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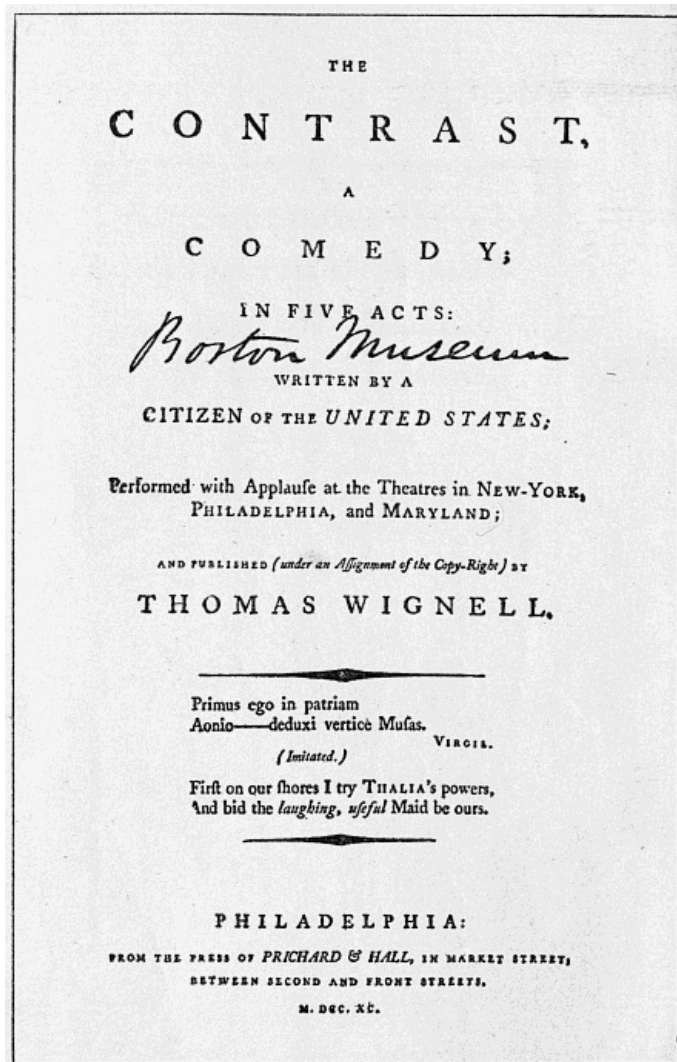
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FAC-SIMILE TITLE-PAGE OF THE FIRST EDITION
(From the Original, owned by Dr. F. W. Atkinson)

Representative Plays by American Dramatists

Edited, with an Introduction to Each Play

By **MONTROSE J. MOSES**

1765-1819

Illustrated with Portraits, and Original Title-Pages

BENJAMIN BLOM, INC.

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To

DR. FRED W. ATKINSON

In grateful recollection of his encouragement and aid in the preparation of this volume.

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INTRODUCTION

The present collection of "Representative Plays by American Dramatists" is the first of its kind to be offered to the general reader. In its scope, it covers a period from 1765-1911, and in its plan of selection, it strives to show the advance in playwriting during successive periods of American history.

Because of this scheme, the choice of plays for the Colonial and Revolutionary sections necessarily includes several which, while written for the stage, are not authentically located as far as production is concerned. There is no indication that Robert Rogers's "Ponteach" was ever

accepted by any of the theatrical companies of the time, and there is no positive proof that Mrs. Mercy Warren's "The Group" was ever done, although there are casual references to the fact that performances were given at Amboyme. Nor have we any right to believe that Samuel Low's "The Politician Out-witted" received other than scant treatment from the managers to whom it was submitted; it was published rather to please the readers of the closet drama. Nevertheless, it has been thought essential to include these plays because they are representative of the spirit of the times, and help to give a more comprehensive view of the subjects which were treated in dramatic form by the early American playwrights.

From the moment the American writer ceased to be an Englishman, and became fully aware of his national consciousness, American drama, following the trend of the development of American literature, began to feel its way for the proper expression of national characteristics.

