

Itagelanda

"THE DEVIL"—A PLAY AND A CONTORTION

A Disquisition on a Drama Whose Morals Languish and Whose Presentation Was Made Nauseatingly Vulgar, Together With a Comparison of Two Companies Struggling With the Same Sulphurous Farrago and Its Bewildering Interpretation.

By J. F. S.

IT WAS disconcerting in the extreme to return from a poor few days of rest and recreation in the mountains last week and to find that in my absence the mice did play and had taken to going to two devils at once. Such things are all right in New York, where the Bowery still exists and where each man does what his neighbor can't see. But in quiet, respectable, spring-heeled Portland! Who would have thought it?

The vacation consisted mainly of such mildly entertaining amusements as falling down precipices, into trout streams and over deer licks, the white coyot dodging fellow hunters with equally uncertain rifles. It was but tame sport compared to the feast that the Bungalow and the Lyric had thoughtfully provided for my return. Not daring to break into the Molnar play, still absolutely fresh and sane from my recent contest with the woods and the wilderness, I submitted first to the vaccine offered by an Orpheum bill—the precaution proved worse than the disease could have been—and then, donning my reddest necktie, sallied out and took in both devils in one long and dreadful, never-to-be-forgotten day.

In former days the devil—the old-fashioned devil that is, and not this new and alarming creature who is to be surrounded by quotation marks—held his place in the quota of the world's assets as a personal creature with a red tail, sharp horns—like those of a two-point buck, to use a woods comparison—and angrily waving tail. My first idea of the gentleman's appearance was gleaned from a classic entitled "The World's Great Disasters"—the volume was the piece de resistance of my childhood's dentist's waiting room and is irretrievably connected with fear and wretchedness—in which the devil himself was the frontispiece, done in colors of red and black. And such, through many sittings of "Faust" and "Goethe" and "Milton," he remained until I saw Franz Molnar's play. And Molnar's conception of the devil as the spirit of temptation that assails us all, while no more original than Gounod's phosphorescent and sulphuric creation, has the charm of novelty in that it introduces him as a purely psychological fiend.

Such a Clumsy Devil.

Yet you can't even call him psychological without immediately beginning to qualify your announcement. He's such a clumsy devil, he meddles so long with little things. He devotes nearly two days to wrecking the souls of three people, two of them so weak that the change from a namby-pamby longing to do evil to an actual revelry of wrong-doing is salutary rather than anything else. In an age where we regard anything as better than merely negative living their "fall" is a matter for congratulation.

Unless you saw both "Devils" last week you missed something. If you went to the Bungalow and not the Lyric you missed the spirit of the play entirely unless you possess more intelligence than Mr. Bowles gives you credit for owning, while if you saw the Lyric and not the Bungalow you failed to witness the most excellent acting of Mr. Sydney Ayres as Dr. Kelmar, the Devil.

The simultaneous production of the play at both houses gave an almost unprecedented opportunity for a study of acting. As was to have been expected the Baker company, with a few glaring exceptions, gave the better reading of the lines? But this was more than counterbalanced by the good sense displayed by Mr. Blunkall in sticking to the play as it was sent him by the manuscript jobbers. The reviews of the Portland production gave Mr. Bowles, the new director of the Bungalow company, entire credit for the improvements he made in the original reading of the play, therefore perform I must take it for granted that he and he alone conceived that unique and illuminative series of tableaux that preceded the first act of the Bungalow performance and that likewise the bloody and groanful end to the third act was the work of the new stage director.

His idea of the intelligence of theatre-goers, while, it must be admitted, is somewhat justified by the facts, is nevertheless a hardship that is necessarily imposed upon everyone. The stage director received the manuscript for the play, read it over, and, presumably, couldn't understand it. Nothing daunted, however, he reverted to childhood's pictures of Satan, thought of the red lights and bat wings of Gounod's fiend, and decided that the only thing to do, inasmuch as stupid Molnar had introduced the wolf in sheep's clothing, was to tear off the wool and reveal the devil in his true shape.

Not a Bit Afraid.

