



**Emma Goldman, *The Social Significance of the Modern Drama*
(Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1914; The Gorham Press, Boston, U.S.A.)**

THE ENGLISH DRAMA: STANLEY HOUGHTON

HINDLE WAKES



In Stanley Houghton, who died last year, the drama lost a talented and brave artist. Brave, because he had the courage to touch one of the most sensitive spots of Puritanism - woman's virtue. Whatever else one may criticise or attack, the sacredness of virtue must remain untouched. It is the last fetich which even so-called liberal-minded people refuse to destroy.

To be sure, the attitude towards this holy of holies has of late years undergone a considerable change. It is beginning to be felt in ever-growing circles that love is its own justification, requiring no sanction of either religion or law. The revolutionary idea, however, that woman may, even as man, follow the urge of her nature, has never before been so sincerely and radically expressed.

The message of "Hindle Wakes" is therefore of inestimable value, inasmuch as it dispels the fog of the silly sentimentalism and disgusting bombast that declares woman a thing apart from nature - one who neither does nor must crave the joys of life permissible to man.

Hindle is a small weaving town, symbolically representing the wakefulness of every small community to the shortcomings of its neighbors.

Christopher Hawthorne and *Nathaniel Jeffcote* had begun life together as lads in the cotton mill. But while *Christopher* was always a timid and shrinking boy, *Nathaniel* was aggressive and ambitious. When the play opens, *Christopher*, though an old man, is still a poor weaver; *Nathaniel*, on the contrary, has reached the top of financial and social success. He is the owner of the biggest mill; is wealthy, influential, and withal a man of power. For *Nathaniel Jeffcote* always loved power and social approval. Speaking of the motor he bought for his only son *Alan*, he tells his wife:

Jeffcote. Why did I buy a motor-car? Not because I wanted to go motoring. I hate it. I bought it so that people could see *Alan* driving about in it, and say, "There's *Jeffcote's* lad in his new car. It cost five hundred quid."

However, *Nathaniel* is a "square man," and when facing an emergency, not chary with justice and always quick to decide in its favor.

The *Jeffcotes* center all their hopes on *Alan*, their only child, who is to inherit their fortune and business. *Alan* is engaged to *Beatrice*, the lovely, sweet daughter of *Sir Timothy Farrar*, and all is joyous at the *Jeffcotes*'.

Down in the valley of *Hindle* live the *Hawthornes*, humble and content, as behooves God-fearing workers. They too have ambitions in behalf of their daughter *Fanny*, strong, willful and self-reliant, - qualities molded in the hard grind of *Jeffcote's* mill, where she had begun work as a tot.

During the "bank holiday" *Fanny* with her chum *Mary* goes to a neighboring town for an outing. There they meet two young men, *Alan Jeffcote* and his friend. *Fanny* departs with *Alan*, and they spend a glorious time together. On the way home *Mary* is drowned. As a result of the accident the *Hawthornes* learn that their daughter had not spent her vacation with *Mary*. When *Fanny* returns, they question her, and though she at first refuses to give an account of herself, they soon discover that the girl had passed the time with a man, - young *Alan Jeffcote*. Her parents are naturally horrified, and decide to force the *Jeffcotes* to have *Alan* marry *Fanny*.

In the old mother of *Fanny* the author has succeeded in giving a most splendid characterization of the born drudge, hardened by her long struggle with poverty, and grown shrewd in the ways of the world. She knows her daughter so little, however, that she believes *Fanny* had schemed the affair with *Alan* in the hope that she might force him to marry her. In her imagination the old woman already sees *Fanny* as the mistress of the *Jeffcote* estate. She persuades her husband to go immediately to the *Jeffcotes*, and though it is very late at night, the old man is forced to start out on his disagreeable errand.

Jeffcote, a man of integrity, is much shocked at the news brought to him by old *Hawthorne*. Nevertheless he will not countenance the wrong.

Jeffcote. I'll see you're treated right. Do you hear?

Christopher. I can't ask for more than that.

Jeffcote. I'll see you're treated right.

Young *Alan* had never known responsibility. Why should he, with so much wealth awaiting him? When confronted by his father and told that he must marry *Fanny*, he fights hard against it. It may be said, in justice to *Alan*, that he really loves his betrothed, *Beatrice*, though such a circumstance has never deterred the *Alans* from having a lark with another girl.

The young man resents his father's command to marry the mill girl. But when even *Beatrice* insists that he belongs to *Fanny*, *Alan* unwillingly consents. *Beatrice*, a devout Christian, believes in renunciation.

Beatrice. I do need you, *Alan*. So much that nothing on earth could make me break off our engagement, if I felt that it was at all possible to let it go on. But it isn't. It's impossible.

Alan. And you want me to marry *Fanny*?

Beatrice. Yes. Oh, Alan! can't you see what a splendid sacrifice you have it in your power to make? Not only to do the right thing, but to give up so much in order to do it.

