

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

CONDITIONS OF MEMBERSHIP.

INDIVIDUAL Membership of the League may be acquired by the payment of an annual subscription of £1.1s. At the same subscription any organized Society or group of not less than ten persons may become affiliated to the Drama League, and as an affiliated Society shall acquire and exercise all the privileges afforded by the League. Subscriptions count as from January 1st or July 1st, whichever date is nearer to the first application for membership. Life membership (for Individuals only) can be acquired by a single payment of twelve Guineas.

The Library of over 50,000 volumes is available to all members of the League and affiliated Societies who may borrow under their subscription three books at a time without extra charge, and complete acting or reading sets of any published play for a fee of 2/6 for one week, 3/6 for three weeks, or 5/- for six weeks, postage extra.

Other privileges of membership include the free receipt of the League's bulletin, *War-Time Drama*, the right to consult the Information Bureau on any matter connected with the Stage, advice on the running of Drama Festivals, the right to a free criticism of an original MS. play, Postal Course in Play-writing, etc. etc. Experts are available by arrangement to advise on, or help with, the initiation of every kind of dramatic activity, professional or amateur. Special attention is given to the requirements of H.M. Forces as well as of Schools, Rural Groups and Youth Clubs. In certain circumstances these last may affiliate to the League at half the normal fee.

Further particulars, with a free Specimen Copy of the League's journal, may be obtained from THE DIRECTOR, BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE, 9 Fitzroy Square, London. W.1. Telephone: EUSton 2666.

**TWENTYFIVE
YEARS OF THE**

**BRITISH
DRAMA
LEAGUE**

MCMXIX-MCMXLIV

**(Facsimile of booklet produced to
commemorate twenty-fifth anniversary, 1944)**

MCMXIX

Public inauguration of the British Drama League took place at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, on June 22nd, 1919. The speakers included Sir Michael Sadler (in the Chair), the Rt. Hon. J. R. Clynes, M.P., Lady Denman, Lena Ashwell, the Rev. H.R.L. Sheppard, J. Fisher White, Ben Greet and Laurence Binyon. "The Drama", said Mr. Whitworth, was *par excellence* the art of the people, and the Theatre everybody's business. It was therefore essential that the League should include representatives of every interest involved. That this ideal was put into practice may be seen from the original list of patrons and Committee members printed on the second page of the cover. The Haymarket Theatre meeting was widely noticed in the press, so that the League found itself immediately 'on the map' as a National Institution. Already, too, it had secured the support of the man who at that time, above all others, by his experience of the theatre, by his personal prestige, by his directive genius, was in a unique position to ensure the success of the undertaking. Harley Granville-Barker accepted the chairmanship of the Council, and in that capacity most generously applied himself to the task of steering the ship of the League through the first twelve years of her uncharted voyage. The publicity obtained from the inaugural meeting was followed up, at the suggestion of Elsie Fogerty, by the organization of the first Theatre Conference ever held in this country, at Stratford-on-Avon in the following August. This was attended by delegates of theatrical organizations, by professional actors, managers, producers, scene-designers, educationists and social workers. Speakers included the Bishop of Birmingham, William Archer, Lord Burnham, Granville-Barker, Miss Horniman and many others. At the penultimate meeting on Thursday, August 25th, the following summary resolutions were proposed and carried.- (1) 'That this Conference urges the importance of establishing a National Theatre policy adequate to the needs of the people, and a Faculty of the Theatre at the Universities of the country, with the necessary Colleges.' (2) 'That this Conference pledges itself to promote and assist collective and individual efforts in the development of the art of Acting, Drama and the Theatre as forces in the life of the Nation'

THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE
INCORPORATING THE VILLAGE DRAMA SOCIETY

Officers and Committee-Members, 1944 :

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C.M.Haines	E.J.P.Mace	Florence Smith

WINNERS IN THE NATIONAL FESTIVAL

- 1927 Wyndham's Theatre. Welwyn Garden City Society in *Mr. Sampson*, by Charles Lee. Judges: Miss Cathleen Nesbitt, Mr. W. A. Darlington and Mr. John Drinkwater.
- 1928 New Theatre. Ardrossan & Saltcoats Players Club in *The Old Lady Shows Her Medals*, by J. M. Barrie. Judges: Miss Lilian Braithwaite, Mr. E. A. Bourne and Mr. Nigel Playfair.
- 1929 Wyndham's Theatre. Liverpool Playgoers Club in *The Devil Among the Skins*, by Ernest Goodwin. Judges: Miss Sybil Thorndike, Sir Barry Jackson and Mr. Joseph Thorp.
- 1930 Queen's Theatre. Hampstead Play and Pageant Union in *The Man Who Wouldn't Go To Heaven*, by F. Sladen-Smith. Judges: Miss Irene Vanbrugh and Mr. Ivor Brown.
- 1931 Globe Theatre. Falkirk High School F. P. Dramatic Club in *Ardvorlich's Wife*, by Gordon Bottomley. Judges: Miss Edith Craig, Mr. Cedric Hardwicke and Mr. Charles Morgan.
- 1932 Garrick Theatre. The Players Club, Beaconsfield, in *On the High Road*, by Tchekov. Judges: Miss Auriol Lee, Mr. Clifford Bax and Mr. Nicholas Hannen.
- 1933 The Old Vic. Birkenhead Institute Old Boys Dramatic Society in *The Road of Poplars*, by Vernon Sylvain. Judges: Miss Haidee Wright, Mr. Anmer Hall and Mr. Mordaunt Shairp.
- 1934 The Old Vic. The Barr and Stroud Dramatic Club, Glasgow in *What Every Woman Knows (Act 1)*, by J. M. Barrie. Judges: Miss Fabia Drake, Mr. Ivor Brown and Mr. Edmund Gwenn.
- 1935 The Old Vic. The Welwyn Thaliens in *Not This Man*, by Sydney Box. Judges: Miss Flora Robson, Mr. Lewis Casson and Mr. Tyrone Guthrie.
- 1936 The Old Vic. The Guild of Abbey Players, Abingdon, in *The Spartan Girl* by A. J. Talbot. Judges: Miss Irene Hentschel. Mr. Henry Cass and Mr. John Drinkwater.
- 1937 The Old Vic. Newcastle Y.W.C.A. Dramatic Club in *The Willing Spirit*, by Esther McCracken. Judges: Miss Violet Vanbrugh, Mr. Ronald Adam and Mr. William Armstrong.
- 1938 Theatre Royal, Glasgow. Midland Bank Dramatic Society in *Count Albany*, by Donald Carswell. Judges: Miss Marie Ney, Mr. James Bridie and Mr. Norman Marshall.
- 1939 The Scala Theatre. Unity Theatre, London, in *Plant in the Sun*, by Ben Bengal. Judges: Miss Louise Hampton, Mr. Tyrone Guthrie and Mr. Stephen Williams.

