

Education by Wireless

W.E.A. Lectures: The Play and the People Series of Lectures from IYA

THE Workers' Education Association of New Zealand is extending its work by wireless lectures. In order to get the best results from these lectures, notes will be published regularly before the lectures. The Otago centre provides the following notes for a lecture on "The Play and the People" to be given by Mr. Lloyd Ross, M.A., LL.B., from Dunedin, on Tuesday, April 23, at 7.30.

Why go to the Theatre?

A MAN was on his way to commit suicide by throwing himself over Waterloo Bridge and happened to come into a theatre for a few minutes, not knowing what sort of entertainment was being given there. It happened to be "Everyman" and he found in it something which gave him enough courage to live. That is one story. In a recent English inquest of a man who had shot himself in a London hotel, it came out that he had gone to see Shakespeare's tragedy "Othello" the night before. The Coroner commented: "Oh, I know it—a most distressing play, with a suicide at the end." That is another story. Is a great play likely to have a depressing or stimulating effect? What does the public want? Why do we go to plays? Such questions can be approached from two points of view. First, we could carry out an investigation of actual playgoers and of those who do not think the drama worth bothering about, or secondly we could give an account of the audiences who have gone to plays in the past. Listeners-in are invited to give their opinions. Here it is proposed to outline the history of the audience.

From Greece to Sussex.

AT Epidaurus there are the ruins of an ancient Greek theatre, which had accommodation for at least 16,000 people. Erected in a valley, the stone seats rose tier upon tier around the stage, so admirably that a person speaking in an ordinary tone from the stage can still be heard perfectly in all parts of the auditorium. Here were performed the Greek plays—mostly tragedies of the life and death, tremendous passions, dreadful deeds of gods' and powerful men. "Agamemnon," for instance, depicts the return of King Agamemnon from the sack of Troy, and his murder by his wife—a sordid domestic tragedy! Although the plays abound in such incidents, these were not enacted on the stage, but were described in long lyrical choruses. A typical modern criticism might be not that the plays were too exciting, but that they were too dull—no action and long speeches. Yet the Greeks flocked to the plays, and we

remember that these Greeks produced magnificent buildings and statuary which are still the glory of the world. What did they see in these plays?

Then we jump across the centuries to Sussex, and there we find villagers performing Greek plays, spending hours in preparation, going to the performances almost as part of a religious rite, enjoying themselves as did the ancient Greeks. Says one witness: "People saw in the plays ideas which they had felt, but had never been able to express. The blacksmith's wife always came in her bath chair and had never yet missed a performance, although she was delicate." It might be worth while to read a Greek play to see whether it has any appeal for our picture-going age.

Shakespeare.

WHILE the Elizabethans liked scenes of madness, drunkenness, vice, and brutality, they were prepared to stand for three hours or more in the pit of the Globe Theatre and listen to the stirring poetry of Shakespeare, watch the tragedies of "Hamlet," "King Lear," and "Othello," unassisted by the scenery and mechanical devices of our day. Shakespeare was a best-seller then, and if we accept the verdict of the "Old Vic" Theatre in modern London, we again feel that given the opportunity at a low price, the masses of the people will flock to the great plays as enthusiastically as did the Elizabethan apprentice. Miss Lilian Bayliss, the organiser of the "Old Vic," declared that the drama had a wonderful effect on tired minds and she thought that it had kept people sane during the war. She remembered one boy who had been blinded in the war: no one could get him to take any interest in life until he was brought one day to the "Old Vic" to a performance of "Mignon." From that time he had quite changed. Everywhere in England, in rural districts as well as in the large towns, in private homes and factories, people are reading plays, and finding in this dramatic work something that makes life fuller and more enjoyable. Some of the experiments will be described in the lecture by Mr. Ross. It would be an interesting adventure to analyse the audiences, past and present. Books and Discussion: "Drama," Ashley Dukes (Home University Library); "Euripides and His Age," Gilbert Murray; "Drama," J. R. Williams (W.E.A. outline); "Modern Drama," Otago W.E.A. Correspondence Course.

Discussion.