And so, in the second and third volumes of this series, the reader will find plays which, while not wonderful in their literary value, are, nevertheless, very distinctive, as reflecting the theatrical tastes of the time, and the very crude, but none the less sincere, technical effort of the playwrights. All the dramas included in the second and third volumes have had their stage productions, and are thus representative of characteristics which mark the abilities of certain actors, whose claims to originality are found in the special types they created.

It has been the present editor's object so to arrange the successive order of these plays that the reader may not only be able to judge the change in stagecraft and technique, but, likewise, may note the change in social idea and in historical attitude toward certain subjects. For example, "The Contrast" contains the first American Stage Yankee—a model for a succession of Stage Yankees to follow. But, whereas Royall Tyler's *Jonathan* was not especially written to exploit the peculiar abilities of Mr. Wignell, the comedian, most of the Yankee plays of a later date were written to exploit the peculiar excellences of such actors as G. H. Hill and James H. Hackett.

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In no way can the reader better sense the change in social customs and ideals than by reading a series of plays written in successive generations and reflecting the varying customs of the time. In some respects "The Contrast" may be considered our very earliest drama of social manners, even though Royall Tyler was not over-successful in stamping the small talk of his women as being distinctively American. Rather is it the direct imitation—without the brilliancy—of the small talk in "The School for Scandal." But, nevertheless, "The Contrast" does attempt to deal with society in New York before the nineteenth century, and in Mrs. Mowatt's "Fashion," in Mrs. Bateman's "Self," in Bronson Howard's "Saratoga" (which has been published), in Clyde Fitch's "The Moth and the Flame," and in Langdon Mitchell's "The New York Idea," we are given a very significant and sharply defined panoramic view of the variations in moral and social attitudes.

The plays included in this series have very largely been selected because of their distinct American flavour. The majority of the dramas deal directly with American subjects. But it seemed unwise and unrepresentative to frame one's policy of selection too rigidly on that score. Had such a method been adhered to, many of the plays written for Edwin Forrest would have to be omitted from consideration. It would have been difficult, because of this stricture, to include representative examples of dramas by the Philadelphia and Knickerbocker schools of playwrights. Robert T. Conrad's "Jack Cade," John Howard Payne's "Brutus," George Henry Boker's "Francesca da Rimini," and Nathaniel P. Willis's "Tortosa, the Usurer," would thus have been ruled from the collection. Nevertheless are they representative plays by American dramatists. Another departure from the American atmosphere is in the case of Steele Mackaye; here in preference to "Hazel Kirke," I have selected "Paul Kauvar," farthest away from American life, inasmuch as it deals with Nihilism, but written at a time when there was a Nihilistic fever in New York City.

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No editor, attempting such a comprehensive collection as this, can be entirely successful in including everything which will enrich his original plan. There are always limitations placed upon him by the owners of copyrights, and by gaps in the development, due to loss of manuscripts. It was naturally my desire to have all the distinctive American playwrights represented in the present collection. Therefore, in justice, the omissions have to be indicated here, because they leave gaps in a development which it would have been well to offer unbroken and complete.

When the collection was first conceived, there was every indication that permission would be granted me to reproduce at least one of the Robert Montgomery Bird manuscripts, now owned by the University of Pennsylvania. Naturally, a collection of representative plays should include either Bird's "The Gladiator," or one of his other more or less oratorical and poetical pieces, written under the inspiration of Edwin Forrest. The intention to include John Augustus Stone's "Metamora" brought to light, after correspondence with the Forrest Home in Philadelphia, that either the manuscript of that play has irrevocably been destroyed, or else has been preserved so carefully that no one remotely connected with the actor Forrest has thus far been able to locate it. Only a few well remembered speeches and isolated scenes are seemingly left of a play which increased so largely the fame of Mr. Forrest.

