

"INTERLUDE" Prize Winning Drama

THE play given here, "Interlude," was awarded second place in the Play Competition instituted by the "N.Z. Dairy Exporter" and the "Radio Record." Prizes of £5/5/-, £4/4/- and £3/3/- were offered for original plays suitable for presentation by women only within a time limit of from twenty to thirty minutes. The winning play was published last week. The purpose was to make available original plays suitable for presentation by those interested in drama in the circles of the Women's Institute and Women's Division. The detailed award was:—"The Signal," by Helen Gordon (1); "Interlude," by Constance Merritt (2); "Aunt Lizzie's Friend," by Olive McKenzie (3).

Mrs. Conway (loudly, with harshness): "Boy! Pull that damned punkah!"

(The movement of the punkah quickens suddenly. As Mrs. Conway continues her reading a mutter of voices is heard off-stage.)

Mrs. Proctor (off-stage): "No, I'll show myself in."

(Mrs. Proctor is seen to pass the windows, back-stage and enters through arched doorway. She is a tall, thin, fussy, but well-meaning woman, and has a breathless, jerky manner of speech. She is flurried and nervous in demeanour, and remains standing.)

Mrs. Conway (putting down book on table): "How d' you do, Mrs. Proctor, won't you sit down? Pardon my not rising, it's so hot. (With slight reproach.) Too hot for you to be rushing over here to see me!"

Mrs. Proctor (moving quickly towards the sofa, and with suppressed excitement): "You see—Oh, but I just had to come and see you at once. (Here she pauses as if at loss to proceed). . . . It's difficult to know how to begin—"

Mrs. Conway (matter-of-fact): "All the more reason why you should sit down."

(Mrs. Proctor sits on edge of wicker chair near end of sofa, and her hands nervously twist handkerchief.)

Mrs. P. (suddenly): "It's about your boy—"

Mrs. C.: "Cook! Has that black devil been drinking and got married again? Six times is a little—"

Mrs. P.: "No! No! Mrs. Conway. It's your son, I mean."

Mrs. C. (carelessly): Oh, Peter!

Mrs. P.: Yes, yes, Peter and Mrs. Brodie. (With great scorn): That woman! Old enough to be his mother, too! Both myself and Mr. Proctor thought that you should know, so I came over at once. Of course, you can't guess how far it's gone—and, as I said to Jim, you would never suspect your own friend of such deceitful behaviour.

(Mrs. Conway starts to speak, but Mrs. P. cuts her short.)

Mrs. P.: I know, Mrs. Conway, I know, it's hard to credit it, but it is a sad fact. The ingratitude of it! Why, I remember her wedding to Simon Brodie here in this very house. No sister could have done more for her than you did. Indeed, she would never have met Simon but you—and Peter!—I remember he and my John ran out from the wedding breakfast to play some boys' game on the veranda! Why, it's not only shameful, but it's absurd!

Mrs. C. (heavily, musingly): But love often seems absurd.

Mrs. P.: Love! (Snorts indig-

Characters:

Mary Conway, Zetta Brodie, Mrs. Proctor.

SCENE: The living-room of Mrs. Conway's bungalow in Kurali, a hill-station in India. Left is a fireplace and mantelpiece on which stand a large photograph of a boy aged about 22, and a few odd ornaments. Set at right angles to fireplace, slightly to back of room, is a long Chesterfield, at far end of which is a small table on which lie books, magazines, with a large goliwog propped up against them. Round the fireplace are two or three wicker chairs. The back wall is practically taken up by large windows, except to right, where an arched doorway is hung with mosquito netting. Through the open windows can be seen the posts of the veranda, beyond which is a typical Indian hill scene. Right of archway is a small table on which is a telephone. A decanter, syphon, and a box of cigarettes are on the sideboard, which stands against the right wall. Overhead a punkah, pulled by means of cords through the right wall, moves continuously.

TIME: Late afternoon.

As the curtain rises, Mary Conway, rather a masculine, middle-aged woman, dressed in light tropical clothing, is lying on the couch facing centre stage. She is smoking a cigarette and reading. She fans herself impatiently from time to time.



Five years before you came to India, I met a man who meant everything to me. This new power swept me right off my feet and I hovered, blinded by the glory of such happiness as I had never known existed.

nanity.) She has no right to love him. (Mrs. C. moves nervously on sofa.) What of Simon? He's been a good husband to her for years. Why can't she be satisfied with him, instead of chasing after Peter like some infatuated school-girl. (Gasps, surprised by her own eloquence.) Someone must stop her—

Mrs. C. (suddenly seeming to arouse herself from her own meditation, sternly, holding up her hand): One moment, please, Mrs. Proctor!

(Rises from couch and moves centre-stage, Mrs. P.'s gaze following her.)

Mrs. C.: Am I to understand that your mission here has been for the sole purpose of passing on to me the idle talk of scandal-mongers concerning my son and my friend, any truth of which I must surely be only too painfully aware?

Mrs. P. (hurt): No! No, Mrs. Conway. I am surprised that you should think that of me. You don't understand. There's more than that—I heard of it through my cook. You know, he's Mrs. Brodie's cook's brother. I know he was telling the truth. He said Mrs. Brodie was all packed and ready to leave for Bombay to-night to join Peter on his leave. He said they were going to England and would probably never come back!

(Mrs. C. is obviously horrified; she sits down limply on sofa, gripping the arm tightly.)

Mrs. C. (flatly): To-night! (Wonderingly.) So soon! I never dreamed. (Suddenly getting a hold on herself.) But that is impossible! Your cook is lying. (Rises, and paces anxiously to and fro.)

Mrs. P.: (Also rising and following Mrs. C. up and down the room): But I assure you it is true. (Wringing her hands.) Oh, my dear, what can we do?

Mrs. C.: (Sharply and stopping suddenly in her pacing and turning on Mrs. P.): Do! Do! Why, nothing, of course. If what you say is true, then it lies entirely between Peter and Zetta Brodie. It is not for you or me to interfere now. (Mrs. P. commences to protest.) Oh, yes! Yes, I fully appreciate your desire to help, but I must think it over, and if you don't mind I'd rather be alone. (As if to herself): To think it has reached such a crisis already. How blind I've been!

Mrs. P. (obviously only too glad to get away): By all means, my dear (crossing and patting Mrs. C.'s hand), and send for me if I can be of any assistance. (Walking to exit.) And don't you be too soft with that woman. Think of Peter, my dear, think of him

(Exit through doorway as Mrs. B. is seen to approach past windows. As the two meet in doorway, Mrs. P. steps aside to let her (Continued on page 29))