MCMXX

DRAMA in Education formed the main plank in the League's platform for its second year. In January a meeting was held at University College in connection with the Annual Conference of Educational Associations. This brought a goodly number of accessions to the membership. It also foreshadowed a deputation to the President of the Board of Education with the object of submitting the resolutions passed at the Stratford Conference. They were formally presented by Mr. W. L. Courteney and Sir Sydney Lee. Mr. Fisher showed himself in full sympathy with their spirit, and went so far as to commit himself to the observation 'that it would be consonant with the English political tradition that any step which the Government might take in the way of helping the Theatre should be in aid of schemes initiated by local enterprise and assisted by local contributions'. This was the first public admission on the part of a Cabinet Minister that the status of Drama might justify State recognition in the form of grants in aid. Following the deputation, representatives of the League were invited to meet the Board with a view to discussing practical measures for the carrying out of our policy, particularly in respect of the place of Drama in the curriculum of Colleges and Training Schools.

In May, contact was made with the Federation of Women's Institutes, and the League was invited to arrange the dramatic section of their Exhibition at the Royal Horticultural Hall. The League also judged competition plays from many Women's Institutes, and speeches were made at the annual W.I. meeting by Lord Burnham and others.

Recourse to the League on the part of an increasing number of outside bodies began to be noticeable. These included the League of Nations Union, the London District Command, the Workers Educational Association, the Village Clubs Association and the London Council of Public Morality. The League also acquired official representation on the Council of the Leisure of the People, the National Council of Social Service and the National Alliance of Employers and Employed.

The work of the office continued to expand, and the staff was joined by Miss Frances Briggs, previously secretary to Miss Lilian Baylis, whose unflinching service has continued as a major asset to the league over the whole period covered by this record.

THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

Officers and Committee-Members, 1919

President

Lord Howard de Walden

Vice-Presidents:

Viscount Burnham	Viscount Rothermere	Sir Vincent Caillard
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John Drinkwater	The Hon. Mrs. Alfred Lyttelton	Norman Wilkinson
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Elsie Fogerty	Actors' Association)
Edyth Goodall	Norman Page
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The Executive Committee is composed of the Chairmen of the above Sub-Committees. under the Chairmanship of Mr. Charles Tennyson

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William Archer	Robert Bridges	Professor Gilbert Murray

AND AFTER

EXIGENCIES Of War-time entail the preparation of this booklet long before year's end, but at the time of going to press the membership of the League had risen to a record total of 5000, and plans were on foot for two events (if the military situation permits) to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the League: (i) a travelling exhibition of exemplary designs for the building or re-building of post-war stages, and (2) a Conference in London which will offer an impartial platform for the discussion of urgent problems facing the Theatre in the days ahead.

Conspicuous among these problems is the relationship between public and private enterprise. The League has never desired the nationalization of the Theatre, and is critical of any departmental control which, in the name of social welfare, might spoil the integrity of theatre art, hinder commercial initiative, or enfeeble the spontaneous creative impulse of theatre artists. At the same time, one of our main preoccupations has always been the Theatre's claim to be recognised by the State. It is not for nothing that every Annual Conference of the League has been inaugurated by a Civic Reception, or that the delegates have been welcomed at a special service in the cathedral or parish church of the city or town in which the Conference has been hold. As a result, the Stage has become reputable as never before, Civic Authorities have grown drama conscious, while the League's recurrent contacts with the Board of Education and the annual presence of the President of the Board at our Community Festival can have had no slight effect in 'softening' the official attitude. This is shown in many ways, not least by the State-aided drama policy of C.E.M.A., and by the grants now allotted by many County Education Authorities for drama advisers and for the spread of dramatic recreation in the Service of Youth.

For the rest, the League awaits the future not unhelpfully. This is indeed a year of crisis. But already, maybe, the wheel is almost turned full circle. Who knows how soon, at the end of a second world conflict, it may be our task once again, in words already quoted, 'to help to lead a blindly groping and war-worn world into the old paths of peace. for in love and beauty and delight there is no death, no change'.

MCMXLIII

FOLLOWING the closure of the League's Costume Department the Council decided that it would be better to dispose of the costumes than to allow them to deteriorate in store during the war period. At the same time, it was brought to their notice that the rooms hitherto occupied by the Costume Department could be readily adapted as a small theatre. The work of reconstruction was put in hand and under the title of 'The Practice Theatre' the little playhouse was officially opened on Midsummer Eve with a performance of *Spring Green Lady* by Eleanor Farjeon, and *Puck's Post* by Olga Katzin, the latter having been specially written for the occasion. In both cases the players were drawn from members of London Youth Clubs. Viscount Esher presided, an address was given by Mr. E. Chuter Ede M.P. and a prologue was spoken by Miss Peggy Ashcroft. The theatre is not licensed for public performances, but is very suitable for private productions, classes or rehearsals. The Decor is by Maxwell Armfield, R.W.S.

A further development was the institution of The Play Encouragement Committee to promote the writing and performance of plays vitally concerned with the war effort or dealing constructively with the national and international problems arising from the war. The Committee met twelve times during the year, and considered 158 MSS., some of which were circulated to societies affiliated to the League and elsewhere. The Committee also organized a series of discussions on the provision of dramatic material suited to various fields of war-time activity, the first being addressed by Stephen Spender. At subsequent meetings the speakers were Walter Hudd, J. B. Priestley, Major Michael MacOwan, Dr. C. E. M. Joad, Miss Frances Mackenzie and Dr. J. J. Mallon. No fewer than 105 MSS. were also submitted for the League's ordinary critical service, compared with 28 in 1942.

The other war-time activities of the League continued on an even larger scale than before, but the most important event of the year was without doubt the visit so graciously paid by the Queen to our Headquarters on Thursday afternoon, December 2nd. On this notable occasion Her Majesty witnessed a rehearsal of Youth Club Leaders in the Practice Theatre, inspected the Library, and viewed the model for the National Theatre designed by the late Sir Edwin Lutyens and Mr. Cecil Macy.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

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AT THE ALDEN PRESS

MCMXLII

The growth of membership during this year was most remarkable, which was satisfactory not only from our point of view, but as proof of the revival of cultural activity in the country at large. The demands from Youth Clubs especially became quite a problem of administration, and out of 160 students who attended the Summer School at Bournemouth, over 100 were Youth Leaders or concerned in Youth Club work.

Two hundred and eighty-one Service Units were now affiliated to the League and the Library received a grant from the Army Welfare Department in aid of this service. A consignment of 2067 volumes of modern plays was selected and dispatched to the Middle East to the order of the War Office. The League also took a prominent part in promoting dramatic entertainment under the Ministry of Labour scheme for Holidays at Home.

Although the war inevitably severed many contacts between the League and European countries, relations with the Theatre in the Soviet Union were well maintained, while under the aegis of the British Council, British Institutes in Madrid, Lisbon, Alexandria, Cairo, Mansoura, Minia, Jaffa, Haifa, Baghdad, Khartoum, Santiago and Valparaiso joined the League. Copies of *War-Time Drama* in bulk were sent to Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Bogota and Cairo. Three hundred of every issue were dispatched to Sydney for the New South Wales branch.