In the selection of *types* my attention naturally became centered on the characters of *Colonel Mulberry Sellars*, and *Judge Bardwell Slote*, the former in a dramatization of "The Gilded Age," by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner, and the latter, in a play by Benjamin E. Woolf, called "The Mighty Dollar." Extended investigation revealed the fact that, even if the plays are not lost, they are still unlocated, by the literary executors of Mark Twain on the one hand, and by the family of Mr. Woolf on the other. It is well to mention these instances, because, until the recent interest in the origins of American drama, manifest on all sides, there has been a danger that

many most valuable manuscript plays would be lost to the student forever.

At a revival of individual scenes from distinctive American Plays, given in New York, on January 22, 1917, considerable difficulty was experienced before the stock-company manuscript of Frank E. Murdoch's "Davy Crockett" was procured. This play, old-fashioned in its general development, is none the less representative of old-time melodramatic situation and romantic manipulation, and there is every reason to believe that, with the tremendous changes in theatrical taste, unless this play is published in available printed form, it will be lost to the student of ten years from now. The play would have been included in the present edition if space had allowed.

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When I came to a consideration of the modern section, there were many omissions which had to be made, due very largely to the fact that authors and owners of copyright were loath to forego their rights. A collection of this kind should undoubtedly have the name of James A. Herne represented in its contents, inasmuch as none of Mr. Herne's plays have heretofore been published, and two of his most distinctive dramas in original manuscript, "Margaret Fleming" and "Griffith Davenport," have been totally destroyed by fire. But representatives of Mr. Herne's family have declined, at the present time, to allow his plays to be published. This is to be regretted, inasmuch as nearly all of the most prominent American playwrights are represented, either in the publication of isolated plays or in definitive editions. I should have liked to end this collection with the inclusion of Mr. Eugene Walter's "The Easiest Way;" at the present time, that play, which was once issued in an edition privately printed, is to be found in the *Drama League Series* of plays.

From the standpoint of non-copyright material, two interesting conditions have been revealed through investigation. The first published play, in America, was "Androboros," by Governor Robert Hunter, written in collaboration with Chief Justice Lewis Morris.^[1] Only one copy of that play is in existence, owned by Mr. H. E. Huntington, of New York, having formerly been a valued possession in the library of the Duke of Devonshire; and having descended from the private ownership of David Garrick and John Kemble, the English actors. Naturally, the private collector is loath, in view of the rarity of his edition, to allow it, at present, to be reprinted.

[1] The title-page of "Androboros" reads: "Androboros"/ A/Bographical [Sic.] Farce/In Three Acts, Viz./The Senate,/The Consistory,/and/The Apotheosis./ By Governour Hunter./Printed at Moropolis since 1st August, 1714. [Taken from Huntington Copy. Moropolis means Fool's Town.]

Some scholars, however, point to "Les Muses de la Nouvelle-France," printed in Paris in 1609, where the third piece is "Le Théâtre de Neptune en la Nouvelle-France." According to Marc Lescarbot, this was "représentée sur les flots du Port-Royal le quatorzième de Novembre, mille six cens six, au retour de Sieur de Poutrincourt du pais des Armouchiquois." This may be regarded as example of the first play written and acted on North American soil, it, however, being in French, and not given within what is now the United States, but rather at Port Royal, in Acadia. (See two interesting letters, 1^o W. J. Neidig, *Nation*, 88:86, January 28, 1909; 2^o Philip Alexander Bruce, *Nation*, 88:136, February 11, 1909.)

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It was my further desire, as an example of college playwriting, to include the text of Barnabas Bidwell's "The Mercenary Match," written at Yale, and played by the students of Yale.^[2] Only one copy of that play is, thus far, known to be in existence, owned by Mr. Evert Jansen Wendell, and its inclusion in the present collection is debarred for the same reason.

[2] The/Mercenary Match,/A Tragedy./By Barna Bidwell./New Haven:/Printed by Meigs, Bowen and Dana,/In Chapel-Street./(1785.)