Like Tom Walker, he was not afraid to view the devil in his orthodox clothing, whatever scruples he might have about seeing him in a frock coat, and so he gave us that interesting series of tableaux vivants displaying the fiend in his own really truly shape leading two lovers to destruction and disappearing in a blaze of red fire and smoke at the end. The minute the tableaux began I knew what was going to happen. I realized in a flash that the name devil had suggested red fire to the Bungalow stage director and that it was bound to out, although I was not quite prepared for the liberal display which the generous manager gave us and which rivaled a country Fourth of July demonstration.

Having been well prepared for what was to come by this preliminary brimstone bath the play as a study of symbolism was completely ruined. It was not left to the spectator to decide whether Dr. Kelmar was the person of a real man. There was no doubt remaining as to the identity of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. That had all been nicely settled for you before the curtain went up. You couldn't for a minute imagine after that that Dr. Kelmar might be an evil-minded, cynical man, bent on breaking up a home. Your nose was held in spite of your struggles so that you had to open your mouth and take your dose of personal devil whether you wanted to or not.

But having established the devil as the devil to your own satisfaction and beyond peradventure of an argument to the heartless director sat down and tried to conceive of some way of painting the devil still blacker. Mr. Bowles some time in his early youth must have been a straight-laced Presbyterian. On no other grounds can his relentless pursuit of the nicely concealed fiend that lay in Molnar's creation be explained. He had no mercy on him nor on us. He conceived that entirely unnecessary, inept and vulgar scene between two children and a scarlet woman in the second act. It was an offense not only against dramatic art but against the decency of the patrons of the theatre. It served no purpose excepting to prolong the time covered by the play and to irritate me beyond measure. And then as the final scene, the author having failed to kill anyone, to drag out any wails or work any physical violence, the stage director added a suicide on his own hook.

As It Is in the Book.

Molnar, as his final scene—correctly and most impressively played at the Lyric, by the way—shows the lovers, Meta and Franz, leave the stage for another room. Josef Kranz, Meta's husband, led by Kelmar, entered the room and Kelmar pointed out to him the door leading to Franz's chamber. Here Franz is supposed to stand in amazed grief at what he sees while Kelmar, looking at his watch, remarks that he must be going and leaves the three together, the silent figure on the stage and the two invisible ones in the rear room.

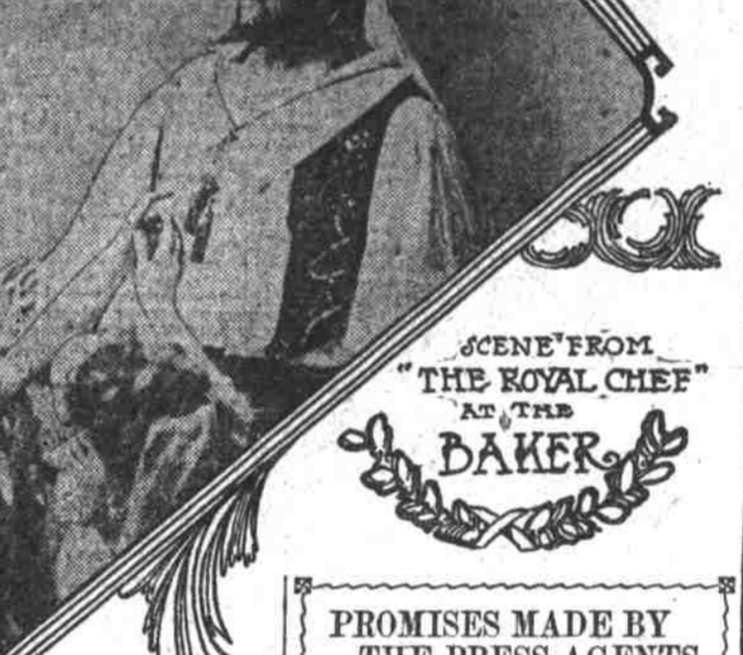
This very powerful denouement went way over the head of Mr. Bowles. What! No blood and gore! No murder! No fine frenzy and passion! New-ah, new-ah, no while there is a stage dagger left in the effects of the Baker stock company. So the husband, having a glittering paper knife thrust into his hands by the grinning Kelmar, hops around the room gesticulating and posturing, beating his breast and tearing his hair, advances behind Meta and Franz, makes as if to stab them, and then, with a gasp, tries it again, with another horrible grimace, and is held back by the devil, and then runs back to the hall where he presumably sticks it in himself, to the accompaniment of most awful groans and grunts.



