

At the Play

"THE DAY OF GLORY" (EMBASSY)

DURING the war Mr. H. E. BATES got closer than any other writer to the very special philosophy of aircrews. Without flourish or sentimentality he managed to tune in to the men who were working out a grim new way of life behind an almost impenetrable façade of comic moustaches and fantastic under-statement. Here, in his first play, he uses this knowledge against a domestic back-ground to show what the fear was like that followed the first glamour of fighting and to ask if there shall be no end to such sacrifice. I must confess I found it much more moving than some other critics have done. The dialogue discovers the quick revealing phrase of which Mr. BATES is a master, and the piece is skilfully put together, though both the second and third acts I thought went on too long.

On the eve of a big operation we see a famous fighter pilot rejecting the fiancée who cannot grasp how he has changed and turning for comfort to a girl who understands. He would like to talk naturally with his mother, but to nobody but *Julia*, old beyond her years, can he explain what he feels about the terror he saw in the face of a German he has just shot down. In the offing is an uncle who lost part of his reason at Passchendaele. Next morning the pilot is killed. It is a conventional enough story, but *Jack's* tight-drawn suffering, *Julia's* compassion and the crazy old man's horror that his own private hell has not been worth while add up to something more positive than a mere commentary on the mess of war. And Mr. BATES leaves the door open for hope. The casting is accurate and Mr. BASIL DEAN's production polished, though occasionally there is a need to speak up. Miss MARY MORRIS gives the performance of the evening as *Julia*, Mr. RODERICK LOVELL as *Jack* sympathetically suggests the strains below the surface, Miss GWYNNE WHITBY plays the *Mother* with excellent judgment, and into his sketch of a Polish

pilot Mr. GERARD HEINZ packs all the laughing, tortured gallantry of those doughty fighters. The rest are sound.

MISS RUTH DRAPER (APOLLO)

MISS DRAPER's repertoire is so extensive that I dare not say what is new, but only that I was lucky enough to hit off six pieces which I hadn't seen before. "A Class in Greek Poise" is merciless satire on Middle West uplift. In "A Children's Party" the mother of a tough quartet copes tactfully with every possible crisis but one.

France," the one about the peasant seeing off her husband in a little boat to join De Gaulle. It is magnificent and I could see it once a week and each time find something more to marvel at.

There is only one Miss DRAPER. Let us hope she comes back to us soon.

"AND NO BIRDS SING" (ALDWYCH)

As a hinge for their comedy Miss JENNY LAIRD and Mr. JOHN FERNALD employ the ancient controversy of career or marriage, which I thought had long been settled by all the women who seem to succeed in making the best of both worlds. It is a clumsy hinge and too much of it is visible, but though the argument is stale the manner of the play is fresh and lively; and if Miss ELIZABETH ALLAN fails to persuade us quite that the heroine's problem exists we can at least believe that the presence of so attractive a doctor possessed of such dazzling resources of wardrobe and cellar must be social dynamite in any London slum. What it all boils down to is whether *Dr. Elizabeth* will continue to sublimate her mother-instinct in teaching the young of the tenements to think for themselves, estranging her ecclesiastical landlords in the process, or go down fighting before the breezy charms of *George*, late R.N.V.R., a man of guile and patience? Seeing that he is played by Mr. HAROLD WARRENDER with irresistible lightheartedness we planked our money on *George*, and it was a safe bet. There are neat incidental situations and some excellent minor sketches of character, in particular by Mr. NIGEL STOCK, a rugged son of Glasgow, Miss HELEN HAYE, a vinegared puritan, Miss NATALIE JORDAN, the doctor's chief guinea-pig, and Mr. RUSSELL WATERS, a winning Jeeves from the lower deck. I should say the acting is rather better than the play, but that the combined operation will undoubtedly please the town, which will not inquire too deeply whether landlords who end a tenancy on the grounds of free-thinking would not quickly find themselves at the deep end of a law court. ERIC.



COLLECTING THE EMPTY

Col. Sanderson, D.S.O. MR. RAYMOND HUNTLEY
Julia MISS MARY MORRIS

"Three Breakfasts" is the story of a marriage from silly bliss through middle doldrums to the comfortable moorings of deafness and rheumatism. "Glasses" is a brilliant bit of social observation based on our general inability to master the devil in our spectacles. More serious in tone is "Three Generations in the Court of Domestic Relations," showing a New York slum-girl pleading to a judge against her mother and grandmother for permission to marry and get away; and "In County Kerry" is the simple relation by an old Irishwoman of how her son died at Suvla and afterwards appeared to her. It is sentimental but effective. Finally we had "Vive la