Post-war planning was now the order of the day in many spheres, and a special Committee was set up by the Council to draft a scheme for state-aided Civic Theatres after the war. The memorandum was endorsed by British Actors Equity, and distinguished people in many walks of life, headed by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The scheme was submitted to the Prime Minister, the President of the Board of Education, and the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts, which later evinced much sympathy with the scheme, and indicated its willingness to consider such specific proposals as might be referred to them. The scheme won widespread and almost unanimous support from the Press, and is now under consideration by the Civic Authorities of Birmingham, Nottingham, Grimsby, Newcastle, Wolverhampton and other centres.

MCMXLI

THE Service of Youth recently initiated by the Board of Education offered a new and important opportunity for the spread of drama among young people. Special sessions for Youth Club Leaders were held at our Summer Drama School and the attention of the Board of Education was drawn to the importance of drama as an educational, recreative and character-building force. On Wednesday, October 22nd, Mr. E. Chuter Ede, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, received a deputation from the League. A number of practical suggestions were put forward with which Mr. Chuter Ede professed himself in full sympathy. He concluded by welcoming the British Drama League as a valuable agent in the promotion of acting among young people and said he was willing to do anything in his power to assist it. With a view to fostering this important activity, the admission of bona fide Youth Clubs working under the Board of Education scheme was authorized at half the normal subscription, provided that the appropriate County or County Borough Youth Committee was itself affiliated to the League on the usual terms.

The use of the Library by members of H.M. forces was increasing rapidly. Play-reading Circles were formed by the Education Officers of various units, but in many cases requests for books came from the men themselves. This occurred not only in this country. The Library received applications for books from several groups in so distant an outpost as Iceland. An arrangement was also made with the British Council under which books could be regularly supplied to many refugee groups from foreign parts.

To supervise the rationing of materials for stage costumes in the professional theatre the Board of Trade had appointed an Advisory Committee representing the main branches of the entertainment industry. At the request of the Board the British Drama League appointed a separate Advisory Committee for amateur performances. In spite of an emergency grant of £500 voted by the Carnegie Trust for the previous year, the 1941 balance-sheet showed but a small surplus. The fact was that a steep decline in membership had occurred in the autumn and winter of 1940, but during the latter part of this year new members began to pour in, and it was clear that for the League, as well as for the country as a whole, the worst was over.

**TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF THE
BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE
MCMXIX-MCMXLIV**

**Ludit qui bene laborat
Laborat qui bene ludit**

**LONDON
9 FITZROY SQUARE
W. 1**

FOREWORD

THIS brief chronicle makes no attempt to provide an exhaustive history of the British Drama League, a thing which in the space at our disposal would be manifestly impossible. It should be accepted rather as a kind of anthology of such endeavours and achievements as may best, taken together, permit a bird's-eye view of the first five-and- twenty years of the League's life. A few comments and figures are added here and there as a background to the picture. It is hoped that the record may not be without some interest to the general reader; but it is dedicated more particularly to the older members of the League as a reminder of the tradition they have helped to form, as well as to those newer members who will not wish to be unmindful of the tradition they inherit.

MCMXL

THE Annual Report for the year ended October 31st shows that the League's total membership had fallen to 2,503 as against 3,739 in the previous year. The membership of societies had suffered more than that of individuals, and of the societies the larger more than the smaller. But the policy of concentration on activities specifically related to the war effort (whether conducted by members of the League or not) was continued. and the League was soon officially represented on the Central Consultative Council of the Ministry of Labour, the Central Advisory Council for Adult Education in H.M. Forces, the Central Committee of E.N.S.A., the Art and Entertainment Emergency Council. and the newly constituted joint Drama Committee carried on at the National Council of Social Service.

Early in the year the League was approached by the War Office Comforts Committee with a request for the provision of costumes and other stage requisites for amateur performances by members of the B.E.F. in France. Nine large consignments of costumes and make-up requisites were dispatched in the early spring. With the withdrawal of the B.E.F. from France, it was decided that the same provision should be continued to the troops at home, and 78 costume outfits were circulated among various military establishments. That this assistance was appreciated is shown by the following letter from the Entertainments Officer, H.Q. 5th Div. Home Forces: 'Once again I write to thank you for being so kind as to send this Division's Concert Party a make-up box and costumes. In all my dealings with societies who profess to help entertainment in the Services, I must confess, so far as we are concerned, the British Drama League is the only one that really does magnificent work.'

The Community Theatre Festival was abandoned for the time being, but owing to a grant from the Committee for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts, the League was enabled to guarantee adjudication fees where a loss was shown on any local Festival.

The Council was assured that there would still be a place for Drama Schools of a specialized character, and Frances Mackenzie was re-engaged as Adviser for Amateur Drama with special reference to the organization of Schools. A very successful one was held at the Memorial Theatre, Stratford-on-Avon, from August 17th to 24th.

MCMXXXIX

THE outbreak of war on September 3rd came as no surprise to the country. Nevertheless, up to that date the League had carried on as usual. Summer schools were held at Bangor and Stratford-on-Avon, and the League was active in support of the National Theatre Committee which had just acquired a site for the Theatre in South Kensington. However, it was held wise to close our Headquarters on the commencement of hostilities; but they were reopened on September 18th, with the exception of the Costume Department, the Schools Department and the Village Drama Section. These closures resulted in the dispersal to various forms of war service of 19 out of a staff of 29.

Under the auspices of the Ministry of Information the Director was enabled during October to attend meetings specially called by the Ministry at Newcastle, Leeds, Manchester, Nottingham, Birmingham, Bristol and Tunbridge Wells. Invitations were sent to Drama League officials in each region and to certain other representative people. The general policy of the amateur movement in war-time was freely discussed, and a lead given for its maintenance, so far as war-conditions might permit.

In those days of uncertainty, when the nation was still confused by the dark prospect before it, it was naturally an open question whether cultural activities of any sort would have either the opportunity or the duty to carry on. Light, however, was thrown on this dilemma by a message received at the close of the year from the President of the Board of Education.

'I am very glad to know', wrote Earl de la Warr, that the British Drama League is managing to carry on some of its work during this period of emergency. It is already becoming clear that in present conditions there is more need than ever before for certain kinds of recreation and leisure activities, especially in the reception areas. I am particularly glad, therefore, to find the British Drama League giving attention to this problem and stimulating home-made entertainment of a kind in which everybody can take part. Drama and Music will form one of the best antidotes to boredom and listlessness which many people must be feeling at the present time, and I look to organizations like the British Drama League to play an important part in keeping up the Home Front.'

THE GERM

IN the autumn of 1918, Mr. Harry Leggatt, of the Workers Educational Association, was conducting a series of play-readings in the Y.M.C.A. hut attached to the Vickers Armstrong works at Crayford, Kent. One of these readings was attended by Geoffrey Whitworth who was at once aware of what was, for him, a wholly novel manifestation of dramatic art. He thought how fine it would be if what was being done at Crayford might be done elsewhere, and after consultation with friends it was decided that the time was ripe for a concerted effort, not only to encourage amateur play-readings, but to provide a focus of revival in all aspects of the art of the stage.

