

## 'DAYS WITHOUT END'

### Modern Miracle Play at Questors' Theatre

Conflict is one of the three great dramatic motives, and conflict between the better and worse self of one John Loving, has been taken by Eugene O'Neill as the basis for his unusual and arresting play, "Days Without End," produced by the Questors in the little theatre in Mattock-lane, Ealing, on Thursday and last night, and which will be repeated this evening.

The author describes this unforgettable experiment in dramatic form as a "modern miracle play," and that is, perhaps, the best possible description, although whether Evil is as effectively portrayed by a figure in modern evening dress, wearing a mask of horrible and callous immobility, as by the more ancient forms of a hooped Mephistopheles, is one of the questions which will probably be brought up at Monday's discussion upon the play and its production.

One thing is certain—the Questors are to be congratulated upon staging so unusual a play which, it is believed, has never been previously seen in London, and has been put on only by a very few scattered theatre groups in Great Britain, and, in its Dutch version, by some rather exclusive theatrical groups in Holland.

In a modern and somewhat morbid manner the author sets himself the task of showing the gradual deterioration of a soul, that of John Loving, who first loses faith in a God of Love because his parents, for whom he prays passionately that they may be saved, both die of an epidemic of influenza raging in New York City. He partially regains paradise by marrying Elsa, but evil, in the guise of the masked figure in evening dress, pursues him even in his happy home life, and tempts him to be unfaithful. This story is unfolded—and a little clumsily so—by the recounting of the plot of a novel, a device one supposes inspired by John's evil genius—Loving, who is his worse self, just as John is his better self. The former pursues John like a shadow even to the Cross of Christ, in the last act, where he dies at the foot of the cross, and where, after long striving and deep humiliation, John at last realises the meaning of the cry, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Elsa, his wife, nearly dies of pneumonia, and bitterness of a spirit whose love was not great enough to forgive infidelity, but as John himself realises the peace of divine pardon, Elsa becomes big enough in soul to forgive also, and a play of tense and tragic agony ends on a note of love and forgiveness. It is obvious that such a theme needs delicate and understanding handling and this was obtained under the production of Rosalie Van der Gucht, and at the hands of the nine players in the cast.

Mr. T. S. Saunders caught the dignified sorrow and earnestness necessary to a telling portrait of John's priestly uncle Father Matthew Bird, the seconder of all that is good in his nephew. Mr. William Dann, as John's original and best self, played an exigent and emotional part with sober and effective realism and sincerity. Mr. Frank Wheeler, as John's evil spirit and worse self, was so quietly, efficiently and nauseatingly in his mask as to almost haunt the mind, and Mrs. Mildred Emmet played with straight and simple tenderness as Elsa, John's adoring wife, who, just because of the idealistic nature of her human devotion to John, found it very hard to forgive him. Mrs. Mary Bennett showed real dramatic and controlled emotion in the role of Mrs. Lucy Hillman, and smaller parts were well played by Miss Kathleen Smith as Margaret, the maid, Mr. Lionel Locke as John's visitor, William Eliot, Mr. Laurie Rivers as Dr. Herbert Stillwell, and Miss Muriel Curtis as the nurse.

C.C.



A scene from the last act of "Days Without End," produced by the Questors at their theatre in Mattock-lane, Ealing, this week.