

ARSENIC AND OLD LACE

THERE was a full and enthusiastic house on Monday for the opening night of Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society's production of "Arsenic and Old Lace" at the Regent Theatre.

The Society has been going since 1920 and this was its 25th show. As Dr. John F. Taylor, president of the Society, remarked at the close:

tain came down on the slightly panting, bowing cast.

Perhaps the one who panted most, and with justification, was Roger Massey, who kept up the distraught hilarity of "Mortimer Brewster," with admirable energy, Ann Massey and Helen Eldridge as "Abby" and "Martha Brewster," the two poisoning but otherwise sweet little old ladies, succeeded in creating the right atmosphere of genteel murder-as-a-charity. "Aunt Abby's" gently shocked "Well, now!" on finding a 13th body in a window seat, was a gem.

Donald Leech, as their rival in murder, "Jonathan Brewster," was convincingly horrific, with a face that was a masterpiece of make-up. The harsh, growling voice was this face's perfect complement, and, in fact, Mr. Leech was sublimely ugly and a wonderful creation to have about the stage.

Frank Page, as the mad "Teddy Brewster," endeared himself to the audience from the first blast on his bugle to the last. One should not, of course, single out one character and apply the adjective "mad;" practically all of them were, and they did it very well.

Others in the cast were Mike Gibbons, Jim Welham, Edwin Adams, Gwen Judge, Cecil Bocking, James P. Michael, W. Rondel, George R. Wade and Alec Torry.

Producer was Miss Joyce Waddy, and the stage manager was Mr. P. Berkeley.

A thing that could easily have ship-wrecked the cast, the American accent, was well under control. They used it consistently and it was a good brand. Just one little thing (whether curable or not I do not know): plainly

"I think you have all enjoyed this show—if you haven't, you've pretended to!"

There wasn't much pretence about it. The laughter and applause began soon after the first act started, and continued with dull moments until the final cur-

visible hands manipulating the curtains and reaching for the nocords and their owners also far too visible in the wings.