

# "CHERRY ACRES"

## Repertory Society Play

### A Pretty Piece of Sentiment

#### CAST OF CHARACTERS.

Margaret Ann . . . . . KATHLEEN MCGREGOR.  
Peter Greatorex . . . . . CECIL CARSON.  
Michael Sturdy . . . . . ALAN CARSON.  
Skipper . . . . . PADDY.  
Hester Tudor . . . . . EDITH ROWETT.  
Mrs. Brown . . . . . ITALIA GUYATT.  
William Williams . . . . . W. A. BLAKE.  
Eustace Treeves . . . . . JACK READING.  
Molly Murry . . . . . MARY LUYA.  
Mrs. Tudor . . . . . Mrs. R. PARKINSON.  
First Shrimp . . . . . JOAN SALKELD.  
Second Shrimp . . . . . GWEN SULLIVAN  
Play produced by Mr. George Eaton.

The Brisbane Repertory Theatre appears to have suddenly developed a sense of humour. Last year the prize play, "In Beauty It Is Finished" attracted policemen to the society's doorstep, and there were rumours of suppression in the air. Strong men wrote to the Press about public morals. By giving the prize this year to the play "Cherry Acres," written by Mrs. Dorothea Tobin, the selection committee have completely vindicated themselves in the eyes of social reformers, moral uplifters, and all those who believe that our stage should, above all things, be pure.

We find in "Cherry Acres" none of those nasty nauseating problems of Australian life encountered in Mr. G. L. Dann's play of last year. On the other hand the play produced by the society at Cremorne Theatre on Friday evening proved to be as pretty a piece of sentiment as we are likely to see for some time. Even the players themselves are shocked at the heroine's use of the word "damn" in the third act.

"Cherry Acres" purports to be a play based on Australian life. But the whole atmosphere is English rather than Australian. The name "Cherry Acres" itself, given to the estate (it sounds too much like heresy to call it a farm) has certainly an English rather than an Australian tang about it. We find the characters talking about the "village" nearby, the heroine, in the height of an Australian summer, describes a certain phenomenon as "falling like snowflakes," and we have gipsies roving the neighbourhood. Finally we have an enraged aunt talking about her "one blood relation" and complaining to the world

enraged aunt talking about her "one blood relation," and proclaiming to the world that "No Tudor Shall Perish While I Stand By," when she has ceased declaiming that "this state of affairs shall not go on." To complete the picture we have a party of Australians indulging quite spontaneously in carol singing on Christmas Eve.

In a message from the authoress delivered by Mr. Royston Marcus at the fall of the curtain, it is made clear that most of these characters are taken from life. More than one warning has been issued against the danger of this practice if followed too slavishly. In some respects Mrs. Tobin has fallen foul of these dangers. But we have one consolation in that in this play the life of the great primary producer is free from all cares and worries. Droughts and disease, oppressive taxation and the fall in commodity prices have no place in this idyllic picture. For "Cherry Acres" is nothing if not idyllic, and because of that there were many enraptured sighs from the ladies of the audience when the curtain fell. Peter Greatorex, the trustee of Margaret Ann, the heroine, might have been Daddy Longlegs himself reincarnated. In the absence of a villain we have Aunt Hestor Tudor, an iron-willed, despotic glib-tongued old maid, who is certainly the personification of what all aunts are usually supposed to be. She has a remarkable command of the rhetorical sentence, as evidence the long involved proclamation she utters when she commences talking at one side of the stage and never ceases until she disappears out of the opposite exit, the audience being left to figure out what she really meant long after she has vanished. Altogether it was one of the best drawn characters in the play, so realistic that it became stogy. Margaret Ann is certainly a charming character, but hardly a typical product of the great Australian outdoors. But her use of the word "damn" somewhat vindicates the author.

It is, in short, a play which begins as a piece for adults and ends as a piece for children. The stern realities of the trusteeship of "Cherry Acres" in the first two acts is lost sight of in the latter part of the play when Christmas time and its festivities gives the author scope for prettiness, and the introduction of two or three appealing child studies. But neither in the creation of atmosphere nor in the command of dramatic situation does the play attain great heights. Even though the situation is fairly well handled it certainly brings nothing new to Australian drama, and some elements which are quite foreign to it.

The manner in which the play was presented deserves the highest commendation. The cast was a strong one insofar as there were no really weak links. Miss Kathleen Macgregor played the heroine with a vivacious charm which was rarely forced or artificial. One could not help noticing her

ous charm which was rarely forced or artificial. One could not help noticing her marked resemblance to a certain Brisbane actress who has won fame on the professional boards. She is remarkably like her sister in speech, mannerisms, and appearance. Her diction was always good, even though it had an explosive element which should have been curbed a little. The diction of almost every player, even to the children, was good, and easily heard. Mr. Cecil Carson made a very acceptable trustee, a very prettily drawn character. Miss Edith Rowett, as the frigid aunt acted superbly, even though she was inclined to elocute her lines. Italia Guyatt acted superbly as Mrs. Brown and Mr. Jack Reading was such an unattentive lover that he frequently looked towards the audience instead of to her when she was speaking to him. Master Alan Carson, the two "Shrimps" Misses Joan Salkeld, and Gwen Sullivan and Paddy the dog were all that the authoress could have desired. Mr. George B. Eaton, the producer, has done his work really well, and made the most of this new contribution to Australian stage literature.

A.H.T.