

REPERTORY'S BEST FOR THE YEAR

"The Late Christopher Bean"

Miss Rhoda Felgate's Triumph

THE CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY.

Dr. Haggett	Ludo Gordon
Susan Haggett	Beryl Telford
Gweny	Rhoda Felgate
Mrs. Haggatt	Kathleen Radford
Ada Haggatt	Jean Archibald
Bruce McRae	W. Binning Wilson
Tallant	Vince Fogarty
Rosen	Leo Guyatt
Davenport	Redmond O'Hara

"THE Late Christopher Bean," the English adaptation from Rene Fauchois' "Prene Garde a La Peinture," by Emlyn Williams, which was presented by the Brisbane Repertory Theatre last night goes very near to being the best play the society has given to us this year. It has been called a brilliant comedy, but it is more than that. It rests not only on brilliant comedy. It fulfils all the qualifications of a first rate play, in that it points a moral, and its characters are real people who behave naturally. Moreover, it is a beautifully constructed play with the strands of plot subtly interwoven in such a way as to lead one on from one act to another with the utmost naturalness and simplicity. Some of the characters are beautifully drawn, yet they are used to poke fun at poor old humanity and its inherent greed.

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Another title for the play might have been "The Triumph of Gwenny" or "The Decline and Fall of Dr. Haggett." For these two events occurred simultaneously with the final curtain. In the three acts, which are packed with action and incident, there is not one entry or exit that is not naturally conceived. There is none of that obvious pushing a character off stage so that another can take up the running. The comedy, too, lies not altogether in the brilliant dialogue. Situation claims its share.

If Dr. Haggett at the end is a rather pitiful figure of frustrated greed we yet feel that he is a very mortal being. One can imagine that after the final curtain has fallen, his unfulfilled financial expectations worry him less than does his conscience over his disgracefully shabby treatment of Gwenny. In the first act he decries greed for money as one of the cardinal sins. In the third we see him firmly in the grip of the same impulse, yet conscious of his own moral decline.

PIVOTAL POINT.

GWENNY, the old servant, is really the pivotal point of the whole play. The full significance of her place in the scheme of things is unfolded in a masterly manner in the course of the play, the playwright centring the interest on her more and more with each succeeding act. Naturally there are hints . . . her strange knowledge of the painter's art when the daubs of Bruce McRae are paraded, her strange emotional reactions to the mention of Chris. Bean, and her admission in the second act that she has more than a few sketches of the artist in her keeping. We feel almost from the very beginning that Gwenny knows more about the late Chris. than anyone else.

Miss Rhoda Felgate gave an almost perfect characterisation of Gwenny. It was good in a variety of ways. She struck just the right note in the emotional field. Her comedy was beautifully timed . . . and timing is as important in comedy as it is in cricket.

Her use of the charming . . . accent was right to the last syllable, her exits were most effectively done and gesture was at times used as eloquently as we

were most effectively done and gesture was at times used as eloquently as we are likely to see it used on the Princess Theatre stage for a long time. She made us see precisely the position Gwenny held in this household. Indeed she was Gwenny, which is the highest compliment one can pay her.

DEVELOPED SURPRISINGLY.

MR. LUDO GORDON developed the character Dr. Haggett surprisingly from rather sober beginnings. A wizened old country doctor, with an almost quixotic disregard for worldly wealth. He managed very well the gradual descent in his own and our estimations when the chance for big money came along. Mr. Gordon acted better and better as the play progressed. He behaved quite naturally and in keeping with the distraught feelings of one who is becoming panicky about his own moral rectitude. The two villains of the piece were well conceived, both in the play and in the performance.

Mr. Leo Guyatt's delineation of the furtive Rosen, a rather slippery customer who redeemed himself in the end by his own sincerity of purpose, was all that one expects from this very capable actor. Mr. Vince Fogarty was a different type of rogue but was convincing. Mr. Redmond O'Hara gave one of his best performances to date as the dignified art critic. The part suited him perfectly and he made the best of it. Misses Kathleen Radford, Jean Archibald, and Beryl Telford sustained their parts well.

In all respects the producing of Miss Barbara Sisley was excellent. And if we have forgotten to mention Mr. W. Binning Wilson it is that he was fitted so well into the picture that he has hitherto been overlooked.

The play will be presented again this evening at the Princess Theatre.