MINA CROLLUS GLEASON AT THE BUNGALOW



HOWARD RUSSELL BAKER STOCK CO. IN "A GILDED FOOL" AT THE BUNGALOW



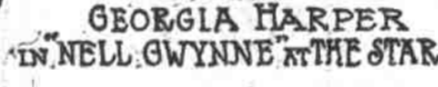
CHAS. A. FIGG ALLEN CURTIS CO. AT THE OAKS



SCENE FROM "THE ROYAL CHEF" AT THE BAKER



MISS VIOLA HUNTER AT THE GRAND



GEORGIA HARPER IN "NELL GWYNNE" AT THE STAR

The Lyric performance gave to that last scene something of the tragic—indeed, the only bit of the tragic that was to be found in the whole unpleasant business. It wasn't because Mr. Carl Berch, who played the husband, was better suited to his part than was Mr. Gleason, it wasn't because either the Meta or Franz of Warda Howard and Mr. Blunkall were better than those of Mr. Ayres and Miss Jewel, because they were not, but it was because we had been led to the very threshold of fate and were left there in the darkness. We had followed them in their course of evil, a course against which they had striven, weakly it is true, but still had striven, and had been swept away by the evil that was within them rather than by the horns and tail of Mr. Bowles' devil.

Honors to Sidney Ayres.

When it comes to a comparison of the acting of the two companies Mr. Ayres carries away the honors not only from his competitor but from the other members of his own company. His work in the devil was good because it was for the most part delicately suggestive of the role. He, of course, had to fall by the wayside when it came to red hose and a red vest. He, imbued with the spirit of the production, must wear something to show that he really was the devil after all, even you might think he wasn't now and then. It was too much to expect that he would do otherwise. But his characterization was on the whole one worthy of remembrance. Mr. Blunkall is physically and temperamentally less suited to the role than Mr. Ayres, but he avoided his rival's pitfall of red. He, of course, had the immeasurable advantage of not having announced beforehand that he was the devil. And he played up to this with all the ability he had.

Izetta Jewell was better than Warda Howard as Meta because she was sillier. Meta was scarcely the creature of Miss Howard's imagination. She must have had very little sense, have been pretty and affected. And Miss Jewel did this well. Margie Manderville's Sophie in the Lyric production fell far below that of Miss Kent, although both left much to be desired. Florence Jewell of the Lyric was not adapted to the part of Bertha. She couldn't look wicked and as though her life had been "ruined" to save her soul. For the rest the Baker company had the better players, Mr. Bowles outlooking if not outplaying Charles King as Franz. The dancing supes in the ballroom scene, however, were awful to behold.

It is to be regretted that with the acting of Mr. Ayres as the devil there could not have been good sense displayed in the putting on of the play. Whatever merit it had as a play lies in its portrayal of the power of evil suggestion, the lesson of which was quite generally overlooked. From a literary standpoint the versions given here at least show the play to be of little value. Its epigrams are not particularly scintillating although they are cynical in the extreme and cynicism is usually confounded with wit. It is a story that grips the imagination because of the suggestion that evil like good is omnipresent. It's not a new suggestion but it's been well advertised by quarrelling managers and as a result both Portland houses did capacity business all week. The invitation to go to the devil was one that was too tempting to be declined. And it's more than likely that we'll all go again later on in the season and continue going for some seasons to come.



Max Dill and Edith Whiteley, With Kolb & Dill in "Lonesome Town" at the Hellig Tonight.

DRAMATIC CALENDAR FOR THE WEEK

HELLIG—Tonight and all week Kolb and Dill in "Lonesome Town." Mr. Ayres will play the Goodwin role of "The Royal Chef." **BUNGALOW**—This afternoon and week "The Royal Chef." **GLIDED FOOL**—This afternoon and week "Nell Gwynne." **STAR**—This afternoon and week "Tennessee's Partner." by Blunkall stock company. **GRAND**—Vaudeville. **PANTAGES**—Vaudeville.