That was a moment of social idealism comparable with what we find to-day, but unassisted by the State and entirely dependent, therefore, on the enthusiasm of individuals. Among the small circle of pioneers who planned the British Drama League were Lena Ashwell, Edith Craig, J. Fisher White, Elsie Fogerty, Penelope Wheeler, Norman Wilkinson, W. J. Turner and Charles Tennyson. Early in 1919 they convened a private meeting at the house of Mrs. Robert Mathias, under the chairmanship of Roger Fry. The object of the league was there defined as 'the encouragement of the art of the Theatre, both for its own sake and as a means of intelligent recreation among all classes of the community'. Expenses of running the League were estimated at £5000 a year. It was actually started on a capital of £400, contributed for the most part by Lord Howard de Walden (our first President) and Robert Mond (our first Hon. Treasurer). On these slender resources a one-room office was rented in Southampton Street, and a prospectus circulated to names suggested by the Committee.

'You have undertaken great tasks', wrote Sir Frank Benson; 'many of us will wish you success in their achievement. I for one see what further service you can render from your combined viewpoint of audience, artist and manager, to authors, actors and their public. If you are true to your programme you will, on the neutral ground of art, unite many antagonists and reconcile many divergent interests in one common and noble purpose. You will help to lead a blindly-groping and war-worn world into the old paths of peace, for in "love and beauty and delight there is no death, no change"'

MCMXXI

THIS year the offices of the League removed from Southampton Street to more commodious premises at 10 King Street, Covent Garden. Two rooms were here available, one for a general office and the other for a private room for interviews and committee meetings. The general office could also accommodate the nucleus of the League's Library in the form of the gift from Miss A. E. Horniman of the entire collection of plays and annotated prompt copies used by her during her tenancy of the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester.

True to its policy of offering an open platform for the discussion of any problem connected with the Theatre, the League convened a meeting at the Haymarket Theatre to discuss the question of the Sunday opening of Theatres, then very much in the air. Lord Burnham presided at the meeting, and the speakers included Canon Adderley and Mr. Arthur Bouchier (in favour of Sunday opening) with Mr. Bernard Shaw and Mr. Alfred Lugg (representing the Actors' Association) against. It was soon evident that the meeting as a whole was strongly opposed to the proposal in any form, and it was negatived by a large majority.

The Plays and Publications Committee drew up a list of plays for Community Theatres, Schools, etc., which was published by the Poetry Bookshop as one of their series of monthly Chap Books under the title of 'Commendable Plays', with a coloured cover by Albert Ruthersford This publication had a good sale and was soon out of print.

In spite of the wide publicity obtained by the League in respect of its more public activities. this was a year of much anxiety on the financial side; the membership, which in the previous year had totalled 400 individual members and 54 Societies, gave little sign of growth. Moreover, the League's journal *Drama*, which had been produced on a too sumptuous scale, found few purchasers outside the actual membership of the League. A serious deficit would have been shown had it not been for the timely initiative of Mrs. Geoffrey Whitworth who, with the help of Elizabeth Fagan, organized the 'Beggar's Opera Ball' the Savoy Hotel in January, from which the funds of the League benefited to the extent of £500. This was followed in two successive years by further Balls, which were again highly remunerative; after which the League became self-supporting..

MCMXXXVIII

THUNDER clouds of war were already looming on the horizon. but did riot prevent the Congress of the *Societe Universelle du Theatre* which, it will be remembered, had been invited to meet in London in 1938. The entire arrangements for the Conference were made by the Foreign Drama Committee of the Drama League with the assistance of the British Council. Over fifty delegates attended, representing sections of the *Societe* in Belgium, Catalonia, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Holland, Hungary. Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Roumania, Switzerland, the U.S.A. and Yugoslavia. An official luncheon was given by the British Council on July 8th at the Savoy Hotel, at which H.R.H. the Duke of Kent presided. The speakers included M.Jean Zay, French Minister of Education; M.Jules Romains, President of the *Societe Universelle do Theatre*, and Sir John Martin-Harvey. The conference itself took place during three days at Stratford-on-Avon in the Conference Hall of the Memorial Theatre. Papers were read by many delegates, including from the British Section a contribution by T.S.Eliot on 'The Future of Poetic Drama', and on behalf of the French Section a statement on 'Political Propaganda and the Theatre' by H. R. Lenormand. 'The French delegation', he said, 'does not dispute the power of the stage to move and persuade, but it views with anxiety every attempt to place dramatic art at the service of a cause alien to its spirit. I know that in States called "totalitarian" freedom of expression is so threatened that the writer for the stage finds himself in this dilemma- to do what he is told or hold his peace. A writer is now a soldier, and if he is detailed for propaganda work he ought to have the courage to refuse it.' By the German delegation these bold words were met, not unnaturally, with agitated dissent.

Among the drama schools held this year, an unusual venture was the Easter School and Conference for Playwrights. The School was attended by 110 dramatists and about 50 MSS. plays were submitted for criticism at the Conference. Lecturers included Clifford Bax. Lord Dunsany, Gertrude Jennings, Edward Knoblock and John van Druten.

For the first time the final of the National Festival of Community Drama was held out of London, taking place by kind invitation of the Scottish Community Drama Association at the Theatre Royal Glasgow. Entries had totalled 602,

MCMXXXVII

ROUTINE activities continued throughout the year, and reference may now once more be made to the Library which, by this time, contained over 32,000 volumes. The total number of issues during the year was 44,170. Of this number, 28,867 were plays from the lending library, 2,943 critical works and 12,360 reading sets. The Costume Department, under the chairmanship of Mr. B. L. Sutcliffe, was also well patronized, over 2000 costumes being hired during the year.

In response to an invitation received from the Editor of the *News Chronicle* the League assisted in the organization of an Amateur Dramatic Contest, and chose the panel of adjudicators to attend performances of *Mystery at Green Fingers*, the play specially written for the contest by J. B. Priestley. The contest was open to all and sundry, and entries were received from 218 societies, over 70 Per cent of which were societies affiliated to the League.

The Village Drama Section, under the chairmanship of Professor T. H. Searls, was now working in close co-operation with the 'Joint Committee for Music and Drama'.

Six full-length drama schools were held between June 1936 and mid-October 1937, and two courses of evening classes took place in the lecture-room at Fitzroy Square. The League also organized, or assisted in the organizing, of twenty-five weekend and one-day schools in various parts of the country. These were mostly held in connection with other bodies such as the Rural Community Council and the Women's Institutes. Lecturers at these schools included the Bishop of Chichester, Esme Church, Tyrone Guthrie, Dr. Stefan Hock, Michael MacOwan, M. Saint-Denis, Margaret Webster and John Gielgud.

A collection of eight stage models designed by Mollie MacArthur, Richard Southern, Hedley Briggs, 'Motley', Doris Zinkeisen, Paul Shelving and Oliver Messel, with twenty costume designs. was arranged and forwarded for exhibition in the French Section, *Centre Art et Atelier*, at the Paris International Exhibition. A proportion of the expense involved was defrayed by the British Council.

