

WISCONSIN PLAYS: Second Series.—The Feast of the Holy Innocents, by S. Marshall Ilsley; On the Pier, by Laura Sherry; The Shadow, by Howard Mumford Jones; We Live Again, by Thornton Gilman. Introduction by Zona Gale. Huebsch; \$1.50.

No other band of workers in our little theaters has justified higher expectations than the Wisconsin Dramatic Society. Their productions—managed, staged, and acted by enthusiastic, serious-minded amateurs—have deserved and have won the support of all classes of their public. The wholesome educational influence of these productions for a better appreciation of good drama has been effectively seconded by the public meetings of the Society, by its publications, by lectures held under its auspices. The policy of encouraging new playwrights, especially Wisconsin playwrights, is a definite expression of the hope that our little theaters will be schools for American dramatists. In the first, fine meaning of the word the Wisconsin Dramatic has been "popular" both in its aims and its achievements, and a host of sympathetic friends all over America look to this distinctly Middle West organization for guidance and inspiration. The disappointment of these admirers in the Second Series of the Wisconsin Plays will be great.

Instead of fulfilling our high expectations, three of the four plays in this volume confirm the most skeptical fears of sundry unfriendly critics of the little theaters. They are not only commonplace in conception, but also immature in expression, and even faulty in construction. Perhaps it is most just to consider them as examples of exercises from the primary grade in the school of play-writing, but only a doting parent could find in them any promise for the future. The single play of distinction in the book is *The Shadow*. There is a real thought behind this pretty little fantasy, and Mr. Jones has most skilfully woven the atmosphere of his autumnal woods setting into the allegory of Memory. The final effect achieved is worthy of warmest praise, and it is to be hoped that the play will be popular with competent little-theater companies. The signal success of *The Shadow* emphasizes the fact that it is the only play of this volume that is not realistic in spirit and local in genre. In view of the romantic tendencies of the little theaters this may not be a coincidence. At least Mr. Jones points a way by which little-theater playwrights may avoid provincialism and the deadly lack of dramatic interest—provided they possess his imagination and charm of expression.