

# "Housemaster"

## Repertory Theatre Presents Bright Comedy

### THE CAST.

Charles Donkin	W. A. Blake
"Bimbo" Farrington	Don Cameron
Victor Beamish	Peter Buchanan
Frank Hastings	William Williams
Ellen	Betty Brown
Barbara Fane	Clare Clarke
"Button" Farrington	Betty Boulton
Matron	Vera Goodfellow
Rosemary Farrington	Vivienne Taylor
Chris Farrington	Marjorie Cullen
Philip de Pourville	Mervyn Eadie
"Flossie" Nightingale	John Dolby
Rev. Edmund Ovington	Ernest Busch
Sir Berkeley Nightingale	Ludovic Gardon
Travers	Eric Kelk
"Pop"	John Bow
"Old Crump"	Alan Burke

Ian Hay's "Housemaster," the second production of the Brisbane Repertory Theatre Society, which was presented at the Princess Theatre last night is, as the name implies, a school comedy. But unlike some other school comedies we could mention, it is not subversive of discipline. Even the opening scene removes any impression on that score, though not necessarily the impression made on poor Bimbo Farrington, who, bent double, with posterior audience-wards, has just received a number of hearty lashes with the cane posterior-wards, with the housemaster (W. A. Blake) boiling with inner indignation, but showing on the surface a masterly calm.

The play took time to settle down. Perhaps at the beginning the tempo was somewhat slow. The play really started to live when the three imps of mischief arrived. Thereafter, it went with verve, with a very even standard of performance throughout, and with the audience very slow on the up-take. Really good lines sailed over their heads without evincing even a chuckle. This facility for missing good comedy lines, unless they are heavily under-scored, is a feature of our audiences in general, which is difficult to understand. Although W. A. Blake made an excellent housemaster ("The Moke," to his friends), he was not quite up to his usual form, despite the fact that he did some things admirably, and his control of facial expression and of the right emphasis of the right line were beyond criticism. He steered the course between stern discipline and an intense

passionate sense of justice in a manner that was entirely admirable. And there was restraint in all things. Lack of restraint marred some of the other per-

formances. "Button" (Miss B. Boulton), the youngest of the three imps let loose in the world of the housemaster, revealed this weakness to a degree sufficient to throw this character slightly out of focus. She looked older than 13 and she bounced about the stage like a ping-pong ball, retrieved bits of chocolate from her underclothing, planted exuberant kisses on all unsuspecting males, and generally gave all the manifestations of irresponsible, irrepressible youth, without quite getting to the core of the part. Perhaps it was restraint that was needed here as well as in the part of that "duplication" of her, the equally irrepressible "Bimbo." But what could one expect of these folk whose friends were more interested in "roasting sparrows over bunsen burners."

### A SPLENDID VOICE.

Vivienne Taylor was admirably cast as the eldest of the trio of feminine visitants on the peace and calm of the housemaster. Her voice is perhaps one of the best voices the society possesses. Her presence and her person were appealing, but she was inclined to be a trifle clothes-conscious in one act. And who can blame her? Some of the best and most appealing parts of the play came with her scenes with the housemaster, especially where he gives her some fatherly advice. Marjorie Cullen as Chris, the third sister of this trio, should beware of speaking lines too softly and allowing them to trail off into inaudible silences. Clare Clarke got the spirit of the part of Barbara Fane to perfection. Mervyn Eadie had a small quiet part in which he was entirely effective. Peter Buchanan was never better as the "double rowing-blue" than when he

was bristling with indignation when he listened to the "Head" (the Egg) announcing the gradual abolition of rowing as a sport. I have never seen anyone bristle better and more silently. The part was very nicely handled throughout. In the midst of a whole host of other characters, who did good work, one must mention "Old Crump" (Alan Burke) for achieving absolute naturalness and conviction in a small but amusing character study. The production of Kathleen Hirst, except in a few very minor particulars, was admirable.

The play is full of good lines, which positively sparkle, and should draw another large audience for this evening's performance. Let us hope, though, it commences before 8.5 p.m. and finishes before 11 p.m.

A.H.T.