**Abie’s Irish Rose**

**By Anne Nichols**

The plot was ably summarized by Judge Learned Hand, in his opinion in the lawsuit:

Abie's Irish Rose presents a Jewish family living in prosperous circumstances in New York. The father, a widower, is in business as a merchant, in which his son and only child helps him. The boy has philandered with young women, who to his father's great disgust have always been Gentiles, for he is obsessed with a passion that his daughter-in-law shall be an orthodox Jew. When the play opens the son, who has been courting a young Irish Catholic girl, has already married her secretly before a Protestant minister, and concerned about how to soften the blow for his father securing a favorable reception for his bride, while concealing her faith and race. To accomplish this he introduces her to his father as a Jewish girl in whom he is interested and conceals the fact they are married. The girl somewhat reluctantly agrees to the plan; the father takes the bait, becomes infatuated with the girl, insists that they must marry. He assumes they will because it's the father's idea. He calls in a rabbi, and prepares for the wedding according to the Jewish rite.

Meanwhile the girl's father, also a widower who lives in California and is as intense in his own religious antagonism as the Jew, has been called to New York, supposing that his daughter is to marry an Irishman and a Catholic. Accompanied by a priest, he arrives at the house at the moment when the marriage is being celebrated, so too late to prevent it, and the two fathers, each infuriated by the proposed union of his child to a heretic, fall into unseemly and grotesque antics. The priest and the rabbi become friendly, exchange trite sentiments about religion, and agree that the match is good. Apparently out of abundant caution, the priest celebrates the marriage for a third time, while the girl's father is inveigled away. The second act closes with each father, still outraged, seeking to find some way by which the union, thus trebly insured, may be dissolved.

The last act takes place about a year later, the young couple having meanwhile been abjured by each father, and left to their own resources. They have had twins, a boy and a girl, but their fathers know no more than that a child has been born. At Christmas each, led by his craving to see his grandchild, goes separately to the young folks' home, where they encounter each other, each laden with gifts, one for a boy, the other for a girl. After some slapstick comedy, depending upon the insistence of each that he is right about the sex of the grandchild, they become reconciled when they learn the truth, and that each child is to bear the given name of a grandparent. The curtain falls as the fathers are exchanging amenities, and the Jew giving evidence of an abatement in the strictness of his orthodoxy.[6]

There have been some variations of the plot in different versions of the play/film. Nichols' original Broadway play had the couple meeting in France during World War I, with the young man having been a soldier and the girl a nurse who had tended to him. In this version, the priest and the rabbi from the wedding are also veterans of the same war, and recognize one another from their time in the service.