

## "JONAH AND THE WHALE"

### Questors in a Bridie Play

The ancient and the modern, the crude and the sophisticated, the tragic and the humorous are interwoven with tantalising but interesting effect by the ingenious hand of James Bridie in his play, "Jonah and the Whale," presented by the Questors in their theatre in Mattock-lane, Ealing, on Saturday, Sunday and Monday. Those among the audience familiar with Bridie's play, "Tobias and the Angel," could guess more or less how Bridie would treat such an Old Testament theme as Jonah.

This dramatist's style suits the particular talents of this society, and Mr. Alfred Emmet, who produced, and also "roared with mighty effect" by means of an amplifier as the whale, surmounted freak difficulties in production with an almost uncanny skill. The deck of the sailing ship bound for Tarshish, on which Jonah runs away from duty as his conscience conceived it, and the dim interior scene "in the belly of the whale," which together form the second act, were extremely effective, and the stage trick of moving the back cloth created the illusion that the vessel was really in motion. The "noises off" during this act were well-judged and well-timed. The audience fully appreciated the witty and spectacular skit on the modern smart set represented by the scene on the balcony of the Hotel Baal at Nineveh, where Tola, the fashionable woman novelist of that city, entertains her blasé friends.

### PROVINCIAL PROPHET

Mr. Francis Smith, bare-foot and clad in tattered, greasy, grey-green garments, is to be congratulated upon his portrait of the complex character of this "little provincial prophet," as he finally realised himself to be, the dupe of his own conceit that he alone could hear the divine voice and could set the world right by his denunciation. This actor was pre-eminently sincere; his declarations were trenchant and dogmatic, yet he was human enough on his other side. It was a sensitive, well-balanced performance, and Mr. Smith got well under the skin of the character.

Miss Joan Angel was throughout more herself than Eurodias, the village girl of Gittah Hopher, in love with Jonah. It was a charming, agreeable self, but her acting did not give one the sense of period which Mr. Smith's Jonah did. It is only fair, however, to say that it was a difficult part, for the Hebrew maid has to use such modern slang as "cowardly eustard," which is well out of period. Mr. Eric Voce's Bilshan, a commercial traveller, who flits through the scenes, was strong, as it was meant to be, on the cynical side. Mr. Philip Allen was as successfully vociferous as any sergeant-major as the sea captain, and Miss Rena Rice as Eshtemoa, the leading citizeness of the smart set of Nineveh, and whose one virtue was a queer sort of pagan courage, gave another outstanding characterisation.

Mr. Michael Kelly was among those in the cast who successfully duplicated roles, and he was particularly effective as the sentry at Gittah Hopher.

Mr. Gunter Heilbut was responsible for the stage decorations.

It was, without doubt, intelligent entertainment, at which the Questors aim, if somewhat brain-teasing.

C.C.