Contacts with the theatre abroad were strengthened. A growing number of visitors from the Dominions, the Continent and the U.S.A. taught and obtained information and personal introductions through the mediation of the League during their stay in this country.

MCMXXII

IN response to a request from the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education, a Memorandum was submitted by the League, giving its views as to the place that should be assigned to Drama in the School curriculum. At the same time, following a recommendation made by the Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art, the Senate of London University established a diploma in Dramatic Art - a most important *step in* the movement to bring the Theatre into direct relation with the higher educational system of the country.

Then the League took a prominent part, together with the Actors' Association, in an effort to deal with the evil of the 'bogus manager'. The Association also invited the Drama League to nominate correspondents in various big cities to supply the Association with brief notes on any outstanding performances by actors in touring companies.

In February. the League arranged for a visit by the Unnamed Society of Manchester to the Margaret Morris Theatre in Chelsea, and under the auspices of the League Miss Maude Scott started dramatic classes at the Mary ward Settlement.

In the sphere of foreign drama, the League assisted the Institut Français in arranging two performances by the Comedie Francaise at His Majesty's Theatre, and on the evening of Sunday, May 28th, Lord and Lady Howard de Walden,, on behalf of the League, gave a reception to the Company at Seaford House.

Early in the year Mr. Gordon Craig had challenged interested persons in England to take action for the transference to London of the international Theatre Exhibition recently opened at Amsterdarn. The League, with the help of Lord Howard de Walden and other generous patrons, succeeded in raising over £2000 to meet the expenses of this Exhibition, which was opened at the Victoria and Albert Museum on June and by the Dutch Ambassador. The same evening a banquet was held under the auspices of the League at the Hotel Cecil.

In addition to the Annual General Meeting, it had now become our custom to hold an Annual Conference in some important provincial centre. This year it was held at Stockport, and once again afforded an unrivalled opportunity for members of the League to exchange views in person and to take measures for the development of their own work and that of the League.

MCMXXIII

A MISTAKE it would be to imagine that the more spectacular events arranged from the League's Headquarters provide a true index of its day-to-day activities. indeed, its most permanent, and perhaps most valuable influence was now being wielded up and down the country through an ever-growing number of member societies of all types and of every social class. By June 1923 the number of affiliated societies amounted to 360- a small total by later standards, but already including many bodies, both professional and amateur, which were destined to hold an important place in the dramatic scene throughout succeeding years. Individual mention must be invidious. But as a rough indication of the scope of the League's clientele, the following examples may suffice: Cotswold Players, English Folk Dance Society, Exeter Drama League, Huddersfield Thespians, Manchester Playgoers Club, Dumfries Guild of Players, Oxted and Limpsfield Players, Village Drama Society and the O.U.D.S.

The League's 'Plays and Publications Committee' were now busy with the publication of a series of new plays. in alliance with Mr. Basil Blackwell of Oxford. The first batch included *False Premises* by Laurence Housman, *Up Stream* by Clifford Bax, *The Man Who Ate The Popomack* by W..J. Turner, and *Advertising April* by Herbert Farjeon and Horace Horsnell. The reception of these plays was very favourable. *Advertising April* was first produced in London at the Criterion Theatre and *The Man Who Ate The Popomack* by the Three Hundred Club. This series was an innovation in the publishing world. Hitherto the issue of unproduced dramatic material was almost unknown, and the Drama League series certainly did a great deal to encourage stage production for plays by younger dramatists of distinction.

Now, too. the League began to receive an increasing number of MS. plays for criticism. During this Year 67 reports on MSS. Were provided by the League's Reader.

The problem of authors' fees on amateur performances constantly recurred from this time onwards. The League took the line that, as, much in the interest of playwrights as amateur societies, payment by royalty instead of a fixed fee was desirable. But most of the play-agents demurred, while some of the larger amateur societies feared that payment by royalty would actually involve higher charges.

MCMXXXVI

OVER a period of several years a special Committee of the League had been concerned with a survey of the principal dialect variants current throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, and this year saw the fruit of their labours in the issue of twenty-four gramophone records covering a like number of typical examples of local speech. The Committee included Lord Tweedsmuir, Miss Elsie Fogerty and Miss Mary Kelly. The records were made by the Columbia Gramophone Co., and the speakers were in all cases natives of the districts represented. Each record began with the same 'standard passage', a short monologue based on Skeat's Phonetic Survey (1884), which comprises in the shortest possible space all the sounds in the phonetic alphabet. This was followed by various items in poetry and prose, indigenous to each region represented. A complete set of the records was graciously accepted by His late Majesty King George V, and among preliminary subscribers were Avery Hill Training College, Armstrong College (Newcastle-on-Tyne), the B.B.C., the Institut de Phonitique (Paris), the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, the Scottish Community Drama Association, the Englischer Seminar University of Berlin, the University of Copenhagen and the Drama Department, Yale University, U.S.A. The sale of these records has been continuous since their first publication and their utility to students, actors, and stage-producers need not be stressed.

An Exhibition was hold in co-operation with the National Theatre Appeal Committee at the Thackeray Rooms, Derry & Toms, Kensington. The Exhibition included designs and models representing the best work in the modern theatre, both professional and amateur. and the entire collection was transferred to the Manchester Art Gallery where it remained open for six weeks. In June the League took part in the entertainment of fourteen Finnish actors from the National and other principal theatres at Helsingfors. In August the Director conducted a party to the World Congress for Leisure Time and Recreation at Hamburg and Berlin, and in this connection the Liverpool Playgoers Club toured several cities in North Germany with their production of *The Devil Among the Skins* by Ernest Goodwin.

MCMXXXV

IT had now become evident that the library service was hampered for lack of space. At the same time, the council was aware that new quarters must be found for the V.D.S. Costume Department, the lease of whose house at New Cross was running out. It was therefore decided to seek larger premises under one roof, both for the Headquarters of the League and for the Costume Department. Suitable premises were found at 9 Fitzroy Square, and with the help of the Carnegie Trust, the Pilgrim Trust, and contributions from our members, the freehold was purchased and the new Headquarters officially opened by the Lord Chamberlain, the Earl of Cromer, on Friday, July 28th.

Of this event *The Times* wrote in a leading article: 'To the two or three who sixteen years ago "sat on packing cases in a frowsty room planning the Drama League" it might well have seemed beyond belief that one day a Lord Chamberlain would come and open for them a large and charming new centre, with office-room for all their many activities, a great library, a costume store, a lecture-room, a book-shop, a restaurant. and all else that is necessary to a practical and efficient institute of the theatre; that they would be able to reckon their finances, their membership, their books in thousands or tens of thousands, and to name among their supporters the Carnegie Trust and the Pilgrim Trust. Yet today they can hardly be surprised at their own success., for they would never have started the movement but for their conviction of the existence of this dramatic faculty in human nature and of its power over human life. They have proved their conviction to the hilt. The child's love of inventing and dressing up lives on in the adult; and the British Drama League is there to guide and foster it. helping this many-sided art to find its own power as a means of education, of self-expression, and of activity, which can make all life richer and happier.'

