

'Poison Pen' is worth a far larger audience

A SEA of empty seats at a first performance is disconcerting to any cast, and for the first few minutes of "Poison Pen" on Monday at the Regent, Chelmsford, the players must have been struck by the emptiness of the theatre. But they soon warmed to their task, and gave the small audience as good an evening's entertainment as can be found anywhere outside the West End.

"Poison Pen" was a good choice for the Chelmsford Operatic and Dramatic Society's first thriller. It has a compact plot, plenty of humour, and many thrills. Everyone in the cast has something interesting to do and say.

The best performance of the evening was that of Jane Stocks, who as the middle-aged sister of the Rector (Donald Leech) gave a most convincing display.

Donald Leech, although he fumbled for his lines once or twice, was excellent as the Rector—the "Father Confessor" of a small country village. A long, difficult part, obviously carefully studied.

Cecil Bocking was his usual cheery self in the part of a police inspector (he *should* be good at that!). Dorothy Cox, as his wife, was a likeable character, but perhaps at times rather too overpowering.

The cast is too long to mention many good supporting rôles.

It is enough to say that there were no real flaws, and to give a special mention to the "row" between the Rector's daughter (Rosemary Gornall) and her fiancée (Ken. Warren). They could, however, kiss more convincingly.

It is all very good fun. The plot, as may be gathered from the title, is about a series of vicious anonymous letters sent by . . . but no; go and see for yourself. It's worth it.

A.J.P.

STOLEN CAR BURNED OUT

Two hours after his car was stolen from outside his house in Queens Road, Chelmsford, Mr. Donald Leech was taken in a police car to Stock to see if he could identify a vehicle which was reported to be on fire on the West Hanningfield road.

Mr. Frank Page, whose bicycle had been in the open boot of the car and was also missing, went along too.

On arrival at the spot the party found that the only recoverable items were a lumber-jacket and part of a car rug. A bicycle believed to be Mr. Page's, was found a few hundred yards away.

It was stated on Tuesday that Chelmsford C.I.D. are investigating the case, and hope to make an early arrest.