

WHEN ACTORS HAD TO ACT

"Naughty 'Nineties" Starts Some Memories

ALTHOUGH he does not go back as far as the Naughty Nineties, Bernard Beeby, who supervises dramatic productions for the NBS, does remember the Naughty 'Twenties, and the naughtier 'Teens of this century. An item set down for 2YA on Thursday of next week, entitled "The Naughty 'Nineties," was an excuse to start him talking about the days when actors asked each other how long they'd been "in the business," and scoffed "amateur!" if the answer was less than ten years.

Long enough in the "business" to claim the professional title, Mr.

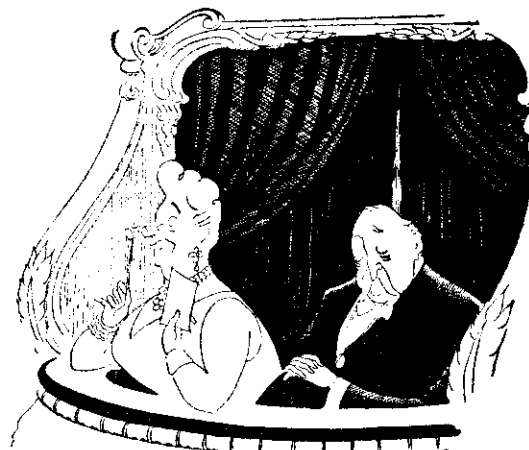
Beeby shares with others a small opinion of amateurs on the stage. Amateurs, for example, had never to keep up with a season playing "stock." They thought they had done well if they produced a play in six weeks (and still do), but in a season of stock productions a professional would learn next week's part while he played this week's, and keep it up—for three-act plays, mind you—for a year at a time.

A Man of Parts

Although he is an unusually "quick study," Mr. Beeby found that a year of playing leading parts, and playing 52 of them in the year, had him going over his part in the street, in the bath, out walking, and in bed, and he finished in

the end with a nervous breakdown. Once he played two plays a week for ten weeks, and not one of them had been familiar to him before.

Less strenuous, but not very much less, would be his and others' similar experiences touring with such companies as Alan Wilkie's. Their repertoire would be 30 to 35 plays, and any week the programme might be altered. In fact, said Mr. Beeby, this was usual, for the programme for the week following would be posted at the beginning of the week, and the players needs must refresh their memory as best they could in the short time allowed them. They would therefore have to carry in their heads parts for 30 odd plays, and each night concentrate properly on whatever was on hand.



Experience brought the ability to do this without strain and actors soon found themselves able to play tricks and get away with it. "It is hard work, sometimes terribly hard," said Mr. Beeby, "but actors always like to remember the humour."

Plenty of Fun

Of fun there was plenty, whether accidental or intended. Often, he said, actors well set in their lines would deliberately set about disconcerting others on the

(Continued on next page)



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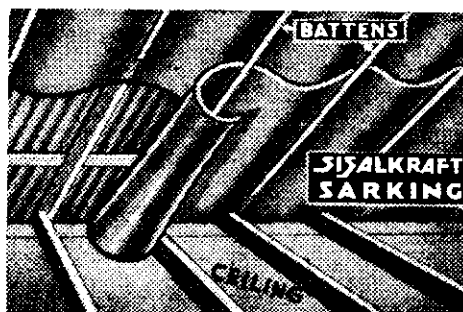
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