NEXT WEEK'S OFFERINGS

HELLIG—Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday "Comin' Thro' the Rye." **HELLIG**—The Cat and the Fiddle. **BUNGALOW**—The Girl of the Golden West. **LYRIC**—Young Mrs. Winthrop.

great chances for acting, and contains many of the wittiest lines and funniest situations known to stagemod to date. Mr. Ayres will play the Goodwin role of "The Royal Chef." "A Gilded Fool," as the name indicates, tells about a young man of wealth, good looks and kindly heart, but lacking apparently in brains, for he goes the pace with a rapidity that would cause a self-made millionaire to simply die of apoplexy or nervous shock. But in spite of his training (or lack of it) and frivolous habits, this Chancy Short has a certain amount of sense, and it only needs the touch of a woman's hand to start him on a different road, which in the end brings him to a realization of what he is and what he might still do with himself. The story is cleverly told, with interesting characters are introduced and strong scenes worked up. For not one moment does the piece drag, and when Chancy enters the New York Exchange, becoming the victim of a deeply laid scheme to ruin him, things happen with remarkable swiftness. When all is apparently lost, the old adage "A fool for luck," asserts itself, bringing the play to a happy and logical ending. The Baker stock company will be under the direction of Donald Bowles; Chancy Short, devoted to the theatre, Ruthven, Bannister, Strange, bankers and brokers, Earl D. Dwire, James Gleason, Jack Duval, manager of the Philadelphia branch of Ruthven Co., Donald Bowles; Rev. Jacob Howell, who has a mission, William Gleason; De Puyser Ruthven, Ruthven's son; Matthew Perkins, valet to Short, Howard Russell; Morgan, butler to Ruthven, R. E. Bradburn, son of William; Margaret Ruthven, daughter of Ruthven, Miss Izetta Jewell; Sophia Ruthven, wife to Ruthven, Miss Louise Kent; Miss Jessie Kent, devoted to the theatre, Minnie Kent, Miss Maribel Seymour; Maud, a maid, Miss Hazel Jewell.

PROMISES MADE BY THE PRESS AGENTS

Kolb and Dill at Hellig Tonight. Beginning tonight the favorite comedians, Kolb and Dill, together with their excellent supporting company, will commence an engagement of one week at the Hellig theatre, Fourteenth and Washington streets, in their latest musical comedy success, "Lonesome Town." A special-price matinee will be given Saturday. The book is by the late Judson D. Brusle, while the tuneful music was penned by J. A. Rayner. These German dialect comedians made an instantaneous hit with this musical comedy in San Francisco, where it ran uninterruptedly for several months in the grand houses. Its Pacific coast success was later repeated in New York, Chicago and all of the other prominent cities of the east, and the critics throughout the country are unanimous in declaring "Lonesome Town" to be the liveliest bit of nonsense that has ever been attempted by these imitable "slim" and "fat" representatives of German comedy.

The New York production has been brought to the coast intact, and the play will be presented by the same cast and in exactly the same manner that it was during its extended run at the Circle theatre, New York City. Maude Lambert, the popular Broadway prima donna, will sing the leading role, and her two great song hits, "Dearie" and "Just Some One," are sure to catch up here.

Another well-known player who will assist the stars in the extraction of laughter is Emily Clifford, who has been seen as the tramp, a boy of handsome chorus girls, who make a pretty background for the sumptuous stage settings, will add their charm to the performance by singing the many catchy numbers with which the piece is interspersed.

Regular Baker Season Opens.

The first of the regular Baker theatre traveling attractions that have always heretofore played at top prices in Portland will make its appearance this afternoon in the person of one of the biggest favorites of the musical-comedy world, "The Royal Chef," which will be given at the Bungalow theatre. The play has been adopted at this house, and which will continue for all attractions that appear here this season. "The Royal Chef" is not only extremely catchy, but has scored number for number with any ever written for a single production in many a day. The scenic effects are described as great, and the company, with its costumes and every accessory require to give it proper setting, so the specialists, chorus, dancers and supernumeraries, meet every requirement and in point of numbers exceed that which is usually required in musical comedy. It is claiming a good deal to say that there have been no new ideas evolved in this class of popular entertainment, but the claim is certainly substantiated in "The Royal Chef."

