

QUESTORS IN SYNGE PLAY

Bold Venture Under War Conditions

The production by the Questors on Sunday afternoon of J. M. Synge's "Playboy of the Western World," was, to say the least of it, a bold venture under the restricted conditions imposed by war. To a large extent the courage displayed in the choice of so difficult a play was justified. Casting is always an anxious matter in these emergency days, and a play in which everyone has to speak the broad Irish dialect of County Mayo presents a formidable task. However, although there were occasional lapses in accent, the players had obviously taken trouble to study the lilt and dialect (they did so from records made by the Irish Players themselves) and the result, on the whole, was satisfactory.

Mr. Eric Voce produced, and succeeded in the creation of a distinctly Celtic atmosphere, in which the play's grim humour flourished.

The setting, for which Mr. Fred Robinson (also stage manager) was responsible, might really have been a corner of a squalid public-house on the wild west coast of Ireland.

IN THE TITLE ROLE

Mr. Alfred Emmet, in the title role of Christopher Mahon, gave a beautiful portrait of this lonely lad, whose brain worked differently from that of most of his fellows, and whose being cried aloud for love and understanding, which his rough life in the remote hills of County Mayo, ever repressed by his cruel, drunken father, denied him.

A little "touched"—perhaps—suffering from an inferiority complex, a child in many ways, a strong man in others, capable of being a bully and a coward; on occasions docile as a lamb and with a vague sense of joy amidst the unhappiness of his lot—this was a complicated and exigent character to portray, and Mr. Emmet gave it both tenderness and strength.

Miss Barbara Hutchins was less successful as the publican's daughter, Pegeen, between whom and Christopher an attachment springs up. Giving both fire and passion to her acting she over-acted, to the occasional detriment of clear diction. Her frequent vehemence and rare moments of calm tended to become irritating, and she thus spoiled a sincere enough portrait of a tempestuous, head-strong character.

AN ACHIEVEMENT

Owing to the illness of Miss Joy Cade, who was in the original cast, Miss Joan Cowderoy (prompter of the production) took over the role of the neighbouring Widow Quin at very short notice, and, indeed, with only one rehearsal. She played the part, with its feline stealth and cunning, with a quiet force and confidence which gave it outstanding distinction, and which made it—as the author intended—a direct and striking contrast to the heroine's turbulence. Mr. Charles Leno appeared to enjoy his part as Pegeen's father, a devil-may-care publican, and so did Mr. John H. Turner and Mr. Ferguson Morton, as small neighbouring farmers, "over-fond of a glass." Mr. Lionel Locke treated with his customary skill the role of Old Mahon, Christy's father, and Mr. Michael Kelly gave credibility to the character of Shawn Keogh, Pegeen's canting, despicable cousin. The Misses L. Metcalfe, E. Bishop, J. Angel, B. Turner and J. Bass, as a party of fresh and excitable young Irish colleens, completed the cast.

Repeat performances will be given this (Saturday) afternoon and to-morrow (Sunday), beginning at 3 p.m.

C.C.