

"SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER"

Miss Dulcie Scott's Feat Repertory Performance

THE CAST.

Mr. Hardcastle Norman Lewis
 Tony Lumpkin Tom MacMinn
 Hastings Jack Walsh
 Marlow Nigel Jackson
 Sir Charles Marlow Jack Lynam
 Diggory Jum Pendleton
 Roger Pat Roberts
 Landlord of the "Three
 Pigeons" Inn Jack Lynam
 Mrs. Hardcastle Babette Ferguson
 Miss Kate Hardcastle Vivienne Taylor
 Miss Constance Neville Gwen Harrison
 Pimple Jean Whitfield

OLIVER GOLDSMITH'S "She Stoops to Conquer," is regarded as a classic, as a kind of milestone in the history of the drama. But there are difficulties in presenting it to-day for, to be effective, it has to be extremely well done. The creaking dramatic machinery requires to be well lubricated with smooth polished acting and a good deal of finesse in other directions otherwise its limitations become painfully apparent. The decision of the Brisbane Repertory Theatre Society to present it may have been made from purely educational motives, for a matinee for school children is to be given on Saturday, July 25. The first production at the Princess Theatre on Saturday evening was notable for the fact that Miss Dulcie Scott, taking the part of Kate at extremely short notice and with the script in her hand throughout the play, yet showed many other members of the cast points which ought to have been watched more closely in their work.

It is difficult to imagine how well Miss Scott would have played the part if she had had time to prepare it properly. For despite the necessity for taking an occasional peep at her book, and even of reading passages from it, she never lost for a moment the thread of the characterisations. Facial expression, gestures, the correct emphasis on the right word at the right time, and a complete fluency of diction were consistently in keeping with the part. It was interesting to see her building up the character quite convincingly under these conditions. Perhaps, after a time, we subconsciously took her difficulties a little too much for granted. Yet there were many occasions when she revealed a presence of mind which few members of the society could have achieved under like circumstances.

Miss Scott's brand of acting is all too rare in the society. The difficulty is that when she is on the boards the rest of the company suffers by comparison. She turns what is normally a good cast into one that is less appealing by her own excellences. Don Bradman playing with his old school eleven. For that reason, perhaps, there should be tolerance shown to the remainder of the cast. That tolerance would be justified if the play had been, in general, slightly better acted. But Miss Scott's virtues were so patently absent in many others in the cast that she points an accusing finger, not only at some of these players, but to many

she points an accusing finger, not only at some of these players, but to many of the repertory players in general. For instance there were several curtains in which Miss Scott had pointed, but involved lines to say. How well she said them! The well rounded phrases were rendered with such poise and with such perfect balance that they lingered on in the mind long after the curtain had fallen. That, indeed, seemed to throw into relief a general weakness throughout the play, . . . the almost entire absence of correct voice modulation to give proper point and emphasis to the lines.

Unfortunately for the society this ability to step into a part and be completely at ease in it is given to but few. What one player can achieve in a day, others have to work assiduously for years to achieve. Tom M'Minn has been gradually improving his technique, and on Saturday the part of Tony should have suited him. But he, along with Mr. Nigel Jackson and Jack Walsh, encountered difficulties in two directions. In this kind of play, with the sweet gentilities of the period so much in evidence, a very special kind of deportment is necessary to menfolk. A bow, gracefully done, gives colour to a part. But if it is slovenly, gone is the atmosphere of gentility. The spoken line in such parts requires something of the same poise, especially these lines, which have some literary polish about them.

Yet there were some excellent touches in McMinn's characterisation. He did his best piece of acting when he was sitting backstage thinking out ways and means of saving the situation. He brought the air of the swashbuckler occasionally to the surface without ever quite achieving complete conviction. Mr. Nigel Jackson struggled manfully with a part that was a little too much for him. He had little time to explore the comedy in the part. It is possible that if he and Mr. Walsh had exchanged parts the results might have been better, but here again Mr. Walsh has yet to acquire poise. Norman Lewis played Mr. Hardcastle with smoothness and with certain dignity. He spoke his lines very clearly, but perhaps at times a little too softly for the comfort of the more distant members of the audience. He was in character, comparatively speaking. Jum Pendleton made a very neat job indeed of the oafish Diggory. Here is one of the few men of the society who step neatly into a part and straight-way achieve a tailor-made fit.

The other ladies of the cast, as usual, held up the standards much higher than their male colleagues. Babette Ferguson, in a somewhat heavy makeup, was sometimes the skittish old lady, and sometimes a much younger one. But there were passages in which she gave us some very good acting indeed. Gwen Harrison was at home as Constance. Indeed there was hardly a false note throughout.

Mr. Jum Pendleton produced the play, which at times was somewhat loose jointed in this respect. The scene in the tap room of the "Three Pigeons" was hardly a tribute to the brand of ale these young fellows were drinking.

Mr. Erich John supplied one of his best musical programmes to date for this production, as his music fitted perfectly the atmosphere of the play. His orchestra is now quite an established and pleasant feature of these evenings.

A.H.T.