There will be matinees Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, and seats for the entire week are now selling.

"A Gilded Fool" at the Bungalow.

The Baker stock company will open their week at the Bungalow this afternoon, using as a vehicle this week Nat Goodwin's famous comedy success, "A Gilded Fool," which is one of the most favorably known of all modern standard plays. It was (and still is) used by Goodwin in his repertoire for years, and was even later by him as a later than last winter at the Hellig. It gives the whole company, especially the men,

row with the matinee there will be a particularly strong program. Miss Louise and her troupe of high school monkeys will be the headline attraction. Mr. Brodies stock company in "A Gilded Fool," as the name indicates, tells about a young man of wealth, good looks and kindly heart, but lacking apparently in brains, for he goes the pace with a rapidity that would cause a self-made millionaire to simply die of apoplexy or nervous shock. But in spite of his training (or lack of it) and frivolous habits, this Chancy Short has a certain amount of sense, and it only needs the touch of a woman's hand to start him on a different road, which in the end brings him to a realization of what he is and what he might still do with himself. The story is cleverly told, with interesting characters are introduced and strong scenes worked up. For not one moment does the piece drag, and when Chancy enters the New York Exchange, becoming the victim of a deeply laid scheme to ruin him, things happen with remarkable swiftness. When all is apparently lost, the old adage "A fool for luck," asserts itself, bringing the play to a happy and logical ending. The Baker stock company will be under the direction of Donald Bowles; Chancy Short, devoted to the theatre, Ruthven, Bannister, Strange, bankers and brokers, Earl D. Dwire, James Gleason, Jack Duval, manager of the Philadelphia branch of Ruthven Co., Donald Bowles; Rev. Jacob Howell, who has a mission, William Gleason; De Puyser Ruthven, Ruthven's son; Matthew Perkins, valet to Short, Howard Russell; Morgan, butler to Ruthven, R. E. Bradburn, son of William; Margaret Ruthven, daughter of Ruthven, Miss Izetta Jewell; Sophia Ruthven, wife to Ruthven, Miss Louise Kent; Miss Jessie Kent, devoted to the theatre, Minnie Kent, Miss Maribel Seymour; Maud, a maid, Miss Hazel Jewell.

At the Grand.

Vaudeville of a superior type will be found on this week's program at the Grand and the popular home of light amusement will present an exceptionally strong array of talent. Sullivan & Conside have booked another of those great shows which has made the Grand famous. For the headline act "The Flip Mr. Pion" will be offered. This is a clever farce, but the chief interest will be in its people. Those appearing are Francis and Kate Coyle, Volch, Kittle and the popular duo, the "Two of Us." They are not still an instant during their appearance on the stage. "A Lucky Day" is the name of the farce which Louis Chevalier and company will present.

Miss May has sung steadily on the Pacific coast for two seasons, and she has been heard in opera, musical comedy, concert and vaudeville. No singer has such a large following on the coast, and socially as well as musically she is greatly admired. Besides her singing, Miss May finds time to compose, and her income from her own songs is quite a big sum yearly. This engagement at the Louvre grill will afford the lovers of song an opportunity to enjoy the rest, and those theatre-goers who get a "bite" before going home can get double pleasure at the Louvre after the play. Webber's Novelty orchestra will give special orchestral numbers. Miss May will be heard from 10 to 12 nightly.

Allen Curtis Closes at the Oaks.

The end of the long and successful summer management of the Allen Curtis Comedy company will close at the Oaks tonight with the presentation of the excellent musical comedy, "Jakey, Mikey and Ikey." Throughout the summer the Allen Curtis company has given the attendants upon the Oaks a new vaudeville libe. (Continued on Page Seven.)

MARGARET TAYLOR IN SALOME DANCE

Margaret Taylor is the First Woman to Present the Famous "Salome Dance" in Portland. Miss Taylor Will Be Seen With "Coming Thro' the Rye" at the Hellig Next Sunday.