'The War After the War,' I saw Barrie again. He had

of Henley and of Frohman. Alice, Henley's little daughter, was a favorite of Barrie's, and she tried to call him 'Friendly,' but the nearest she could get to it was 'Wendy.' She died, so Barrie has given enduring glory to the name her childish lips created. Nothing could be more Barriesque.

"Barrie lives in his little flat in Adelphi Terrace, with his butler and his housekeeper. Joseph Pennell lives upstairs, and often his neighbors, Shaw



James M. Barrie.

just brought 'The Professor's Love Story' up to date and had come to town for a few days to rehearse it. I found that he has a curious affection for this play. Perhaps one reason is that, unconsciously, it has so much of himself in it. Another is that it was his first real success on the stage.

"Barrie does not talk much about his work. I asked him one night if he had any manuscript that I might have. He replied that he never saved them. 'Surely,' I said, 'you must have something.' He went to his desk, rummaged through a great mass of papers and dug out the complete manuscript of his play 'Half an Hour,' written in ink on narrow sheets of paper. He gave this to me. I asked him who was the fortunate possessor of the manuscript of 'Peter Pan,' and he said that Maude Adams had it.

"I have said that Barrie was saddened. The chief reason for this is the effect which the war has had on all thinking men in England. But Barrie has also had personal contact with the war. He goes out to his hospital in France, and what he sees there inflicts new wounds on his tender heart. The boy for whom he wrote 'Peter Pan'—the original, indeed, of 'Peter Pan'—has died in battle. This was the little boy who, through the kindly intervention of Charles Frohman, saw a special performance of 'Peter Pan' in his bedroom, because he was ill when the play had its first London performance.

"Speaking of 'Peter Pan,' I learned something else of interest in connection with that immortal play. Barrie told it with great feeling. It was the origin of the name Wendy, the Little Mother of the play. William Ernest Henley was a close friend of Barrie. The only portraits one notices in the Barrie study are those

felt Frohman's loss more and more."

continued Mr. Marcossou. "Indeed, I found that Frohman's memory today is cherished more in England than in the United States. There is a memorial fountain for him at Marlow-on-Thames, the sleepy little English town that he loved so well. In England, Charles Frohman has become a tradition and for that reason he will always live. In the United States he will be only a name and in the swift and merciless march of Broadway events he is likely to be forgotten.

"Barrie, with his queer little cap and his eternal big black pipe, has an extraordinary place in the affections of the English people. I was interested to find how greatly he admired James Lane Allen, whose book, 'A Kentucky Cardinal,' is one of his American favorites. It is worth while saying, too, that in the group of active contemporary English authors—men like Wells, Galsworthy, Arnold Bennett, and others with whom I came in contact—there is great interest in three American writers. They acclaim Allen as a great nature realist, and they look upon Theodore Dreiser as a great sex realist. With these men and others there is unrestrained admiration for the late David Graham Phillips, whom they regard as the frank and unafraid chronicler of modern American life. They feel that if Phillips had lived to realize his full destiny he would have become the greatest American novelist.

"One day I asked Barrie how he first met George Meredith, for whom he had one of the closest friendships of his life and in whose memory he wrote a little classic. In reply he told me an interesting story, which has never, so far as I know, appeared in print. He said:

"I was a reporter on a Nottingham newspaper when I was a young man, and one day I resigned and came to London to make my fortune by writing. I had always admired George Meredith, and the first article I ever sold was an essay on his work. With the money I received for it I first paid my room rent and then went to Dorking to see Meredith.

"I hid behind a bush on the grounds of his house—I had no letter to Meredith nor did he know of my existence—and from this coign of vantage I saw the great novelist being wheeled out in his big chair for his afternoon sunning. His sharp eyes caught sight of me in spite of my leafy concealment, and he waved his stick imperiously to bid me draw near. I found myself face to face with the man I adored. Thus began one of the most affectionate friendships of my life. After this I often visited Meredith and read in manuscript nearly everything that he wrote."

Mr. Marcossou showed me an interesting picture of Meredith and Barrie taken together many years ago. "Perhaps some people thought it strange," he said, "for Barrie to accept a title. But as a matter of fact its acceptance implied no compromise on his part. It did not change him in the least, and now no one speaks to him or of him as Sir James. To his old friends he is always just Barrie."