Were this collection—Representative Plays by American Dramatists—encyclopedic in its scope, rather than a suggestive arrangement of a limited number of plays for the purpose of illustrating certain phases of playwriting in American theatrical history, it would have been necessary for the editor to intersperse, here and there, between the plays, certain minor forms of dramatic writing, characteristic of the work done in this country. For example, plays and dialogues written at colleges at a period ante-dating 1800, and likewise ante-dating the Revolution, are a distinctive development in themselves, and would form an interesting contrast with the work being done at the colleges since the beginning of the present so-called dramatic renaissance (1917). These dialogues, in their proper place, will be dealt with in the introductions to a few of the plays. But it is well to indicate here that such illustrations of very definite forms of dramatic expression have been omitted.

In all cases the texts used have been carefully collated with the first editions of the published dramas and, wherever possible, the original casts have been given with the Dramatis Personæ. Interest in American drama consists very largely in the elements of comparison and contrast which certain definite dramas suggest. Even if there is no manuscript of "Metamora" extant, there is sufficient data relating to the character of *Metamora* to contrast the play with Robert Rogers's "Ponteach." Even though Mrs. Warren's "The Group" might be ruled out as an acting drama, none the less is it definitely reflective of the revolutionary temper of Revolutionary times. A comparison of other types of plays will be made as they occur in the course of the three volumes. I emphasize the point here, because I wish to suggest that such a collection as this offers infinite possibilities in the study of the historical, social, and economic evolution of America.

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Most of these plays have been revived. There will be noted, later, performances of "The Prince of

Parthia," of "The Contrast," of Dunlap's "André," and of Mrs. Mowatt's "Fashion," according to our modern methods of acting. These plays may often seem verbose and lacking in continuous development and interest. This would lead us to believe that possibly the early actor had means at his disposal of overcoming these defects by a method of dramatic technique unknown to the present player. In reading these dramas, one must be able to bear in mind the differences which exist between the theatre of to-day and the theatre of yesterday, between the tradition of the actor of to-day and of the actor of yesterday. The technique, for example, in the characterization of *Jonathan*, and in the characterization of *Solon Shingle*, is different from the technique which characterizes the work of Clyde Fitch or which is to be found in David Belasco's "Peter Grimm." In other words, in such a collection, one asks, not the judgment of the highest literary standards, but the judgment of an historical appreciation of the changes in dramatic taste.

This, the first volume of "Representative Plays by American Dramatists," contains dramas which measure the tastes and inclinations of Colonial and Revolutionary life. In the proper understanding of their atmosphere, it is necessary to know something of the general spirit of the theatre of the period; to measure the conditions, customs, and social peculiarities of the provincial actors and audiences. For that reason, it would be well for the general reader beforehand to obtain a bird's-eye view of the history of the American theatre—a view which will comprise some consideration of the first playhouse in this country, of the conditions which confronted Hallam, Henry, and Douglass, the first actors to be at the head of what, in Williamsburg, Virginia, was known as the Virginia Comedians, and in New York and Philadelphia, as the American Company.

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No more fascinating study could be imagined than following the trials and tribulations of the actors in America at this early day, who, as soon as they reached Philadelphia, or as soon as they attempted to invade Boston, were confronted by the Puritanical and sectarian prejudices, against which the early history of the American theatre had to struggle. The personalities of the Hallams, of Douglass and Hodgkinson, are picturesque and worth while tracing in all aspects of their Thespian careers in the Colonies. So, too, the persons of Thomas Wignell, the Comedian, and of Mrs. Merry, are of especial interest. Wignell, at the John Street Theatre, in New York, and at the Southwark Theatre, in Philadelphia, was wont to amuse George Washington, who, on careful examination of his Journals and expense accounts, looms up as the one big theatre-goer of the time.

The reader who follows the effect open hostility with England had upon the American theatre, will find most interesting material relating to the dramatic activities of the soldiers under the leadership of Generals Burgoyne and Howe. In fact, no account of dramatic writings in this country can ignore the fact that General Burgoyne, apart from the farce which incited Mrs. Mercy Warren, was himself a serious dramatist, who took his work seriously, and whose dramas may be obtained at any large reference library. The Red-Coats, as actors, amused their Tory public with such plays as "Tamerlane," "The Busybody," and "Zara;" and when they invaded the Southwark Theatre, around 1777, Major André, the presiding genius of the English soldier-actors, turned to good account his ability as a scene-painter, and painted a backdrop which was preserved in Philadelphia until 1821, when it was destroyed by fire. We have, however, a description of the scene, taken from Durang's "History of the Philadelphia Stage."