During 1934 to 1935 seven full-length Drama Schools were held and four short courses. Of these, the Scarborough Summer School was on a larger scale than ever before, 153 students attending. Miss Frances Mackenzie was now in charge of all schools organized by the League.

The work of the County Committees recently set up by the Village Drama Section had proved so valuable that committees were now formed in all counties where no Rural Community Council existed.

MCMXXIV

AS soon as it became known that the coming British Empire Exhibition at Wembley Park was to include examples of the fine arts, the place of Drama in that Exhibition became a crucial question to those who were accustomed to regard the Theatre as an art rather than as a business. Early in the process of organization it was announced that the entertainments side of the Exhibition (café-chantants, switch-backs, flip-flops, and the like) had been conceded to a well-known expert on such things and, besides this, it was advertised that the trade section of the Exhibition would include commercial samples of technical and mechanical items contributed by the various British firms engaged in the manufacture of stage appliances. But of the art of the Theatre, with a big 'A', there threatened to be no representation at all.

It was left to the British Drama League to press on the Exhibition authorities the duty of remedying this glaring omission. As a result, two galleries were allotted for a British Drama League exhibit, which was formally opened to the public by Miss Ellen Terry on Wednesday, May 21st. In addition to six specially constructed historical stage models and a new model for *King Lear* made by Mr. Gordon Craig, the collection included the Droeshout portrait of Shakespeare lent by the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, a first Folio and a Quarto of Shakespeare's plays lent by Mr. John Murray, six drawings by Inigo Jones lent by the Duke of Devonshire, and a large collection of prints and costumes illustrating the history of the English Stage.

There was also shown the prize-competition model and plans for a National Theatre by Mr. W. L. Somerville of Toronto. This competition had been organized by the League in association with *Country Life* and the first prize of £250 was presented by Mr. James K. Rackett. The jury included, among others, Mr. Alfred Gotch, President of the R.I.B.A., Sir Edwin Lutyens and Mr. Granville-Barker. It may be noticed here that the National Theatre project had always taken a foremost place in the League's programme, and henceforth the League became a kind of flying-buttress to the National Theatre Committee, to the mutual advantage of both bodies.

This year Mr. Alec L. Rea was elected as the Hon. Treasurer of the League in place of the retiring Treasurer, Mr. Robert Mond, and to both these gentlemen it would be hard to express our many obligations,

MCMXXV

OUTSTANDING among the events of this year was the decision of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust to grant a sum of £750 annually for three years for the running of the Drama Library, which it will be remembered had been started in a small way three years earlier. The Trustees also allocated £500 for the expense of moving the League from 10 King Street to the larger premises which would now be needed. At the same time the Executors of the late William Archer gave into the charge of the Drama League his valuable collection of theatre books, numbering over 1500 volumes, pending the establishment of a National Theatre when, by the terms of Mr. Archer's will, the books would be handed over to the Library of that Institution. A special committee was appointed to administer the Library, with Dr. F. S. Boas as chairman, and the League began to purchase printed plays and other books as they were asked for by its members. New premises were found at 8 Adelphi Terrace, the decoration of which was supervised by Mr. Albert Rutherston. The services of Miss Violet Clayton, a trained Librarian, were engaged in place of Miss Mary Dalston who till then had held this position. The new Headquarters were inaugurated at a luncheon at the Hotel Cecil on March 24th, when speeches were delivered by Lord Eustace Percy, Minister of Education, Miss E.S. Haldane and Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, with Viscount Burnham in the chair.

During the same year, and at the instance of the Board of Education, the League was asked by the British Broadcasting Company to provide a series of seven lecture-recitals illustrating the development of the stage from the earliest times to the present day, and this, be it noted, was the first instance of serious attention to the drama on the part of the B.B.C. The lectures were given by Elsie Fogerty, Lewis Casson, Ben Greet, Bridges Adams, Professor Allardyce Nicoll, Nigel Playfair, John Drinkwater and Geoffrey Whitworth.

In 1924 the Annual Conference of affiliated societies had been held at Liverpool under the auspices of the Liverpool Playhouse Circle and was attended by 120 delegates. The Lord Mayor of Liverpool gave a reception to the delegates which was followed by a public meeting addressed by Lena Ashwell, Harley Granville-Barker, Lennox Robinson and Professor Riley.

MCMXXXIV

DRAMA in the Dominions now began to loom larger and larger in the picture of the League's activities. A Committee under the chairmanship of the Earl of Lytton, and including Sir Barry Jackson, Mary Kelly, Lewis Casson and John Bourne, was set up to consider the appointment of a dramatic coach who should visit New Zealand and other parts of the Empire, with a view to founding and encouraging League branches. Although the funds required for this appointment were not forthcoming, a branch of the League was duly founded in New Zealand, and the Bantu Society in Johannesburg obtained special help from us over their production of *Abraham Lincoln*. A branch of the League was also established in New South Wales with the aid of a grant from the League. It was, too, about this time that Lord Bessborough established the Dominion of Canada Community Theatre Festival which was destined for so successful a career, and which was organized on much the same lines as our own National Festival of Community Drama.

This year a Junior Drama Committee to promote drama among young people was established by the League, with representatives from the following societies: the National Association of Boys' Clubs, the National Council of Girls' Clubs, the Boy Scouts' Association, the Girl Guides' Association, the Y.W.C.A., the London County Council, the London Association of Old Scholars' Societies, and the London Council of Social Service. Special terms of affiliation were offered to junior clubs on group lines, and short courses arranged for young people all over the country. Lists of plays for their special use were compiled, and a panel of young producers established.

Arrangements were made for a Drama League party to visit the Moscow Theatre Festival in August. This tour was conducted by Mr. Whitworth, who took the opportunity of attending the annual meeting of the *Societe Universelle du Theatre*, which was held this year in Moscow. In the two following years Drama League tours again visited the Moscow Festival, conducted respectively by Mr. Lewis Casson and Sir Barry Jackson. In the light of future events, it may be interesting to record that all the members of these parties returned to Britain with delightful memories of what they had seen and of the 'Friendly hospitality offered by the artists and technicians of the Soviet stage'

MCMXXXIII

THE first year of Lord Esher's chairmanship coincided with a period of unrest over the Border. The Community Drama movement in Scotland had gone ahead so rapidly that the Committee set up to organize the National Festival in Scotland had decided to assume autonomy under the title of the Scottish Community Drama Association. They also desired that their own societies, whether members of the British Drama League or not, should have a right of entry into the National Festival. The Council, however, felt this to be dangerous, since English societies might well claim the same privilege. After many discussions a compromise was effected. The S.C.D.A. henceforward was to run its own Festival, but agreed that only those societies who were members of both bodies should be eligible for the League's Annual Festival Final in London. On this basis, our relations with the S.C.D.A. became entirely friendly, and have so continued to this day.

