

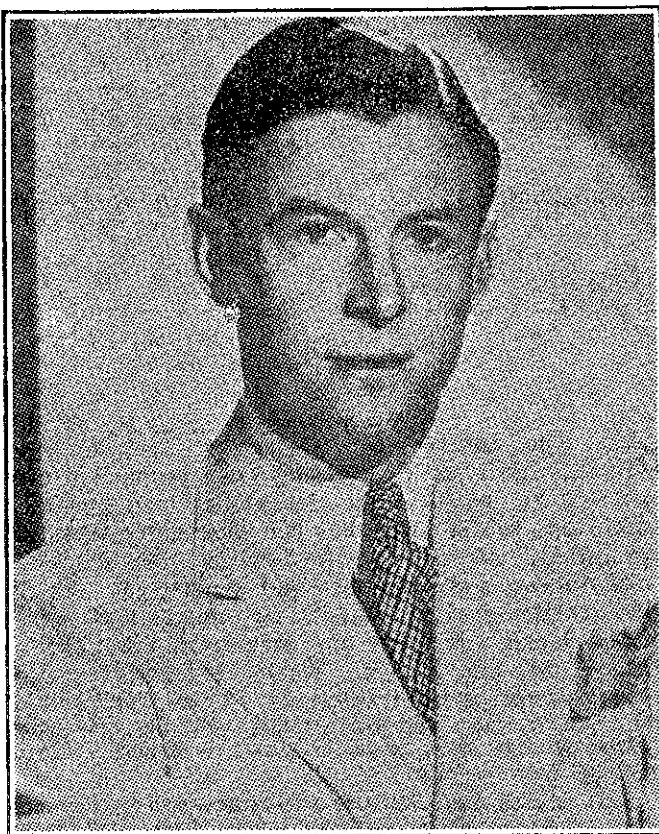
# DOES IT PAY DEBTS?

## *Dunedin Repertory Success Is NOT Built On Recalcitrance*

Special to the "Record"

by

C. H. FORTUNE



COLIN TAPLEY.

... Product of Dunedin Repertory circles who left home early to make his mark in world drama. Tapley will be starred for the first time in "Boo-loo," a Paramount picture with a native cast, shortly to be shown in New Zealand.

**"R**EPERTORY BLUES" and authors' dues seem the common complaint among New Zealand amateur dramatic societies lately. The dues, with blues to follow, are as "catching" as measles among Polynesian natives.

But there is one group at least that stands firmly immune from the national infection. The Dunedin Repertory Society, with a membership of 1026, looks forward joyfully to long years of health. Some say, to death with the traitors! that the secret of its prosperity is that it just doesn't pay any royalties! With magnificent success, it ignores authors.

That, however, is not quite true. Certainly, few payments were made until last year, but the royalties were definitely not ignored. Mostly they were paid into a special account, as they were incurred, and held under reserve. The economics of the policy need no discussion here, but the fact remains that by last year the society had put aside £191/2/- in fees, which were then paid in lump sum.

Actually, therefore, the Dunedin society did not climb upward by bold grinding of the faces of authors. It has paid its way fairly and, what is more, is prepared to go on paying. In the future it has promised to give authors' rights' associations no more worries, but will pay "on the nail" every time.

**SO** much for the accusation that the society is recalcitrant about its debts: now let us examine the history of this progressive group. It may well provide useful clues for other societies which are just now going through the New Zealand species of dramatic slump.

The idea of forming a Repertory Society in Dunedin was conceived by Miss Bessie Thomson, later producer-in-chief, who was assisted in her campaign by Mr. A. C. Stephens. A meeting was held in her studio in 1933, and the society was formed. Mrs. Richard Hudson was appointed president, an office she still holds, and Mr. Stephens became chairman.

The first play presented was Noel Coward's "I Leave It To You," produced by Mr. Reg. Tapley. Mr. Richard White, to-day probably the most outstanding amateur actor in Dunedin, produced the second play, and Major F. H. Lampen was responsible for a third. The fourth, Barrie's "Dear Brutus," was handled by Miss Thomson, annually appointed producer from then on until she sailed for

**S**OME say there are dark and dirty secrets behind the steady success of the Dunedin Repertory Society. This article tells the truth about authors' fees and what the Society has been doing about them.

London last November on leave of absence. At present she is continuing her dramatic studies in London, but is due in Dunedin at the end of the year.

Barrie's "Dear Brutus" was a triumph, establishing the society firmly in public favour. It paved the way for other fine productions, of which the most important were "Libel," "And So To Bed," "The Skin Game," and "Pygmalion."

"Pygmalion," incidentally, saw the first use of "real rain" on the New Zealand amateur stage. Some of the prim and proper raised their eyebrows at the dialogue until they realised it was a Shaw play. Shaw, like the King, can do no wrong according to theatre-goers.

The society has now entered its sixth year, and celebrated the event recently by presenting "Spring Tide," delightful

comedy of George Billam and J. B. Priestley—another addition to the society's list of outstanding achievements.

**T**HE society presents four plays each year, mainly in

His Majesty's Theatre, but its activities are not restricted to public performances. Social evenings are held monthly in the Town Hall Concert Chamber, where the average attendance of members and guests last year was estimated at 668. In the beginning these meetings took place in the St. Paul's Schoolroom, but that soon proved too small. Later the King Street Tabernacle and the Women's Club were hired, but increase in membership made necessary the removal to the Concert Chamber.

This social side of the society's work has done much to cement membership. Three three-act plays and 24 one-act plays were presented last year at the monthly gatherings, always followed by supper and dancing.

Outstanding event of last year (Contd. on page 38.)