

## "THE TOUCH OF SILK"

Dulcie Scott Scores Again

### Nigel Jackson's Difficult Part

IT is not altogether clear why the Brisbane Repertory Theatre Society revived "The Touch of Silk." It is probable that its appearance was due to the desire to present one Australian play during the year. But surely there are Australian plays that could have been preferred to the revival of this one, which, good as it is, yet dates, and has to do with a theme which has since been rather overdone by Australian playwrights.

However, Mrs. Betty M. Davies has certainly written a good play, and the production of it by Dulcie Scott gives rise to certain problems because she herself took the role in which she scored so heavily in the 1929 performance. The part of Jeanne suits her to perfection. And on Saturday evening she did what very few local players can hope to do. I think it can be taken as a fair statement of the position that in most performances given by most members of the Repertory Theatre Society the audience must consider itself reasonably well served if these performances measure up to standards of rather mundane proficiency. If there is something approaching good characterisation no questions are asked. But on Saturday evening Dulcie Scott went far beyond that standard. In some indefinable way she established the atmosphere of the part almost before she had commenced it. It is true that the playwright helps in this direction. But she went further, and established a kind of tragic background for herself from the very beginning, which helped tremendously in building up the drama and the tragedy later. There were some strongly defined elements in this characterisation. No repertory audience has ever been gripped in quite the same way as she gripped them in the scene for instance, when she reflects on what the touch of silk brings back to her. Here was real acting, real feeling.

For this reason alone the task of Nigel Jackson was made no easier. Nigel Jackson is a player only gaining experience. He has shown a gradual development from the first part he took. This is undoubtedly his best performance, but that does not mean that it measured up to the standards set by Dulcie Scott. No one has the right to expect that of him.

Yet what he did do was surprisingly good. And it may have been that he was helped by Miss Scott far more than usual. He cannot yet have realised, however, that moments of the greatest emotional intensity are often the quietest. If he fell short of the ideal, it was because he did those things which Miss Scott did not do. He worked, as few players have ever worked, to capture the distraught hysteria of Jim Davidson. The trouble was that we were always conscious of the effort. Indeed it should be said that he did wonderfully well to make that effort and make it so convincingly.

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Three other players sustained parts extremely well. Miss Nancy Fowles gave us an almost perfect Mrs. Ryan. She is a type. No small Australian community is without her. And Miss Fowles caught to perfection that breezy good nature which makes the Mrs. Ryans of the outback such an asset. Roy Black sat down in his chair, and pulled out his pipe in the last act with something approaching the perfect "bedside" manner. He, too, touched in the outlines of a character—the country doctor—which could be readily recognised. Mavis Busch might have been a little more vehement, she could have made her part a trifle more acid, as it were, with some advantage, but it was a good performance well in character. W. Binning Wilson, another improving player, also had a type part to play—the self-made, small-town financial magnate. But this type of man is hardly ever as smoothly spoken, as was Mr. Binning. Incidentally it is hardly likely that he and Jim Davidson would have discussed their financial affairs with the width of the country store between them, while Mrs. Ryan, of all people, was within earshot. Norton Stable, Dulcie Wood, Betty Francis, J. Grimstone, Ralph Taylor and Bob Risson were all quite acceptable assistants in the cast. The play will be given again on October 10 and 17.