The *Jeffcotes* and the *Hawthornes* gather to arrange the marriage of their children. It does not occur to them to consult *Fanny* in the matter. Much to their consternation, *Fanny* refuses to abide by the decision of the family council.

Fanny. It's very good of you. You'll hire the parson and get the license and make all the arrangements on your own without consulting me, and I shall have nothing to do save turn up meek as a lamb at the church or registry office or whatever it is.... That's just where you make the mistake. I don't want to marry Alan.... I mean what I say, and I'll trouble you to talk to me without swearing at me. I'm not one of the family yet.

The dismayed parents, and even *Alan*, plead with her and threaten. But *Fanny* is obdurate. At last *Alan* asks to be left alone with her, confident that he can persuade the girl.

Alan. Look here, Fanny, what's all this nonsense about? . . . Why won't you marry me?

Fanny. You can't understand a girl not jumping at you when she gets the chance, can you? . . . How is it that you aren't going to marry Beatrice Farrar ? Weren't you fond of her?

Alan. Very.... I gave her up because my father made me.

Fanny. Made you? Good Lord, a chap of your age!

Alan. My father's a man who will have his own way.... He can keep me short of brass.

Fanny. Earn some brass.

Alan. I can earn some brass, but it will mean hard work and it'll take time. And, after all, I shan't earn anything like what I get now.

Fanny. Then all you want to wed me for is what you'll get with me? I'm to be given away with a pound of tea, as it were?

Alan. I know why you won't marry me.... You're doing it for my sake.

Fanny. Don't you kid yourself, my lad! It isn't because I'm afraid of spoiling your life that I'm refusing you, but because I'm afraid of spoiling mine! That didn't occur to you?

Alan. Look here, Fanny, I promise you I'll treat you fair all the time. You don't need to fear that folk'll look down on you. We shall have too much money for that.

Fanny. I can manage all right on twenty-five bob a week.

Alan. I'm going to fall between two stools. It's all up with Beatrice, of course. And if you won't have me I shall have parted from her to no purpose; besides getting kicked out of the house by my father, more than likely! You said you were fond of me once, but it hasn't taken you long to alter.

Fanny. All women aren't built alike. Beatrice is religious. She'll be sorry for you. I was fond of you in a way.

Alan. But you didn't ever really love me?

Fanny. Love you? Good heavens, of course not! Why on earth should I love you? You were just someone to have a bit of fun with. You were an amusement, a lark. How much more did you care for me?

Alan. But it's not the same. I'm a man.

Fanny. You're a man, and I was your little fancy. Well, I'm a woman, and you were my little fancy. You wouldn't prevent a woman enjoying herself as well as a man, if she takes it into her head?

Alan. But do you mean to say that you didn't care anymore for me than a fellow cares for any girl he happens to pick up?

Fanny. Yes. Are you shocked?

Alan. It's a bit thick; it is really!

Fanny. You're a beauty to talk!

Alan. It sounds so jolly immoral. I never thought of a girl looking on a chap just like that! I made sure you wanted to marry me if you got the chance.

Fanny. No fear! You're not good enough for me. The chap Fanny Hawthorn weds has got to be made of different stuff from you, my lad. My husband, if ever I have one, will be a man, not a fellow who'll throw over his girl at his father's bidding! Strikes me the sons of these rich manufacturers are all much alike. They seem a bit weak in the upper story. It's their father's brass that's too much for them, happen! . . . You've no call to be afraid. I'm not going to disgrace you. But so long as I've to live my own life I don't see why I shouldn't choose what it's to be.

Unheard of, is it not, that a Fanny should refuse to be made a "good woman," and that she should dare demand the right to live in her own way? It has always been considered the most wonderful event in the life of a girl if a young man of wealth, of position, of station came into her life and said, "I will take you as my wife until death do us part."

But a new type of girlhood is in the making. We are developing the Fannies who learn in the school of life, the hardest, the cruelest and at the same time the most vital and instructive school. Why should *Fanny* marry a young man in order to become "good," any more than that he should marry her in order to become good? Is it not because we have gone on for centuries believing that woman's value, her integrity and position in society center about her sex and consist only in her virtue, and that all other usefulness weighs naught in the balance against her "purity"? If she dare express her sex as the Fannies do, we deny her individual and social worth, and stamp her fallen.

The past of a man is never questioned: no one inquires how many Fannies have been in his life. Yet man has the impudence to expect the Fannies to abstain till he is ready to bestow on them his name.

"Hindle Wakes" is a much needed and important social lesson, < not because it necessarily involves the idea that every girl must have sex experience before she meets the man she loves, but rather that she has the right to satisfy, if she so chooses, her emotional and sex demands like any other need of her mind and body. When the Fannies become conscious of that right, the relation of the sexes will lose the shallow romanticism and artificial exaggeration that mystery has surrounded it with, and assume a wholesome, natural, and therefore healthy and normal expression.