

# Charles Klein:

## An Inventory of His Plays in the Manuscript Collection at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center

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### Descriptive Summary

**Creator:** Klein, Charles, 1867-1915

**Title:** Charles Klein Plays

**Dates:** 1900-1921

**Extent:** 10 boxes (4.2 linear feet)

**Abstract:** Most of the professional career of playwright Charles Klein is illuminated by this collection of notes, scenarios, manuscripts, and typescripts for sixty-two of his plays, both produced and unproduced.

**Call Number:** Manuscript Collection MS-02316

**RLIN Record #:** TXRC03-A20

**Language:** English and Russian

**Access:** Open for research

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### Administrative Information

**Acquisition:** Purchase, 1994 (R13282)

**Processed by:** Laura Gottesman, 1999; Richard Workman, 2003

**Repository:** [Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin](#)

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## Biographical Sketch

The playwright Charles Klein was born in London, England, on 7 January 1867. He was one of four sons of Hermann Klein, a professor of languages, and the former Adelaide Soman. All four brothers had careers in the performing arts: Hermann was a singing teacher and music critic, Alfred became an actor, and Manuel was musical director of the New York Hippodrome and a composer who collaborated on the operetta *Mr. Pickwick* (1903) with Charles.

Klein immigrated to the United States at the age of sixteen, as he said, "to carve out my own career." He made up his mind to become a dramatist and decided the best way to learn stagecraft was to get experience as an actor. He began in amateur theatricals and later moved to the professional stage, playing the juvenile parts for which his small stature was suited, including the title role in *Little Lord Fauntleroy*. In 1888 he married Lillian Gottlieb and they had one son, Philip.

In 1890 he was given an opportunity to revise a play he was appearing in, and from then on his dramatic output was continual. Many of his works were written in collaboration with other dramatists or adapted from novels. His early plays were mostly comedies, operettas, and farces, but after the turn of the century, he gravitated toward melodrama and strove for more of a social purpose. Among his most successful works were two librettos for operettas by John Philip Sousa, *El Capitan* (1895), with lyrics by Thomas Frost, and *The Charlatan* (1898); the operetta *Red Feather* (1903), written with composer Reginald De Koven and lyricist Charles Emerson Cook and produced by Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr.; *The Auctioneer* (1901), written with Lee Arthur and produced by David Belasco as a starring vehicle for David Warfield; *The Music Master* (1904), also written for Warfield; *The Lion and the Mouse* (1905); *The Third Degree* (1909); *The Gamblers* (1910); and *Potash and Perlmutter* (1913), written with Montague Glass.

Between 1912 and 1929 several of the plays were made into silent films; *The Gamblers*, for example, was filmed at least four times. He also novelized some of his plays in order to capitalize on their popularity.

In addition to writing plays, Klein worked as a play reader and censor for producer and theater owner Charles Frohman. The pair were sailing on the *Lusitania* on 7 May 1915 when the liner was sunk by a German U-boat and both lost their lives.

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## Sources:

"Charles Klein (I)." *The Internet Movie Database*.

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0458691>. Accessed 2 December 2003.

Edgett, Edwin Francis. "Klein, Charles." In *Dictionary of American Biography*, ed. by Dumas Malone. Vol. 2. New York: Scribner's, 1933.

Wightman, John. "Mr. Charles Klein, the Author." *The Playgoer and Society Illustrated* 6, no. 34 (1912): 116.

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## Scope and Contents

Most of the professional career of playwright Charles Klein is illuminated by this collection of notes, scenarios, manuscripts, and typescripts for sixty-two of his plays, both produced and unproduced. From the successful *El Capitan* of 1896 to the posthumously produced *The Guilty Man* of 1916, almost all of his significant plays are represented here to at least some extent. The collection is arranged in two series: I. Plays, 1900-1921 (9 boxes), and II. Other Works and Theater-Related Materials, 1909-1910 (1 box).

