

# She Makes You See Things

## Ruth Draper—The Woman Who Acts Alone

by  
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**N**EW ZEALAND is worried about the need to fill its bare, open spaces and defend its shores. Without having recourse to Japanese immigrants, I suggest that the easiest way out of the population difficulty might be for the Government to hire Ruth Draper to conjure up imaginary people to settle on our land and swell the ranks of our army.

Absurd? Yes, of course. Yet within the four walls of a theatre, Ruth Draper can do something like that. With nothing more to help her than a couple of chairs, a table, a shawl and a few hats, and a man to pull up the curtain, she is able, in her amazing character studies, to people the stage with imaginary performers and make them live so effectively that the audience does not look at her but at the other characters whom she has created from thin air and the magic of her art.

I have not yet seen Ruth Draper myself, but I have spoken with those who have attended her performances in London, and they tell me there really is something almost magical about this slight, middle-aged woman who acts alone. In a more superstitious age she would quite possibly have been burnt as a witch.

Call it "mass hypnotism" if you like, but when Miss Draper appears alone on the stage she has a company of all the talents behind her. Like a wizard she summons them one by one from the thin air and gives them shape and reality in the mind of her audience.

"She sits at a table and makes believe to call someone on the telephone," a friend told me. "With her very first words you know, by the subtle tones of her voice, what kind of person it is she is talking to. . . . She rings for a maid, and she makes you see a rosy cheeked, white-capped damsel enter the room to answer the ring. . . . She clicks her

**T**HIS is not an interview with Ruth Draper, the "one woman stage company." In the first place Miss Draper is not yet in New Zealand to be interviewed. But even if she were here, it is quite possible that she would not grant an interview. She might, of course; but on the other hand this world-renowned American artist is unique not only in her ability to people a bare stage with up to 50 imaginary performers, but also in her dislike of personal publicity. Her current tour of Australia is said to mark the first time in 23 years that she has broken her silence and granted an interview to the Press.

fingers—and a dog comes bounding in from your imagination. You not only see a dog, you also see what kind of a dog, and how big it is. . . ."

In Melbourne recently Ruth Draper put on a sketch involving an artist (she was the artist, of course), and having gone through all the mimicry of an artist putting down her palette and brush and paints, she walked off the stage. There was a silence in the audience, broken when someone said: "Look—she's forgotten her paints and brush and things!"

It was as vivid as that.

### How It Began

**T**HERE are several stories about the way Ruth Draper began the career which has won her fame in Eng-

land, the Continent, the U.S.A., South Africa, and Australia, and which soon will be winning her fame in New Zealand if New Zealand audiences know how to appreciate a unique experience.

It is said that, more than 20 years ago, a young and sincere American actress played her first part in New York. She was a failure, but she did not retire defeated. She decided she could act better with an imaginary cast than a real one. And so, for many years, this slim, dark, quiet woman has peopled the stage around her with all the characters she needs—a rich and varied tribe



RUTH DRAPER in character for one of her sketches. "In a Church in Italy." . . . "Confound the woman!" said A. P. Herbert.

Another story—and I think the better one—says it all started at a dinner (Contd. on p. 40.)