



## Four Books Designed to Help The Drama Movement

### One Written by a Christchurch Woman

Four books dealing with the theatre are reviewed on this page to-day. The first, "Play Productions for Amateur Drama Groups," was written by Mrs. A. M. Spence-Clark, an English-woman who has been living in Christchurch for some years. Mrs. Spence-Clark was associated with the English theatre and her knowledge of the stage has been widely employed by amateur drama groups and the Canterbury Repertory Society since her arrival in New Zealand. The three other books are English publications, "One-Act Plays for Players" having been selected by the well-known English playwright and critic, Sydney Box.

IN seventy pages and within the compass of twelve chapters, Mrs. A. M. Spence-Clark's book, "Play Productions for Amateur Drama Groups," covers the range of amateur theatricals, from organising drama groups to the art of make-up. It is essentially a book for small clubs such as those connected with women's institutes, churches and schools, and can be recommended as a practical guide specially written for New Zealand conditions. There are several diagrams illustrating the arrangement of the stage, lighting, layout of properties and so on, and the beginner cannot but be impressed by the clarity and simplicity of this book. The last chapter consists of lists of more than fifty plays (also cast and setting) suitable for the amateur performer. It is a comprehensive survey of the fundamentals of acting and producing, and could well be used by any amateur as a stepping-stone to the more serious business of a theatrical career.

"Play Productions for Amateur Drama Groups." Mrs. A. M. Spence-Clark. National Magazines, Limited. Our copy from the publishers.

### Sydney Box's "One-act Plays for Players"

ONE-ACT plays are bought and read chiefly by those who are looking for plays which will act well. In compiling "One-Act Plays for Players," Sydney Box has recognised the importance of estimating the actability of a play, and he has included eight plays which have been produced at drama festivals in England where they have won prizes given for original plays. Each of these eight plays has been successfully performed, and this is some guarantee that their performance in New Zealand is likely to bring success to amateurs who are looking for something new.

None of the twelve new plays is a really great play, but most of them have themes which are pleasantly original. "Tails Up" is a fantasy of

the future supposing that a mechanised world has almost exhausted all its supplies of petroleum and coal, and has to return to horses and sailing ships. "The Government Regrets," by Sydney Box, the compiler of the volume, is an expressionist comedy-drama where we are shown a meeting of Cabinet, which deals with typical social problems in a manner which is provocative of thoughtful laughter.

"Arising out of the Minutes" provides acting opportunities for eleven women who represent the harassed committee of a ladies' club. The most powerful play of the twelve is "Derelect," by Philip Johnson. Here is a play for a woman who can act with every shade of feeling the part of a girl bribed to ruin a man in a sailors' public-house.

Good, new one-act plays are hard to find, but most societies will find at least one play in this book which will be suitable for production, and several which are worth reading aloud in drama groups. There is, however, no simple, straightforward comedy in the book. The Canterbury Repertory Society is producing two of these plays next month.

"One-Act Plays for Players." Selected by Sydney Box. Harrap. Our copy from the publishers.

### Two New Books For Amateur Actors

"The Amateur Actor," by Frances Mackenzie, is a thoroughly practical book based entirely upon the author's own experience on the professional stage and in conducting classes for amateurs. Miss Mackenzie is organ-

ising director of drama schools for the British Drama League. In this book she deals with all the most important problems, artistic and technical, with which amateur actors and producers are faced, including speech, movement, gesture, the creation of atmosphere, working to a climax, entrances and exits, falls and many more, and provides a really sound series of exercises which will enable the amateur player to master the elementary technique of acting, and which will be equally valuable to the producer who has to coach his players. There is also a remarkably valuable chapter on stage management, the stage manager's duties and his relations with the producer, the prompter, rehearsals, scene shifting, and the preparation of a proper prompt book. This little handbook should be in the hands of every amateur player and producer. There is not a wasted word in the book, and the exercises, if followed, would improve any amateur player's technique.

The chief virtue of the plays contained in "Plays Without Fees," selected by John Hampden, is that they may be played without incurring any performing fee. Their other virtues escape me. The plays included are "Opportunity," a drama in one act by R. J. McGregor; "Other Times, Other Manners," a burlesque in two scenes by John Permain; "Aunt Deborah," a farce in one act by Nora Ratcliff; "Celestial Meeting," a farcical sketch by Clive Sansom; "The Friendly Waiter," a comedy in one act by Evelyn Smith; "Gabriel Grub," a mime play by Gladys Wiles. The first four are now published for the first time. I don't know why.

"The Amateur Actor." Frances Mackenzie. "Plays Without Fees." Selected by John Hampden. Thomas Nelson. Our copies from the publisher.

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