

**THE SIN OF AHAB,
A DRAMA
IN ONE ACT**

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The sin of Ahab, a drama in one act by Anna Jane Harnwell

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BY

ANNA JANE HARNWELL

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
CLARA FITCH

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INTRODUCTION

By CLARA FITCH

CHAIRMAN OF THE RELIGIOUS DRAMA COMMITTEE
OF THE DRAMA LEAGUE OF AMERICA

Can religious drama be a means of bringing religion and high idealism into world affairs at the present time of unrest? The Drama League of America asked this question at the close of the World War when great interest was evidenced in spiritual things, realizing the power of the dramatic instinct, the appeal of biblical truths and the wealth of dramatic material contained in the Bible.

A religious drama committee was called by the league to discuss the subject in the broadest use of the term, the aim being to use drama in teaching Bible truths and plays dealing with ethical material. Investigation revealed the lack of good religious plays. To arouse interest in the subject and to secure suitable material the league held a religious drama prize competition. The result was satisfactory—valuable material was gained. Selected plays from this competition are to appear in a Drama League Series, "The Sin of Ahab," the title of this volume being one of the series. Churches and church boards adopted the league's idea of utilizing drama in church work—or reviving drama which had its origin in the church—as the plan afforded wonderful opportunity to use the young life of the church.

"The Sin of Ahab" is a biblical drama in one act. The characters who take speaking parts are Ahab king of Israel, Jezebel his wife, Jonas a boy of seventeen, Obadiah the head of Ahab's household, Naboth a native of Jezreel and Elijah the prophet. The scene is laid in Samaria.

The play throughout has biblical authority except in making Jonas the son of the widow. There is a tradition that Jonas was the boy who was raised from the dead by Elijah. The final scene with Elijah really took place in the vineyard itself, but for pur-

poses of presentation it occurs in the palace. Few light touches relieve the seriousness of the play, but the lesson is well brought out; it will be valuable in teaching the story of Ahab who coveted Naboth's vineyard and of Jezebel his Queen, whose cruel act brought evil upon his house. Naboth's love of home and land, "which was filled with memories of untold sweetness and beyond the price of gold," is a timely reminder in this period of frequent change of home. Among the most beautiful lines in the play are those of Jonas when he speaks of the things a man should covet, "not a vineyard, but gifts of soul, which cannot die nor change."

While Elijah is the principal character, he does not appear until the last part of the scene. He is brought before the audience by the other characters; he permeates the play; one is hardly conscious that he is not present in the flesh. His final speech is the best in the play, ending with, "The Lord Jehovah saith, 'Thou art accursed!'"

"The Sin of Ahab" can be used by those interested in week-day religious training, as an adjunct to text books. This movement started two years ago, is steadily growing and supplying the religious instruction which the public school curriculum fails to provide.

FOREWORD

The author has given definite directions for stage set and costumes, but when it is impossible to secure the things recommended the church auditorium may be used with as little change as possible. The stage set may be dispensed with altogether with no serious loss, although a few simple properties may aid in creating dramatic illusion. The important thing to achieve is to have the actors and audience so interested in the play that scenery is a secondary matter. Thus the play becomes a deep religious service.

Double hinged screens and curtains may be used for background. Stenciling in gold, silver and bronze is effective. Strive for simplicity and suggestiveness in stage sets and costumes. The latter should be by one of the church organizations. Through dramatic productions every church activity may be united.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

AHAB, *King of Israel*

JEZEBEL, *his wife*

JONAS, *a boy of seventeen, a favorite of Ahab*

OBADIAH, *the head of Ahab's household*

NABOTH, *a native of Jezreel*

ELIJAH, *the prophet*

The scene is laid in Samaria, the capital of Israel, the latter part of the tenth century B.C.