

## CLEVER CHARACTER DRAWING

### Repertory Society's Spanish Play

THE Repertory Society chose a play of an unusual type in "Don Abel Wrote a Tragedy," which was presented last night in the Princess Theatre. The authors, Seraffin and Joaquin Alvarez Quintero, have taken no fewer than 26 characters, of which new ones are still entering even in the last scene, and managed to make each one interesting as a piece of humanity. One of them remarks, "We are all characters and we all find each other very amusing," and this line epitomises the play concisely; in the Continental fashion, the play might have been called "Twenty-six characters in search of a plot," for the story is extremely slender, although the play is too long.

It is a human, lovable, and clever comedy, in which there are no villains nor heroes, but simple ordinary people, exactly like those who make up real life. There is some very skilful and enjoyable fun at the expense of the vast army of would-be playwrights, and of the workings (if that is not too imposing a term) of Government offices. Naturally, it would never occur to those who laughed heartily at the latter, to make a comparison between officialdom as here portrayed in Madrid, and in Australia to-day!

Jum Pendleton produced the play, and played a very important part as the timid middle-aged clerk gently ambling through life with a manuscript burning a hole in his pocket and his common sense. His work was delightful, and he brought out effectively the pathos of such a man. At no time did this player fail his authors. Incidentally he was the only member of the cast who pronounced correctly the name of his daughter, Irene. Do Spaniards share the American idiosyncrasy, of pronouncing this name as Ireen?

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women guide the plot, and although there was clever humour supplied by the human contrasts among the male clerks, Miss Campbell's entrance had the effect of "lifting the stage" as well as the spirits of the bored civil servants. That dangerous thing, the soliloquy, also makes its appearance, but the author disarms criticism by discussing its legitimacy in one of the earliest speeches.

The cast, considering its unwieldy size, was very even. Andy Hurst did good character work in the first act, W. A. Blake was appropriately pompous even in make up. Bob Risson spoilt his work by pronouncing the first personal pronoun and all similar sounds to rhyme with hay; Gwen Campbell, Agnes Bullen and Darley Cooper all caught admirably the spirit of their parts, Dulcie Wood, a newcomer, did some very promising work, and Clare Clark played with spirit and humour as the kind middle-aged lady who nearly broke an author's heart by telling him his was "a pretty little play."

John Cover had a difficult part, and in parts handled it well; he must blame his author for seeing humour in the fact that a man stutters.

Those who enjoy adroit comedy should see this play when it is repeated to-night. There is sufficient seriousness hidden by the laughter to make it very real, and the performance will be even more enjoyable if Mr. Pendleton decides to cut a few of the many irrelevant lines and let everybody out of the theatre before eleven o'clock.

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