

"THE ROOF."

FINE REPERTORY PRODUCTION.

The late John Galsworthy was marvellously gifted in his ability for characterisation, and in none of his stage works was this more exemplified than in "The Roof," which was staged at Cremorne last night by the Brisbane Repertory Theatre Society. And although he was an experimentalist in dramatic situation he was never more daring than in this play, when he conceived six scenes that in point of time take place simultaneously. Such a scheme could be successfully achieved only by a master of dramatic construction.

The point of the play, however, is the reaction on the characters, as varied in temperament as they could be, to a danger that confronts them all. In the last scene comes their test, wherein the apparently weak may be found strong, the hysterical calm of demeanour, the timid brave, and the selfish self-sacrificing. As in George Bernard Shaw's "You Never Can Tell" the most important character is a waiter. He has seen life from the unemotional side mostly—being two busy for aught else. He has

seen it from the angle of supplying the body's material nourishment. But for all the importance of the waiter there is really no chief part, hence the play's admirable suitability for performance by a repertory society, where "stars" do not exist, and all are for the cause.

The action of "The Roof" takes place in a small hotel in Paris, and each of the first six scenes is a little play in itself, engaging each time new principals. They are not all seen together until they meet on the roof, when attempting to escape from the burning building.

In the first scene the audience makes the acquaintance of Gustave, the waiter, most admirably played by Mr. Loftus Hyde. He is waiting on a nurse (Miss Kathleen Radford), who is the attendant on a sick man, whose identity is not disclosed till the sixth scene. He is a Mr. Lennox, an author whose one great desire is to get "under the skin" of life, into the very lives of people as they really are. Mr. Cecil Carson gave a fine interpretation of the part. Also on the scene comes the Hon. Reggie Fanning (Mr. Jack Reading), who has been tied to his mother's apron strings, and who is just trying to learn a little of life by the way of the bottle. With him are Brice (Mr. Graham Macdonald) and Baker (Mr. Tom Stephens). Brice is a bully, and Baker rather a fine character when one gets to know him. A Jugoslavian violinist (Mr. Leo Guyatt) also is met. The strains of his music are heard during each scene, and to each group they mean something different. It is midnight, and the clock is put back to a point where Reggie leaves his friends to go to a lounge, where his guide, appointed by his mother, awaits him. The part of this guide, Major Moulteney, fell to Mr. Bob Kelly. Then

comes the part of this guide, Major Moulteney, fell to Mr. Bob Kelly. Then comes a delightful bedroom scene between two schoolgirl sisters (Misses Betty Bolton and Deirdre Crommelin), which begins with a pillow fight and ends in delight that something of life will be gleaned from a hotel on fire. Humour pervades the next scene, where Mr. and Mrs. Beeton occupy twin beds, the one wishing to sleep and the other to read. Miss Rhoda Felgate gave one of her excellent character studies as the matron, and Dr. T. P. Fry was good as the fussy, elderly husband. The sixth scene, also set in a bedroom, shows two-thirds of the "eternal triangle," with Miss Jean Barlow as the lady and Mr. Ray O'Hara as the "young man," confident that love will last for ever. The only poignant scene is that in which the audience peeps into the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Lennox (Miss Esther Jones). Here comedy does not step in, but the action leads directly to that on the roof where character speaks out and one instance occurs of retributive justice at the hands of fate.

"The Roof" will be repeated to-night. Plans are at Paling's.