The Annual Conference of the League was held this year at Edinburgh under the auspices of the Edinburgh Committee of the S.C.D.A. when a Civic Reception was given by the Lord Provost and Magistrates in the City Chamber, and Mr. Bernard Shaw moved the following resolution: 'That this Conference urges the extreme importance as disinterested nurseries of drama and of the art of acting of small dramatic enterprises started spontaneously by local residents in villages and towns outside the commercial touring circuit, and call the attention of playwrights to the wisdom of reserving to themselves personally the duty of licensing performances of their work by such enthusiasts on terms reasonably within their means though possibly not worth collecting commercially by their professional agents'

This year the League joined in the efforts of 'The Stage and Allied Arts Defence League' to secure abolition of the entertainment duty in respect of living entertainment. Although total exemption from the tax was not obtained, a substantial rebate was secured in respect of dramatic entertainments by living artists.

The triennial Conference of the *Societe Universelle du Theatre* was held this year at Zurich. Mr. Whitworth attended and took with him an invitation that the Society should hold its meeting in London in the summer of 1938.

MCMXXVI

FROM America came an invitation to the league to nominate an Amateur Company to take part in the New York Little Theatre Tournament. Seven societies offered themselves and Viscount Burnham kindly suggested that Mr. W. A. Darlington, Dramatic Critic of the *Daily Telegraph*, should select the best. The choice fell on the Huddersfield Thespians with their production of Mr. Sladen-Smith's one-act play *St. Simeon Stylites*. This company went to New York and won the prize of \$200 'for the best production of a published play'.

In this year also M. Firmin Gémier came to London and, at a meeting called by the League at St. James's Theatre, inaugurated the British section of the *Société Universelle du Theatre*, which had recently been founded with Headquarters in Paris. The British section was organized with delegates from the leading theatrical artistic and musical organizations in the country, and with Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth as chairman.

. This year, too, was published the *Report on the Drama in Adult Education* by the Adult Education Committee of the Board of Education. The names of numerous societies affiliated to the Drama League figured prominently in the Report, which further paid tribute to our work in the following terms: 'We desire to record our appreciation of the hard work and enthusiasm which has made possible the great services of the League to the cause of Drama in this country'.

The rapid growth of the amateur movement was, at this time, a cause of anxiety to the Stage Guild, and at their request, Mr. Whitworth attended a Council Meeting to discuss the problem. He suggested that the amateur stage, far from tempting them to enter an already overcrowded profession, offered a safety-valve to the stage-struck who, given the opportunity of expressing their talents as amateurs, were generally content with that status and did not seek to swell the ranks of the 'unemployed'. This view seemed to win acceptance, and thereafter the cordial relations between the professional and the amateur became one of the most pleasing aspects in our work.

Following their support of the Old Vic and Sadler's Wells, the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust now turned their attention for the work of Repertory Companies in other parts of the country. Mr. Whitworth, on behalf of a League Committee, was engaged to investigate applications for assistance and to report to the Trust.

MCMXXVII

INSPIRED by the previous year's success of a British team at the New York Little Theatre Tournament, our own 'Festival of Community Drama' was initiated on a nation-wide scale. For the purpose of the competition Great Britain was divided into six areas, and the best teams eliminated from each area competed at a final Festival held in London, at the New Theatre, on February 1st. Lord Eustace Percy, President of the Board of Education, was present, and the judges included Cathleen Nesbitt, W. A. Darlington and John Drinkwater. The silver challenge cup, presented by Lord Howard de Walden, was won by the Welwyn Garden City Theatre Society for their performance of *Mr. Sampson* by Charles Lee, produced by C. B. Purdom. Soon afterwards this Company sailed for America to take part in the New York Little Theatre Tournament, where their prowess was rewarded by the highest prize the famous "David Belasco Cup".

The Autumn Conference, held this year in London, opened with a reception at the Mansion House. Several hundred guests assembled and were received by the Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress. Speeches were delivered by Lord Burnham, Gladys Cooper and Granville- Barker. Meanwhile, the British section of the *Societe Universelle du Theatre* began its activities by arranging for British representation at the Dramatic Festival organized by M. Gemier in Paris from June 5th to July 10th. Miss Sybil Thorndike appeared with great *reclame* in *St. Joan and The Medea*. A new activity, initiated by Miss Margaret Macnamara, was a School for Amateur Producers, the first of a long series which was to prove of untold value in raising the standard of amateur production. The intensive propaganda undertaken by the League in so many fields, and the practical benefits now available, were at last rewarded by a growth of membership. At the date of the annual meeting our register showed a total of 2037, of which approximately half were affiliated societies. The sale of the League's journal Drama increased to 3000 a month and, with its illustrations and articles on every aspect of the professional and amateur stage, soon became an indispensable record and source of inspiration - not only to the members of the League. Up-to-date news of the foreign theatre was a regular feature, thus filling a noticeable gap in the dramatic journalism of the day.

MMMXXXII

VILLAGE Drama had always been an important field for League activity. Many Village Societies were affiliated to the League, and close touch had always been kept with the Federation of Women's Institutes since that meeting in 1920 when, it will be remembered, Lord Burnham had urged the Federation to make a special point of play acting in their Institutes. It was, however, the Village Drama Society, founded in 1918 by Mary Kelly, which had specialised in the rural side of amateur drama. The chief event during this year must therefore be reckoned the incorporation of the Village Drama Society within the British Drama League. Our best thanks were due to Captain Ellis of the National Council of Social Service whose tactful mediation was largely responsible for the successful result of the negotiations. One of the first activities of the newly formed Village Drama Section of the League was the organization of *A Christmas Interlude* at the Women's Service Hall, Westminster. This event was widely attended, and did much to make the work of the Village Drama Society and its admirable Costume Cupboard known to members of the League and their friends.

It was a pleasure, also, for the League to associate itself with the annual play-writing competition of the Village Drama Society, adjudicated by Mrs. Penelope Wheeler and Dr. Gordon Bottomley. In this eighth competition the adjudicators were able to state that taking the various classes together 'Fewer helpless and impotent plays had been sent in than in any previous year. With regard to the class for "one-act romantic and poetic plays", this had been the weakling in all previous years, but this year the response had been distinctly hopeful and an increased number of entrants faced their problems seriously'.

Sir Donald Maclean, Minister of Education, attended the Final of the National Festival in May. 'I am very glad', he said, 'to be present and to be able to tender, as I do, officially on behalf of His Majesty's Government its whole-hearted support of this Community Festival Movement and to the British Drama League which has flourished so admirably.'

This year saw the retirement of Mr. Harley Granville-Barker from the chairmanship of the Council, his place being taken by Viscount Esher.

MMMXXXI

IN the twelfth Annual Report of the League it was noted that on June 30th the membership reached a total of 3320, new members to the number of 770 having joined during the twelve months covered by the Report. Over 100 lectures and adjudications were given during the year through the instrumentality of the League.

An extension of our work was initiated in the form of a postal course of instruction in the elements of play-writing. The course which has been successfully continued to the present time, consists of twelve lessons which are sent through the post, and the papers written by students are criticised. At the end of the course every student is encouraged to write a play which obtains a careful and detailed criticism. Mr. Edward Lewis was appointed as Director of Studies, and in the first year over 20 students enrolled.

