

"WHAT EVERY WOMAN KNOWS"

Repertory's Success in Barrie Play

Gladys Parkinson's Fine Performance

THE CAST.

David Wylie Tom MacMinn
 Alick Wylie Ludovick Gordon
 James Wylie W. Binning Wilson
 Maggie Wylie Gladys Parkinson
 John Shand William Williams
 The Comtesse de la Briere Jean Barlow
 Lady Sybil Tenierden Katharine Cook
 Mr. Charles Venables Nigel Jackson
 Maid Beryl Holloway
 Footman H. J. Young

NO one knew the Scottish temperament better than did Sir James Barrie. In "What Every Woman Knows," the play from his pen presented by the Brisbane Repertory Theatre Society last night at the Princess Theatre, he blends this knowledge with his stagecraft and whimsical charm of style to provide us with a study of exquisite sensibility. If the Scottish folk of Brisbane wish to see themselves as "ithers see them," to-night is the night, for the play is to be repeated.

The play has been claimed to be Barrie at his best. . . not the Barrie of fantasy, but the Barrie who can give the breath of life to homely situations and breathe into homely characters the warm humanity that we know so well. The claim is justified for he has done nothing finer, for instance, than that first act, which remark is not meant to imply a lack of balance in the play itself. But the first act is so full of things so essentially typical of the man himself. The curtain goes up on two male members of the Wylie family, father and son James, poring over their game at the table . . . a long silence with not a word spoken. David, another son, enters and sits by the fire. Still not a word! David looks glum, sucks his pipe, and stares into space. There is much huffing at the table. Then at long last, the leisurely tempo of the act having been irrevocably set, David breaks the silence.

And so, with things moving along precisely at the right speed (slightly faster movement would have ruined it) the story is unfolded. How James Shand, railway porter, ambitious, dourly Scotch, comes in at the win-

dow to steal knowledge from the Wylie library at dead of night, and is manoeuvred into a bargain to marry Maggie Wylie in five years if they will provide him with £300 for the advancement of his career. There is much typically Scottish haggling over the terms, Maggie revealing a strong practical streak with almost the first words she utters. There are entries and exits, with lines on these exits which ring the bell unerringly.

It is said that the three Wylies (Tom McMinn, Ludo Gordon, and W. Binning Wilson) are actually of Scottish extraction. We have heard W. Binning Wilson's broad Caledonian speech in plays where it was amusingly out of place. Here, of course, it is perfection. And Tom McMinn and Ludo Gordon draw two exceptionally good studies with an assumed burr in the speech that is at times surprisingly lifelike. These three characters blended superbly last night. It would be almost unfair to suggest that one worked better than the other, though one cannot forebear mentioning some of the excellent "business" of Tom McMinn, and the excellent timing of Mr. Wilson in some of his exit lines in the first act.

But the merits of the casting have not yet been half told. Gladys Parkinson's Maggie stood out, I believe, as one of the finest pieces of characterization seen on Brisbane amateur boards this

year. Considering the rising standards in all work being done in Brisbane this is a very big claim to make. It is a beautiful part, and she is perfectly suited to it. But that does not take from her the credit for the perfection of her Scottish accent, and the manner in which it was maintained. It does not account, either, for the hundred and one inimitable touches of comedy vouchsafed lines which were in themselves innocuous in this regard, or for the charming fluency of the whole performance, for her excellent sense of timing, or that fine outburst of emotional acting at the beginning of the second act, superbly done, or the consistently high tone of the performance from beginning to end.

Another complete surprise was the John Shand of William Williams. Here is a young man whose previous experience on the stage is restricted to a small part in "Macbeth." Yet in this play he walks on with a big part and is never out of character for one moment in the entire play. True again, he was the type physically. The best praise we can give him is that we have seen Scotchmen just like him. This was an inspired piece of

nim is that we have seen Scotchmen just like him. This was an inspired piece of casting on Miss Sisley's part.

Other parts in the play were well sustained. Jean Barlow's Countess was delicious in the last act, when she stood off and laughed with the audience at the working out of Maggie's plotting. Katharine Cook and Nigel Jackson (how his work has improved since he began!) were able lieutenants in this last act.

The play will be repeated this evening. It is worth seeing twice.

A.H.T.