

"IN BEAUTY IT IS FINISHED"

Repertory Theatre Production of New Play

THE CAST.

David Edmunds .. ROYSTON MARCUS
 Mary Edmunds MRS. P. J. SYMES
 Joyce HILDA HASTIE
 Marion DULCIE SCOTT
 Tom Stepple CECIL R. CARSON
 Annie EDITH ROWETT

"In Beauty it is Finished," the much discussed play by G. L. Dann, which won the Brisbane Repertory Theatre Society's play competition recently, was performed for the first time in His Majesty's Theatre last night. It must be said at the outset that any persons who went to the theatre expecting, or perchance hoping, that the proprieties would be outraged must have been disappointed. Admittedly the plain blunt speech in which some of the action is clothed had been carefully preserved for the delectation of readers only. But the main objections to the play as being nauseous and sordid because of its thematic material were not sustained. It is true that the heroine is a self-confessed sinner and the hero a half-caste. But the play makes an honest attempt to portray adequately a point of view which does not necessarily coincide with our own moral standards. It is not so much a question of what subject is treated as how it is treated. Sometimes in the play Mr. Dann has been frank, at others he has shown a rather fine delicacy of touch.

The judges of the play no doubt were moved to place "In Beauty it is Finished" first because of the sense of drama it reveals. Mr. Dann has backed realism for all it is worth, perhaps not always with conspicuous success, on the lines of the Eugene O'Neill style. The audience is held gripped until the last curtain, the ending being perhaps as effective as anything in the whole play. Certain situations were strongly handled, and the better the situation the better the writer of the play gained his objective. But there are certain elements in the play which cannot go unchallenged.

David Edmunds and his wife live in a lighthouse on an island off the Queensland coast. They have two daughters. Joyce is about to leave for a long stay in Brisbane, while Marion, who has just had her fling, returns to the island. Marion hides from her parents the fact that she has been following the oldest of professions in the city and the curtain of the first act shows that she has some ideas about a reformation. Tom Stepple, a young fisherman, however, attracts her attention. She is led to believe that he is living with a black gin in a hut about three miles from the light-

house. The two gradually see more of each other until finally Marion, on the point of promising to marry Tom, is horrified to learn from the lips of the gin that she is Tom's mother. Marion returns home to her anxious parents, only to find a self-centred father already framing charges of gross misconduct against her in his mind. She tells her parents the truth about her life in the city and having shocked and angered them, is driven out of the home, only to seek refuge in Tom's arms. The curtain goes down on the two mothers, one rejoicing in her son's fulfilment of his ambition to win a white wife, the other grieving over the fate of her daughter.

Mr. Dann's Marion is not quite true to type. In the first act he was driven to make her finer and better than she really was, because he had to enlist the sympathies of his audience on her behalf later in the play. One presumes that Miss Dulcie Scott delineated the character as the author intended. What right had she to flay the half-caste with his unworthiness of her? The true character of Tom is not revealed until well on in the play. One receives the suggestion that he was consorting with Annie, only to find later that she is his mother. Has the author tried deliberately to mislead his audience, and thereby make Tom still more odious? Tom has done nothing more wrong than to have an ambition. Morally he is really cleaner than Marion, although his ambition to the white mind is odious enough, and the sense of propriety may be outraged in so far as he attains that ambition.

That is the keynote of the whole play, but the author merely is putting forward the point of view of Tom and carrying it through to its logical conclusion.

Generally the story is handled with good dramatic sense. In the first act there are some awkward moments in the manipulating of entries and exits and one rather bad slip. But in the main the action runs smoothly and with not half the jolts and jars that one might expect. Altogether one must come to the conclusion that the dramatic values in the play made it worthy of the society's attention. Whether it fulfils all the requirements of a tragedy is another matter, for the calamity which befalls Marion and her parents is not due to inexorable fate so much as to their own misdeeds.

The acting throughout was almost uniformly good. Miss Dulcie Scott of course stood out. Her fine freedom of style was well suited to two scenes in particular, that in which she finds Tom's true breeding, and that in which she tells her parents of her great fall from grace. Mrs. P. J. Symes drew an admirable picture of an indulgent and self-sacrificing mother although the author spoiled it by making her cry in pity "for myself," when she was obviously doing nothing of the kind. Mr. Royston Marcus's "David" was stiffly drawn. Moreover, he has a good speaking voice which he fails to use to best advantage because of the monotony of his inflection.

Miss Hilda Hastie was natural enough as Joyce, and Mr. Carson, in spite of an amusing slip of the foot on a wet stage at

as Joyce, and Mr. Carson, in spite of an amusing slip of the foot on a wet stage at a critical moment, maintained the character of Tom with conviction, if not with the greatest power. Edith Rowett's Annie was well acted, but her speech was not always quite in keeping with the character. She scored admirably in the final scene, in which the reason for the title of the play is explained with a true sense of dramatic values. The two mothers, the one rejoicing, the other ashamed and weeping, was in keeping with the main trend of the play's argument. The production of Miss Barbara Slaley was good. The novel scene of a self-conscious author bowing to a first night audience was witnessed after the final curtain.

The play will be presented again to-night and on Saturday night.