"It was a landscape," he writes, "presenting a distant *champagne* country, and a winding rivulet, extending from the front of the picture to the extreme distance. In the foreground and centre was a gentle cascade—the water exquisitely executed—overshadowed by a group of majestic forest trees. The perspective was excellently preserved; the foliage, verdure, and general colouring artistically toned and glazed. It was a drop scene, and André's name was inscribed on the back of it in large black letters."

The early American theatre was nothing more than the theatre of England transplanted to a more provincial atmosphere. We have a record of dramatic performances being given at Williams and Mary College before the Royal Governor, in 1702, and, in 1736, the students were presenting Addison's "Cato." In 1714, in Massachusetts, Chief Justice Samuel Sewall, famed for his witchcraft injunctions, protested against acting in Boston, and warned the people in this fashion: "Let not Christian Boston goe beyond Heathen Rome in the practice of Shameful Vanities."

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Evidently the actors who had appeared in New York from the West Indies, in 1702, were, by an ill wind, blown into the sharp-prejudiced atmosphere of New England. Some authorities are inclined to believe that Thomas Kean's appearance on March 5, 1750, in New York, when, as noted by the *Weekly Postboy*, he gave a performance of "Richard III," with permission of Governor Clinton, really begins the history of legitimate theatrical performances in America. This, however, is not historically accurate, for, in South Carolina, it is noted that the first dramatic production occurred in 1734 or 1735, January 18th, although the first Charleston theatre was afterwards erected in 1773, the third regular theatre to be established in the Colonies. (See *The Nation*, 99:278-279; Yates Snowden, "South Carolina Plays and Playwrights," *The Carolinian*, November, 1909.)

The disputed point as to the first theatre in America has also been very thoroughly discussed by Judge Charles P. Daly in his brochure, "The First Theatre in America." (Dunlap Society, New Series, No. 1, 1896.)

In 1755, the Reverend Samuel Davies, whose eloquence made him quite as much an actor as a divine, complained of conditions in Virginia, declaring that plays and romances were more read than "the history of the Blessed Jesus."

The real narrative of Colonial acting, however, begins with William Hallam's appearance in Williamsburg in "The Merchant of Venice," on September 5, 1752; thereafter, as is so excellently traced in Seilhamer, the American Theatre, with its different itinerant companies, began to flourish.

The theatre was such a recreation to the Colonial people that, in many ways, it figured as the one source of official entertainment; especially on occasions when the Royal Governor had to show hospitality to visiting people. For example, the *Maryland Gazette* for November 17, 1752, declares that "The Emperor of the Cherokee nation, with his Empress and their son, the young Prince, attended by several of his warriors and Great Men, and their Ladies, were received at the Palace by his Honour the Governor, attended by such of the Council as were in Town on Thursday, the 9th instant, with all the Marks of Courtesy and Friendship, and were that Evening entertained at the Theatre with the Play (the Tragedy of 'Othello'), and a Pantomime Performance which gave them great surprise, as did the fighting with naked swords on the Stage, which occasioned the Empress to order some about her to go and prevent them killing one another."

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The spirit of the theatre-going at this period has been excellently suggested by John Esten Cook in his novel, "The Virginia Comedians," but the reader who will consult rare files of Colonial newspapers will find therein many advertisements which will throw light on some of the social details of the theatre. It is enough here to suggest that, in the reading of the different plays here offered, some consideration be paid to the general theatrical atmosphere which created and fostered them.

In several of the Introductions the editor has had occasion to mention the exercises and dialogues and plays given in the colleges before the Revolution. These were the distinctive forms which time and occasion created; otherwise the early American dramatist framed his pieces in imitation of English and German tradition. However, as soon as the national period began, another interesting dramatic experiment was put into effect. This has been noted by W. W. Clapp, in his chapter written for Justin Winsor's "Commemorative History of Boston." He says:

"[It was] the custom in the earlier days of the theatre to signalize passing events by such appropriate notice as the resources of the stage would permit."