Because of the extensiveness of many of these drafts and their widely varying stages of completion, items in the Plays series give a strikingly clear insight into the diligent working methods of Klein. Whatever may be the ultimate value of his work, it is difficult not to admire his conscientiousness: jottings of nascent ideas, multiple scenarios, voluminous notes to himself about effects to be achieved and aspects of character to be brought out, and heavily revised manuscripts and typescripts all attest to an artisan who took his task quite seriously and give an unusually full picture of the artistic goals and priorities of a successful American playwright from the beginning of the twentieth century.

There is evidence throughout the collection that hands other than Klein's made an attempt at some point to arrange the papers. The acquisition originally exhibited very little order, there are typed "inventories" that do not completely correlate with the contents of the collection as it exists at present, and there are occasional small typed notes referring to the degree of completion of attached papers or positing that part of a manuscript may have been missing when a copy was typed. Neither the author of these notes nor what attempts at organization might have accompanied them are known, and it is therefore impossible to be certain what Klein's original arrangement may have been. Consequently, the whole series has been arranged alphabetically by title of play.

Where possible, plays are listed by the titles under which they were ultimately produced, with earlier working titles given in parentheses. Where there is no evidence of a production, the most recent or most prominent title has been chosen and alternatives noted in parentheses. Most manuscripts and typescripts are undated, but within each play they have been arranged in creation order as nearly as possible, based on internal evidence.

Klein was apparently in the habit of having his working notes and scenarios typed up at intervals, and these typed transcriptions are present throughout the collection. In nearly every case the original handwritten manuscripts are also present and the two are filed together.

The collection includes one play (*Don Quixote*) that Klein apparently did not contribute to, at least in the form in which it is present here. In another case, that of *The Guilty Man*, another playwright's completed typescript is present as the first stage from which Klein proceeded through several drafts to produce a full collaboration.

Although most typescripts are not dated, several of them have a sticker on the front with his wife's name and a London address. One of these copies bears a date stamp for the year 1921, suggesting that some of the typescripts in the collection were made by his widow after his death.

Other than notes, scenarios, manuscripts, and typescripts, there is one actor's side, for the role of Emily Rodman in *The Money Makers*, and *Maggie Pepper* is represented by ground plans and plots. For *Potash and Perlmutter* there is also an undated printed Russian translation.

The second series, Other Works and Theater-Related Materials, contains the two pages of typed "inventories" mentioned above. Also in this series are membership lists for the Society of American Dramatists and Composers (forerunner of the Dramatists' Guild) and its auxiliary, the Society of Lady Dramatists, with an unsigned letter dated 1909 regarding the executive committee of the joint organizations; notes on the origins of tragedy; and two stories, including a short first-person tale about a physician that is not in Klein's handwriting. The correspondence folder in this series contains one short letter to his typist.

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## Related Material

Elsewhere in the Ransom Center are three letters from Klein in the Theater Arts manuscripts collection, in which he talks about his work and his involvement with Christian Science.

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## Index Terms

### People

Arthur, Lee.

Belasco, David, 1853-1931.

Clarke, Joseph Ignatius Constantine, 1846-1925.

Davis, Ruth Helen.

Frost, Thomas.

Glass, Montague, 1877-1934.

Klein, Lillian Gottlieb.

Sousa, John Philip, 1854-1932.

Stewart, Grant, 1866-1929.

Warfield, David.

### **Subjects**

Society of American Dramatists and Composers.

Society of Lady Dramatists.

American drama (Comedy)

American drama -- 20th century.

American farces.

Dramatists, American.

Melodrama, American.

Musicals.

Theater -- United States.

### **Document Types**

Theater programs.

Scripts (documents).

