

# "THE ROUNDABOUT"

## Comrade Staggles Scores a Hit

### Priestley's Tilt at Communism

#### THE CAST.

Lord Kettlewell . . . . . Ludovic Gordon  
 Churton Saunders . . . . . Jum Pendleton  
 Parsons . . . . . Roy Black  
 Alec Grenside . . . . . Jack Walsh  
 Pamela Kettlewell . . . . . Patricia Steedman  
 Comrade Staggles . . . . . Ralph Taylor  
 Farrington Gurney . . . . . L. B. Swan  
 Lady Kingsbridge . . . . . Edith Rowett  
 Hilda Lancicourt . . . . . Esther Jones  
 Lady Kettlewell . . . . . Betty Francis  
 Alice . . . . . Lorna Watt

Play produced by Rhoda Felgate.

IT is possible that all those energetic gentlemen who work in the interests of Soviet Russia have a case for heavy damages against Mr. J. B. Priestley. It is possible, too, that all the landed gentry of England are similarly situated. For in his play, "The Roundabout," which was presented by the Brisbane Repertory Theatre on Saturday night, Comrade Staggles, bent presumably on turning smug England inside out in the name of the Soviet, cuts a rather sorry figure. So do the landed gentry, for in any home worthy of the name Comrade Staggles would have been emptied out into the streets or rather, should we say, the country road, long before he composed himself in the settee of Lord Kettlewell's drawing room and sneezed heartily, thus giving Mr. Priestley an excellent excuse to ring down the final curtain.

"The Roundabout" is a very amusing play. Its central motif is the clash between irresponsible youth with Communist tendencies and a typical English country home where gentility is still at a premium even if wealth is rapidly evaporating.

#### A REVERSION TO TYPE.

PRIESTLEY never allows his characters to get down to the real issues at stake, but gives us a series of amusing flirtations with the subject, which when linked up with other side issues of the rather sprawling plot make a most diverting evening, even if it does not reveal Comrade Staggles in a very favourable light. It is to the credit of Mr. Ralph Taylor that at the end of the play, and even before we come to the end, we are wondering why on earth someone does not take him by the scruff of the neck and throw him out. Pamela Kettlewell, who has returned with this thoroughly objectionable young man from Russia, goes through the process of reverting to type. Miss Patricia Steedman seemed to be far more at ease when Priestley allows her to shed the shorts and sweater, which make her "look like a mechanic from a third-rate garage." As an apostle of Freedom she fails to convince. But as soon as she dons civilised attire again (where and how she obtains this attire we are not told) she is a different being. She regains her poise, and acts better than before.

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the play that they are really the people the playwright meant them to be, instead of some local player walking through the part. Jum Pendleton was on stage most of the time. He strolled about in pias fours, squatted on chairs, and lighted sundry cigarettes, and chatted amiably to whoever happened to be on stage. And one did feel all the time that here was a genuine Priestley creation and not a Pendleton adaptation. Roy Black's butler assumed the same mantle of reality. It is true that it was the traditional stage butler to the life. But we could forget Roy Black completely while he was on stage. Esther Jones and Edith Rowett maintained the same illusion fairly successfully. Ludo Gordon has done better work than he did on Saturday evening. He was cursed from the opening scene with a memory which refused to function normally, and this fact completely upset him. Next Saturday he will have conquered this failing and probably will give a 100 per cent better performance as Lord Kettlewell.

#### HONOURS TO RALPH TAYLOR.

PERHAPS the honours of the play, however, go to Ralph Taylor. It is easily his best part to date. For he got completely within the skin of Comrade Staggles, and was most convincingly objectionable. His slouch was perfectly assumed, his insolence and his boorishness matched completely the other elements of the character he was portraying. L. B. Swan, still gaining experience in this type of work, is showing distinct improvement and before long should be taking bigger and better roles successfully. Lorna Watt's maid also deserves commendation.

#### VARIETY OF FARE.

THE play, coming between "Lady Precious Stream" and "Hamlet," is a perfect foil to both. It shows what a variety of fare the society is able to provide by its new policy. It may not be Priestley at his best, for at times the craftsmanship is faulty, but it is a thoroughly amusing comedy wherein there are some exceptionally bright lines. On Saturday the cast did not exploit some of these as they might have done. Strangely enough, some of Jum Pendleton's mis-fired, and his good lines rarely do that. Miss Felgate's production, however, was good, and we may safely assume that the remaining performances of the play will be even better than that given on Saturday evening.

"The Roundabout" will be played on August 29 and on September 5. On September 12 "Hamlet" will be presented.

A.H.T.