

Frawley's Production of "Rose of the Rancho" Better Than Any Other Attraction Last Week.

Aileen May's Work Very Good Indeed—Frawley Should Not Be Compelled to Go on the Stage at All.

THE best theatrical thing in town last week was "The Rose of the Rancho," at the little Lola. "The Royal Chef," at the Grand, made good on all of its promises and gave a thoroughly adequate presentation of a musical show, which, although not new, was well put on and is always enjoyable.

Not so much could be said for "A Knight for a Day," which was on view all week at The Moore. It was surprisingly lacking in pretty music, good comedy and all the other essentials of a good musical show. There were, it is true, some rather elaborate electrical effects and the chorus was easy to look at and better trained athletically than vocally. Bobby Barry worked very hard at a contract whose conditions were practically impossible to fulfill, and the other principals of the cast were lost in The Moore.

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A Belasco production of "The Rose of the Rancho" could not have been expected. But the surprising fact remains that even upon so small a stage, with such scenic limitations as exist at the Lola, an "atmospheric" (to quote a worn-out Belasco word) production could have been made. It is too bad that the exigencies of the Lola Theatre compel Mr. Frawley to act. He should do nothing but direct. To him belongs all the credit for a very unusual presentation of one of the prettiest of modern plays. It was admirably done. People who saw the original Belasco production were amazed at the manner in which the charm of the California scenes was presented.

The acting in this play is almost subordinate to the production. The stage pictures, the bright California sunlight, the incidental things, the small parts really carry the play; put one so into the spirit of old Spain that what happens seems somehow of less consequence than it otherwise would be.

When the play was first put on in California, long before Belasco saw it, the principal character was "Kearney," the government agent from Washington. But Belasco's picturesque and sentimental and managerial eye saw the possibilities in the role of the half-Spanish, half-American heiress of a rancho and re-made the play accordingly.

So "Juanita" became the star part, and a pretty, charming part it is.

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One felt the dramatic possibilities of Aileen May, when seeing her as the wilful "Juanita," somewhat as the possibilities of the part may first have been realized. It is the best piece of work she has done within the memory of two years. It would be unfair to compare her to the creator of the part, who was especially picked and trained for it, and carefully coached for many weeks before her first appearance in it. A stock actress gets up in her role on a few days' notice; she has little time to develop the fine points of a part she plays only one week. But Miss May succeeded in getting over the footlights a very large amount of the spirit, the sentiment and the charm of "Juanita, the Rose."

The small character parts were excellently played, and the stage splendidly managed. The principals, aside from Miss May, were not up to their usual standard; there are great opportunities in the roles of Don Luis, of the old padre, and of the Spanish mother, which were hardly touched. Mr. Frawley, with the production on his hands, could not do justice to the role of "Kearney." But it is very gratifying to see so satisfactory a presentation of such a pretty play at a stock house, and it lay over anything else theatrical in town. M. McV. S.

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