



BOOKS

PLAY WITH BALLET

HANS ANDERSEN. A Biographical Play with Ballet by Owen Fletcher. Coulls, Somerville, Wilkie Ltd.

Plays suitable for acting by amateur societies are always in demand, and in certain respects this biographical sketch by Owen Fletcher will meet this demand. But from the production aspect it must present great difficulties, if only because the cast is so large—28 actors, for example, and an undefined number of ballet dancers to dance the three ballets based on the famous fairy tales. Biography does not often lend itself to dramatic treatment. It is apt to become, like the historical novel, history with permanent waves. Perhaps it is to lighten the plain biographical facts that the author introduces the element of unreality and fantasy provided by the ballet. Perhaps, too, it is this that leads him on to depart so far from historical fact as to arrange a charming and fanciful scene between the Princess Alexandra and Hans Andersen just a year before this same princess was born. Andersen's charm and the success of his fairy tales depend very largely on the keenness of his wit, the irony with which his most fanciful tales expose the weakness of human nature. It is a pity not to show this wise and witty side of the dreamer, since one of the objects of the author must have been to bring the Hans Andersen of legend to life. On the other hand, the play shows a freshness which will be welcomed by those who like to escape to the fairy tale world which Andersen himself loved. It not only does that, but it opens the door to possibilities that writers of plays have so far not often exploited. How far Mr. Fletcher himself will go it is for the years to reveal, but even if he fades out, he has blazed a path that others may follow. Meanwhile, it is a pity that his publishers left his name off the title page and put his portrait on the cover to kill the artist's design.

SWASTIKA SHADOW

DRAGON'S TEETH. By Upton Sinclair. Clair, T. Werner Laurie Ltd., London. 10/6 net.

Whatever critics say of Upton Sinclair the novelist, he is one of the ablest propagandists of his time. Through his novels he has denounced iniquities varying from meat works scandals to oil racketeering. This time he has used his head as much as his heart. Though the civilised world needs no convincing today that the growth of Fascism in Europe meant horror in peace followed by the terror of war, the civilised world can do well to read this lesson again. "Dragon's Teeth" is the last of a trilogy; reading it you get a panorama of social and economic events (1929 to 1934) through the eyes of Lanny Budd, a rich American, pink enough to annoy alike the Right and the Red, and liberal enough to risk his life in helping a Jew to escape from infamous Dachau. Lanny skips around Europe, England and

America with the avidity of a movietone news cameraman. The author packs into his story the inside dope on armaments, international finance, domestic life, and political ideologies. The result is good propaganda and a competent novel. Sinclair, the old warrior, has done an unpleasant job with patience and fire.

THE BEAST

BESTIALITY: A record of German atrocities in Poland. Polish Ministry of Information.

It is difficult for normal people to believe in the abnormal. Sometimes it is impossible. The only defence some of us have against horrors that are more horrible than we can bear is angry disbelief. It is Nature's way of tempering the wind to the shorn lamb. But now and again it fails. Belief, with all the sickening things that belief entails, takes sudden hold of us, and the problem then is to retain our own normality. It will be the problem of anyone who reads this booklet. If half of it is true, it will be a terrifying thing to be a German when the war ends; almost as terrible as to be a Pole in Poland to-day. Meanwhile, it is terrifying to think how easy it would be to plunge into savageries of reprisal, and how difficult it will be, whatever happens now, to separate the innocent from the guilty, the reformable from the damned.

NEW SONGS

The Listener has received from the publishers, Arthur H. Stockwell Ltd., Ilfracombe, North Devon, the following songs: "Sometimes," "I'm Back with the Boys Again," "Mothers of England," "Keep Up Your Peckers," "For Democracy," "As Lovely For You," and "Little Children," all composed by James Morrell; "The Devils Have Gone Home" (W. E. Goodison-Orr), "There's a New Road Waiting" (H. Wallis), "The Old Home" (J. Wright), "Each To-morrow" (R. Barrett), "Garden of Dreams" (R. Bros), and "Waltz in My Heart" (W. Hanham), "My Pal" (C. Stowell), "She's the Girl of My Golden Dreams" (P. J. Herbruck), and "Sundown in Devon" (J. Fuller); also "Album Characteristique for Piano, Opus 26," by Adeline Prince.

Ernest Armstrong, of Whakatane (composer of "Sons of the Diggers"), has sent us a copy of his Home Guard Marching Song entitled "Up Guards and At 'Em."

REFERENCE

CENTENNIAL PUBLICATIONS

A most useful reference list of all the books and other publications associated with the Dominion's Centennial has been issued by the Turnbull Library. No worker in this field in the future—unless he is a literary masochist—will think of starting without its aid. It is, in fact, so full, and so sensibly arranged, that it brings a new terror to teachers of history. It runs to 27 pages, and students are not what they used to be if they find fewer than three theses on every page. The compiler is A. G. Bagnall, M.A.

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