

EASTMAN STAR IN ROLE OF FARMER IN "DETOUR"

By Rutheda L. Pretzel

In "The Detour" by Owen Davis, played during the past week by the North Shore Theater guild along the north shore towns, Charles Eastman made the role of "Stephen Hardy" so human and true that it will be remembered long. Owen Davis knew farmers when he wrote the lines for his Stephen—and Charles Eastman knew farmers when he spoke the lines. He had all the important small gestures, too, knew how to slouch into a kitchen chair and tug at a corn cob pipe, how to put his hand in an awkward overall pocket, and he had a knack of pushing out his sentences in an over-the-shoulder way that made his Stephen actually live.

The play concerns itself with the struggle of Steve Hardy's wife, Helen, to nurture in her daughter Kate the passion for painting she had, and which she gave up when she married Steve. From the daughter's infancy until she is almost of age, the mother has talked of and planned for the time when Kate may go to New York to study art. For twenty years she and Steve have toiled with poor land, in a village where "being born and dead are the only things that happen," and she has saved pennies by the infinitely small sacrifices farmers' wives know, so that her daughter may get free of the hard life she has lived.

At the opening of the play, the mother and daughter discover they have saved \$700, and by selling an old fashioned bed they make up the thousand dollars needed. It is decided Kate should leave that day. Steve, with a farmer's unquenchable thirst for land, decides to buy 20 acres owned by Tom Lane, a neighbor lad who is in love with Kate, and Tom offers to sell at \$1500 cash in order to pay off installments due on his new garage. A "Detour" sign has just been put up, closing the road to his garage, and Tom is desperate for cash. Steve finds his wife has \$1000 and demands it. There are hard words between the two, and Steve finally orders them both to go and never come back. They begin to pack a little fearfully, and a little excitedly, while Steve tries his hand at making supper for himself and Tom. After some clever dialogues, an artist and his wife come in for eggs. Kate comes in to hear the artist telling Steve that a water-color of hers shows no sign of artistic talent. Kate sensibly decides to stay at home, and she and Tom proceed happily as a man takes away the "Detour" sign. Steve and his wife find themselves where they started, and as the play closes, Helen is starting to save pennies again for Kate's children.

Witherell Does Well

James Witherell did some skillful work as Tom Lane in the third performance and the dialogues between Mr. Eastman and him were rich with the fine points of tonal inflection and gesture intended by the author. Gordon Van Kirk as Ben Glenny, the small town political job-holder, brought out the breezy, matter-of-fact character of Ben that is so humorous. The part of Weinstein, a Jewish second-hand furniture dealer, was portrayed by Moncure Paynter with a slap-stick comedy tone that delighted the audience. Malcolm Smith pleased as Dana Lamont, the artist, and Mrs. S. Paul Perry was charming as his wife.

The two leading women's roles were taken by Mrs. Taliaferro Milton as Helen Hardy, and Margaret De Lay as her daughter, Kate.

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