(Download pdf) The New York Idea

The New York Idea

Langdon Mitchell
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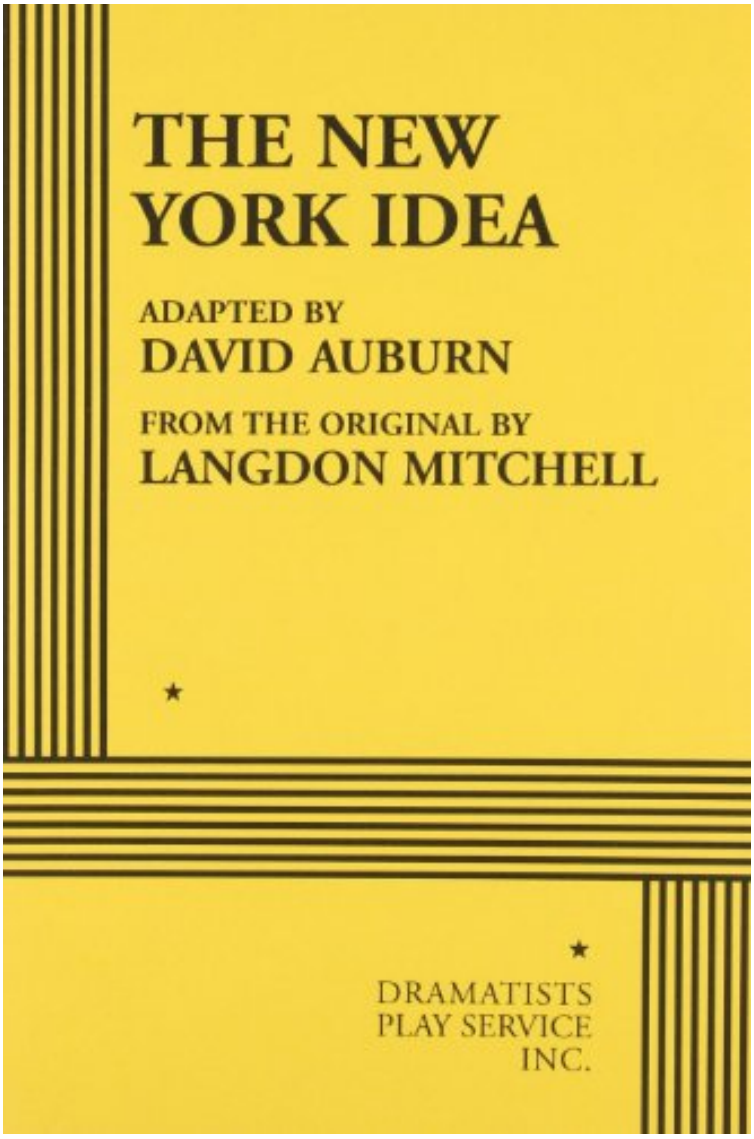

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Langdon Mitchell : The New York Idea before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The New York Idea:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Divorce American StyleBy Lee ArmstrongLangdon Mitchell's "The New York Idea" was written in 1906 and copyrighted in 1907. It has been produced 3 times on Broadway. The 1906 production starred Mrs. Fiske and Arliss Howard and ran for 60 performances. Other revivals followed in 1915 and 1933. As we approach the century mark on this comedy of manners, it's an interesting look back to see what's changed and what still plays.The premise is still most interesting. It follows the adventures of two divorced couples. Phillip

Phillimore, a prominent New York judge, has divorced Vida whose unconventional flare for see-through gowns forays in Egypt make her Bohemian. Wealthy heiress Cynthia Karslake married lawyer and horse enthusiast John Karslake for love and divorced him quickly, dropping him like a hot potato. Cynthia is preparing to marry Phillip Phillimore, a sensible match for her after the flaming passion of the previous marriage burned out. Both Vida Phillimore Jack Karslake are unattached. Business each has before the judge brings them to his residence on the eve of his wedding. Therefore you have the engaged and both ex's trading banter and quips in the drawing room.Complications arise when single Englishman Sir Wilfrid Cates-Darby enters. His suave and easy way plays with the American women he's come to admire. He develops an attraction to both Cynthia Karslake and Vida Phillimore. Cynthia becomes quite jealous as Vida flirts with her ex, fanning a spark that has not entirely gone out. On the day of the wedding, Cynthia allows herself to be taken to the track by Sir Wilfrid, delaying her 3 p.m. wedding to 9 p.m. This goes over like a lead balloon to a cadre of outraged Phillimore relatives including sister Grace, aunt Miss Heneage, cousin William Sudley. Phillip's brother Matthew is a clergyman who has preached liberally on divorce and intends to perform the wedding ceremony.Finally in Act III all draw together for the wedding, only for Cynthia to realize that her jealousy about her ex is stronger than her desire to marry the judge. The play climaxes in the final act as Jack Karslake's investigation into Cynthia's quickie divorce reveals legal flaws that result in the fact that they're still married. Vida hooks up with Sir Wilfrid and marries quickly at the Karslake residence. Cynthia shows up with Jack thinking she's married Phillimore and Cynthia thinking that Jack's married Vida. Misunderstandings are resolved as Cynthia realizes that Karslake kept the room exactly as she left it on the day she walked out on him. Their passion flares as Jack replaces his wedding ring on the willing Cynthia's finger.What's changed? In 1906, divorce was doubtless regarded as more of a scandal than our present-day culture. So the hubbub that surrounds two divorced couples seems quaint. However, the raw emotions that ex's can hold for each other still plays well. The numerous servants in the various households seem quaint as does the fact that Phillimore's house doesn't have electricity, but Karslake's does. The language of the play is quite elevated with numerous words in the judge's dialogue being not in most people's normal vocabulary. The action of the play still flows well and could work with strong leads. Overall, it's an interesting comedy almost 100 years later. Enjoy!

Excerpt from The New York Idea: A Comedy in Four ActsIt is interesting to note, by the way, a return on Mr. Mitchell's part to that convenient assumption of the Restoration and eighteenth century comedy writers that any one in holy orders could solemnize a legal marriage at any time or place, without the slightest formality of banns, witnesses, registration or anything of the sort. One gathers that in New York the entrance to and the exit from the holy estate of matrimony are equally prompt and easy or that, as one of the characters puts it, the church is a regular quick-marriage counter.I presume there is some exaggeration in this, and that a marriage cannot actually be celebrated at midnight, over a champagne-and-lobster supper, by a clergyman who happened to drop in. But there can be no doubt that whatever the social merits or demerits of the system facility of divorce and remarriage is an immense boon to the dramatist: It places within his reach an inexhaustible store Of situations and complications which are barred to the English playwright, to whom divorce always means an ugly and painful scandal. The moralist may insist that this Ought always to be the case and indeed that is the implication which Mr. Mitchell, as a moralist, cone veys to us.About the PublisherForgotten Books publishes hundreds of thousands of rare and classic books. Find more at www.forgottenbooks.comThis book is a reproduction of an important historical work. Forgotten Books uses state-of-the-art technology to digitally reconstruct the work, preserving the original format whilst repairing imperfections present in the aged copy. In rare cases, an imperfection in the original, such as a blemish or missing page, may be replicated in our edition. We do, however, repair the vast majority of imperfections successfully; any imperfections that remain are intentionally left to preserve the state of such historical works.