A Religious Drama School at Bath was organized on behalf of the Religious Drama Society and opened by the Bishop of Winchester. Demonstration-rehearsals were conducted by Mr. Martin Browne, and lectures delivered by Mr. Laurence Housman, Mr. Kenneth Ingram and others. At the same time, the movement for religious plays in this country was growing, not only in secular halls and theatres, but in churches. As Mr. Seward Beddow wrote in an article in *Drama*: 'Because religious plays depend so much on atmosphere it is found specially valuable if they can be performed in a church. It seems amazing that the point could ever have been in dispute. A religious play in theatre or hall has to struggle for the right atmosphere; but in a church everything is there to help the one great end: the religious impression. The play may be set in the midst of hymn, prayer and lesson, and it is best so done.' Certain legal problems arose in connection with such church productions. Had, for instance, the church to be licensed for stage performance? On taking legal advice, the council felt in a position to advise its members that so long as the play was of a biblical or a liturgical character, the question of stage licence need not arise.

Besides shorter courses, two full-length summer schools for amateur producers were organized by the League, one at the Maddermarket Theatre, Norwich, and the other at the University Hall, St. Andrews. The latter was destined to be continued annually by the S.C.D.A.

MCMXXVIII

To celebrate the Centenary of Ibsen's birth, a series of lectures was arranged at the Royal Society of Arts under the patronage of His Excellency the Norwegian Minister. Lectures were given by Sir Edmund Gosse on 'Ibsen the Man', chairman the Norwegian Minister; by Professor J.G. Robertson on 'Ibsen's Place in English Literature', chairman Dr. F. 5. Boas; by Mr. Desmond MacCarthy on 'Ibsen the Dramatist', chairman Geoffrey Whitworth; by Miss Elizabeth Robbins on 'Ibsen and the Actress', chairman J. T. Grein; and by Mr. George Bernard Shaw on 'Ibsen and After', chairman Dame Madge Kendall. Prior to the last lecture an Exhibition of Ibsen relics was shown in the Library of the Royal Society of Arts.

It was with great regret that the Council received the resignation of Miss Violet Clayton who, it will be remembered, had been responsible for the initiation of the Library at Adelphi Terrace. ~ Dorothy Coates was appointed Librarian in her stead, and retains this position to the present day.

Of the final of the third National Festival of Community Drama held at the New Theatre, the *Saturday Review* wrote: 'There are some who regret the introduction of a competitive spirit into the amateurs' theatre, but even the most fervent disciple of play for play's sake must admit that the National Festival has evoked great enthusiasm and really fine work. The winners of the Howard de Walden Cup were a company from Ardrossan who showed individual and corporate quality of the highest kind. It would have been difficult to select a West-End player who could have rendered the part of Dowdie in *The Old Lady Shows Her Medals* better than Mr. Lambert, who is also, we learn, a plumber, a Territorial, a boxing champion, and a Rugby footballer who has reached a Scottish national trial. A good feature of the Festival was the selection by the teams of plays native to their soil and accent, and Monday's performance was exemplary in its variety of piece and method. Of course it is very difficult to make comparisons where the style and mood of the plays are so different, but it is not the comparisons which matter. It is the new and ambitious spirit in amateur acting which the Drama League has served and strengthened.'

Entries to the Festival numbered 155 as compared with 107 in the previous year.

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AUTHORS' Fees had been a main topic at the Annual Conference held in the previous year at Manchester, when a proposal was made for submission to the Incorporated Society of authors. No agreement was reached with the Society; but a resolution in support of the percentage basis was accepted by the League's Council, and a certain number of eminent playwrights agreed to accept percentage terms.

A large room facing the river at Adelphi Terrace having fallen vacant, the Council decided to utilize it as a clubroom for members. In connection with the Club a series of debates was organized. one of these in the motion 'That the Broadcast Play is an Unsatisfactory Form of Art', proposed by Naomi Royd Smith and opposed by Compton Mackenzie, was broadcast by the B.B.C. The development of the Library continued, the total number of volumes acquired since its inception being well over 14,000. Issues during the year amounted to 25,103, showing an increase of 3639 on the previous year. Of these, 17,996 were plays, 2,535 critical works, and 4,572 reading-sets. Gifts to the Library included 500 plays from the Rusholm Theatre Company, a new complete edition of Moliere. presented by its editor, M. Jacques Copeau, and other books from Mr. St. John Ervine and Miss Etlinger. In December a special National Theatre number of Drama was published, containing an illustrated article by Mr. Granville-Barker on the National Theatre plans by Mr. Somerville, as shown at the British Empire Exhibition three years earlier. In response to a questionnaire, the names of over 170 leaders of British opinion in favour of the plan were printed in the journal. At the same time, a Resolution in support of the National Theatre. moved by the Earl of Lytton, was the chief item on the Agenda of the Annual Conference at Northampton. This was passed unanimously. The British Drama League also took part in a Conference convened by the S.M.N.T. Committee at the House of Commons when a special Committee was constituted to draft a National scheme for submission to the Prime Minister. The foundation-stone of the new Memorial Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon was laid on July 2nd. in recognition of the substantial contribution to the rebuilding fund made by the League members, the Director was appointed to the Board of Governors of the Theatre.

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THE League was now officially in touch with the *Comite International pour les Theatres Populaires*, which had been founded in Prague in 1923 with the object of doing for the amateur theatre in all European countries what the *Societe Universelle du Theatre* set out to do for the professional theatre. The fourth International Congress organized by this Committee was held at Liege on June 11th, and Mr. Whitworth attended as representing the League. Afterwards an interesting amateur Drama Festival took place on somewhat similar lines to our own National Festival of Community Drama. The only condition of entry to this competition was that the plays acted should be in the French language, and the majority of the 70 entrants were French, Swiss or Belgian. Among the judges were such Distinguished playwrights as Tristan Bernard, Max Maurey and Charles Vildrac. The winners were a company from Barcelona, with a medieval mystery *Le Retable de la Fleur* by Louis Masrera, who himself produced the play and designed the scenery.

By arrangement with Sir Henry Lunn, a Drama League party. conducted by Mr. Whitworth, attended the Passion Play at Oberammergau. The members of the tour returned with the conviction that the Passion Play exhibited the virtues of community drama at its best, carried, indeed, to a degree of perfection which could never be equalled under less ideal conditions.

At the request of the Town Clerk of Hereford the League was able to render assistance in regard to the celebrations at Hereford on the occasion of the Centenary of the death of Mrs. Siddons on June 8th. it was also arranged for Sir John Martin-Harvey to speak on behalf of the League at the memorial celebration organised by the Mayor of Paddington at the statue of Mrs. Siddons on Paddington. Green.

Early in the year the Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre Committee suffered a serious loss by the death of Sir Israel Gollancz. who had been its Hon Secretary since the inception of the movement in 1912. This appointment was now offered to Mr. Whitworth, who, by permission of the League's Council. accepted it, in this way. relations between the National Theatre and the League grew more and more intimate, though approval of the National Theatre scheme was never made a condition of League membership.