In other words, the event called forth from the Manager, because of commercial possibilities, certain spectacular scenes to attract the patriotic notice of the people. Manager Hodgkinson, on September 20, 1797, celebrated the launching of the frigate *Constitution*.^[3] On January 8, 1800, at the New York Theatre, an "Ode on the Death of General Washington" was recited by Mr. Hodgkinson, written by Samuel Low. It is interesting here to note likewise that Royall Tyler pronounced a Eulogy on Washington at Bennington, Vermont, on February 22, 1800.

[3] Dunlap, himself atune to the hour, wrote "Yankee Chronology; or, Huzza for the Constitution"—"a musical Interlude, in One Act, to which are added, The Patriotic Songs of the Freedom of the Seas, and Yankee Tars," produced at the Park Theatre, New York, 1812. Dunlap wrote many pieces of like character.

A patriotic effusion, celebrating the capture of the British frigate *Guerrière*, was produced on October 2, 1812. In 1813, to commemorate the victory of Perry, a piece was mounted, entitled, "Heroes of the Lake; or, the Glorious Tenth of September." Another piece, equally as suggestive in its title, was "The Sailor's Return; or, Constitution Safe in Port."

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When the Marquis de Lafayette visited the United States in 1825, and was taken to the theatre, the occasion was celebrated by an appropriate "drop." In other words, the Manager, even in those days, had the commercial instinct fully developed.

In the preparation of the present collection, the editor wishes to thank those who have been generous in their advice and appreciation of the work in hand. Being a pioneer effort, the original research necessitated has been of an extensive character. I have had, in order to verify my data, to correspond extensively, not only with the members of the families of the different playwrights, but with many historical societies and libraries. I have likewise had the advantage of being able to consult with Dr. F. W. Atkinson, of the Brooklyn Polytechnic, whose collection of American Drama is probably one of the richest in the country, and with Professor Brander Matthews, whose interest in all drama makes the historian continually in his debt. Certain information concerning Royall Tyler has been furnished me by members of the Tyler family, including Mrs. E. L. Pratt, of Boston. In their proper places, when the plays occur, certain credits and references will be found, but it is a pleasure for me here to thank Mr. Percy Mackaye, Mr. David Belasco, Mr. Langdon Mitchell, Mr. Augustus Thomas, the Clyde Fitch Estate, and the Bronson Howard Estate, for their generous coöperation in bringing the present collection to a successful issue. The privilege is also mine to thank Mr. L. Nelson Nichols, of the Americana Division, and Mr. Victor H. Paltsits, in charge of the Manuscript Division, of the New York Public Library, together with other officials of that Library, of Columbia University, and of the Library Company of Philadelphia, and Miss Z. K. Macdonald, for their unflinching courtesy and untiring efforts in my behalf.

February 22, 1917.

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Some of the most important works on the history of the American Drama and the American Theatre are given herewith. Under each author, there will be found short individual bibliographies, and in the succeeding volumes of the Collection, other general references will be given which will throw light on the theatrical conditions of the particular theatre periods. Naturally, books relating to modern conditions will be reserved for the third volume.

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2. "Moral Tales for American Youths." Boston, 1800.
3. "The Yankee in London: A Series of Letters, written by an American Youth during Nine Months of Residence in the City of London." New York, 1809.
4. Tyler wrote for the newspapers with Joseph Dennie, Walpole, N. H., and published selections from his contributions under the title of "The Spirit of the Farmer's Museum and Lay Preacher's Gazette." He also contributed poems to the *Farmer's Weekly Museum*, to the *Portfolio*, to the *Columbia Centinel*, to the *New England Galaxy*, and to the *Polyanthus*. Prose works were likewise included therein. Some of his contributions to the *Farmer's Museum* were gathered together in 1798 under the title of "Colon and Spondee Papers," and issued by the pioneer American printer, Isaiah Thomas.

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WILLIAM DUNLAP

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JAMES NELSON BARKER

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MORDECAI MANUEL NOAH

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