IN this lecture we are trying to suggest that the reading, hearing, studying, acting and writing of plays

Economics and the Farmer

American Re-broadcasts

Effort by 2YA

FOR the past two years W.E.A. lectures have been a regular feature on 4YA programmes. They have covered a variety of subjects and have been very informative to listeners.

1YA now announces a very interesting series of twelve lectures, to be given every fortnight. These will be specially for the country people, the subject of the talks being "Economics and the Farmer." The first of the lectures will be given on Thursday, May 2. The lecturer will be Mr. N. M. Richmond, B.A., Director of the W.E.A. for the Auckland district.

When announcing the above series of lectures it is appropriate to mention the great service which the broadcasting stations render to the farming community. It is necessary to refer only to the many informative lectures which are broadcast. These talks, given by experts, have covered the whole gamut of farming operations. For instance, there are those given from 2YA by the Agricultural Department, and the Canterbury Progress League, which early recognised the great value of broadcasting as a means of addressing farmers, has given invaluable advice to those farmers of Canterbury who are equipped with receiving sets. The Broadcasting Company is keenly alive to its duty to the people who live in the country and seeks in every possible way to improve its service for the benefit of farmers. This was instanced recently when special midday sessions were conducted by 3YA solely for the purpose of supplying the harvesters of Canterbury with a weather report.

is a most satisfying recreation whose influence permeates every side of our daily lives. In later lectures we will discuss different aspects of the drama itself. There we are interested in the audience. How do you account for the opposition that until recently was shown to the stage? When there is so much unhappiness in the world, why do people go to tragedies? What do you get out of Shakespeare? Which anecdote at the head of these notes would seem to you the more probable? How do the personnel, the emotions roused, the influence, the social results, the sense of enjoyment vary at a football match, cricket game, bridge party, wireless concert, moving pictures, vaudeville entertainment, plays by A. A. Milne and Shakespeare? See if you can analyse your own feelings. Address all questions or points of discussion to "Secretary, W.E.A., University of Otago," and mark the envelope "Radio Talks."

ON Thursday afternoon, 2YA Wellington went on the air an hour and a half earlier than usual in an effort to pick up the short-wave broadcast by KDKA of the speech by Commander Evangeline Booth in connection with the Booth Centenary. The preliminary announcements as to this effort on the part of 2YA were very cautiously worded, and listeners were specially warned that the success or otherwise of the rebroadcast depended upon the condition of the air obtaining at the time. This cautious attitude was dictated by past experience. Earlier efforts had shown that the success of American broadcasts largely depended upon the time at which the transmission was made. The most successful broadcasts received in New Zealand have been those which have been broadcast in America between the hours of midnight and 3 or 4 a.m. On this occasion Commander Evangeline Booth was speaking at 9 p.m. in the evening, consequently no certainty was felt that the conditions would be such as to enable a brilliant success to be attained. This caution proved unfortunately to be only too well founded. Owing to the condition of atmospherics, the earlier stage of the broadcast was not well heard; consequently disappointment was felt that the enterprise shown by the company in making the effort was so poorly rewarded.

It cannot be made too plain that the rebroadcast of American stations depends for success entirely upon air conditions. In spite of the warning given not to count too much upon results, dealers in some country towns apparently erred in expecting too much. One dealer telegraphed as follows to 2YA:—"Give dealers something to demonstrate on; Yankee rebroadcasts rotten." This gentleman would seem to have made the error of assuming, in spite of the warning given, that the attempt to rebroadcast KDKA was made by the company in the certainty of success. This was not so. The company undertook the effort in the hope of achieving success, but it was never contemplated that dealers should demonstrate on such a precarious foundation. It is further to be pointed out that the company went on the air an hour and a half earlier than ordinary programme time, so that the ordinary programme was not interfered with and its opportunity for dealer demonstration.

Sunday last another, more successful attempt was made to relay W2XAD and KDKA, who were exchanging messages with the Byrd expedition. Though atmospheric conditions were bad, it was possible to follow parts of the relay. In addition, a lecture in progress from W2XAD could be followed reasonably well.

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