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**Series I. Plays, 1900-1921, n.d.**

<i>An Affair of State: A Comedy in Three Acts</i> , with Grant Stewart (earlier title, <i>The Diplomat's Daughter</i> )	<b>Box 1 Folder</b>
Notes and scenario ( <i>The Diplomat's Daughter</i> ), 1900	<b>Folder 1</b>
Scenario, 1900	<b>Folder 2</b>
<i>Alva: Grand Opera in One Act</i> , scenarios	<b>Folder 3</b>
<i>An Anglo-French Musical Comedy in 2 Acts</i> (also titled <i>Extravaganza</i> ), scenarios	<b>Folder 4</b>
<i>The Auctioneer: A Character Comedy in Three Acts</i> (1901), with Lee Arthur, typescript, "Property of David Belasco. Set No. 2."	<b>Folder 5</b>
<i>Aurora, The Dawning Light: Farce Comedy, 3 Acts</i> , scenario	<b>Folder 6</b>
<i>The Bath Comedy: A Dramatic Sketch of Castle's Novel</i> , notes and scenario	<b>Folder 7</b>
<i>A Brainy Man: Farce Comedy</i> , scenario	<b>Folder 8</b>
<i>El Capitan: Comic Opera in Three Acts</i> (1896), lyrics by Thomas Frost	
Typescript signed on endpaper "Wm. R. Dixon"	<b>Folder 9</b>
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<i>The Castle Inn</i> , notes and scenario	<b>Folder 12</b>
<i>The Charlatan</i> , manuscript, includes typed lyrics of opening number	<b>Folder 13</b>
<i>The Cigarette-Maker: Musical Play in Three Acts</i> , scenario	<b>Folder 14</b>

*A College Coach* (earlier title, *A College Story*)

Three scenarios (*A College Story*) **Folder**  
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Scenario **Folder** 16

*Conscience*, notes and scenarios **Folder** 17

*Cousin Lucy: A Farcical Play in Three Acts* (1915; earlier title, *Madame Lucette & Co.*) **Box 2**  
**Folder**

Scenario and manuscript (*Madame Lucette & Co.*) **Folder** 1

Typescript (*Madame Lucette & Co.*), 1915 **Folder** 2

*The Crinoline Girl*, Acts II and III, typescript, "Property of A. H. Woods, Eltinge Theatre, New York City," 1914 **Folder**  
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*The Daughters of Men: A Play in Three Acts* (1906)

Scenario **Folder** 4

Typescripts, "Mrs. H. C. De Mille, Authors' Representative, Hudson Theatre, 141 West 44th St., New York City"

1906 **Folder** 5

"Private Copy" **Folder** 6

*Diplomatic Farce*, notes **Folder** 7

*The Doctor: A Farcical Comedy in 3 Acts*, scenarios **Folder** 8-9

*Dr. Mallow: A Play in Three Acts* (earlier titles, *Dr. Larabie* and *Dr. Larabee*)

Manuscripts with notes (untitled) **Folder**  
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Composite manuscript and typescript (untitled) with notes and diagrams **Folder**  
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Act I, typescript (*Dr. Larabie*) **Folder** 13

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<i>During the War: Naval Farcical Comedy</i> (also titled <i>The Blockade Runner</i> ), scenario	<b>Folder</b> 3
<i>Elysium: An Extravaganza</i> , notes	<b>Folder</b> 4
<i>The Firebrand</i> , notes and scenario	<b>Folder</b> 5
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<i>Heartsease: A Play in Four Acts</i> (1897), with Joseph I. C. Clarke, typescript	<b>Folder 3</b>
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<i>The Hon. John Grigsby</i> (1902)	
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Typescripts, 1919	<b>Folder 7</b>
<i>The Lion and the Mouse: A Play in Four Acts</i> (1905)	
Typescript, "As played at the Lyceum Theatre, NY," "Mrs. H. C. De Mille, Authors' Representative, Hudson Theatre, 139 West 44th St., New York City"	<b>Folder 8</b>
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<i>A Man of Brains: Matrimonial Comedy</i> , scenario	<b>Folder 5</b>
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