

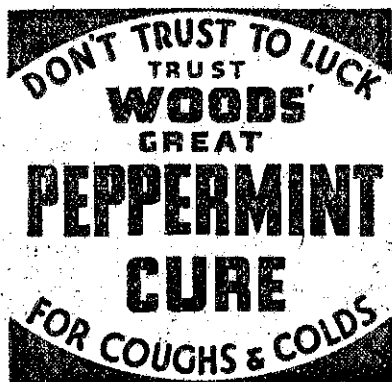
MAKING EASY the CRITIC'S JOB

IT'S hard to keep on praising Wellington's repertory productions, especially when the two major societies in the city are presenting ten a year, but it is a sad fact that the shows are getting better and better. (Sad, that is, for the critic, for it gives him so very little to fasten his teeth on.) And if I keep on telling everyone that the latest show is bigger, better and brighter than the last, I'll be mistaken for a writer of movie advertisements.

But "Laburnum Grove," which the Thespians presented for a season in Wellington recently, and which they took to Wanganui during last week-end, is far and away the best thing that this society has done in its short but singularly bright career. And it is praise indeed to hear a Londoner, who saw the original J. B. Priestley production in a West End theatre, say, "This local effort gave me the surprise of my life. Gillespie was every bit as good as Edmund Gwenn, and the setting was excellent." I didn't know a suburban drawing-room could be made to look so interesting.

Bouquets for the casting, the producing, and the stage setting must be addressed to Victor Lloyd, whose hard work has built the Thespians into one of the finest repertory bodies in New Zealand. For the first time on the Concert Chamber stage the conventional drawing-room setting was dispensed with, and an unusual three-cornered room built, with an interesting archway opening into a hall.

O. N. Gillespie, as the man of the house "who's been up to something," held the stage. Whether he was filling his pipe or drinking an early morning cup of tea before leaving for Birmingham, he was the suburban husband and father to the life. He has a thousand counterparts in New Zealand—in Epsom or Hataitai, Riccarton or St. Clair. Vera Horton as his wife, was the sort of uncurious woman (if there is such a word) who could help any man maintain his self-respect. She was only required to show a touch of fire on one occasion—when she ordered her sister and brother-in-law out of the house. A good performance, hers.



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