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The Devil, D'Annunzio and Ida Rubinstein



Ida Rubinstein, the Dancer, as She Was When She First Captivated D'Annunzio, and Before She Fled from Him.

The Decadent Dramatist and the Recently Repentant Russian Dancer Brought Together Again by His New Play, the Latest Sensual Prodigy of the Paris Stage

Paris, July 5. THE life of asceticism and pious devotion could not hold Ida Rubinstein and Gabriele d'Annunzio.

She, the most temperamental, passionate of all Russian dancers, is now playing the leading role in D'Annunzio's new poetic drama, "The Pisanella, or the Perfumed Death."

He, the most erotic, decadent yet gifted of all verbal magicians, fell madly in love with the dancer when she was playing his "Saint Sebastian." She rejected his wooing, for the spirit of the drama had turned her soul to religion. D'Annunzio was not a man a moralist could approve, for he had a wife and he has most basely ill-treated the great Eleonora Duse, not to mention others.

Ida Rubinstein's example made him repentant also. He decided to return to Italy to make amends to those he had wronged and pay off the enormous debts from which he had fled. She went away to the wilds to repent and purify her soul. But the love of luxury, the yearnings of the flesh and the old deep-rooted habits of life were too strong for both of them. They are both back in Paris again and together.

"The devil has them for good now," say the cynical Parisians. "The Pisanella" is the most hectic, morbidly sensual yet picturesque and original work that has yet been produced by D'Annunzio. Its effect is heightened enormously by the wonderful scenery and costumes designed by the great Russian artist, Leon Bakst. It is accompanied by mystical harmonies by Debussy. Its production at the Chatelet Theatre was the most memorable occurrence in recent dramatic art.

The scene is laid in Cyprus in the thirteenth century, when the beautiful Mediterranean island was a kingdom founded by the Crusaders and the haunt of the most desperate adventurers of Eastern Europe. Cyprus was the reputed birthplace of Venus, and some of the islanders still worship the sensual pagan goddess, while others put their hopes in a poor Christian virgin from the people who, according to legend, will deliver them from pestilence, drought and famine.

With these beliefs is mingled the legend of a lord of the island, who placed his wedding ring on a statue of Venus. The statue came to life, entered the nuptial chamber, and the young lord's bride, seeing that he was overcome with admiration, killed herself in despair.

among the captives is a very beautiful young woman, enacted by Ida Rubinstein, who is offered at auction. Obert Embriac, a Genoese knight, desperately wounded in capturing her, is madly in love with her and demands her for himself. Here are striking passages from this scene:

THE AUCTIONEER.
In the name of God, this woman is offered at auction.

FERNAND VALAR.
Messire Frazes, desistest thou that we unbind her, that you may be able better to know her and judge her whole body? She is perfectly formed. And you will win the gem of the booty.

OBERT EMBRIAC.
By the sacred emerald of Caesarea. Wretch, if any one attempts to put a hand on her I will give him such a stroke in the mouth. That my sword's point will come out through the back of his neck.

FERNAND VALAR.
Hold your tongue. You interfere with the liberty of the auction.

A fierce contest between bidders for the beautiful captive goes on, interrupted by outcries from the wounded Obert Embriac, who finally silences the others with his ravings, crying:

Stop, stop, you foolish bidders, Where is all this gold you offer? Is it in your dogs' jaws? Is it in your pigs' bellies? This blood stained bandage weighs more than all you possess, and this four-foot sword still more. This woman is mine, comrades. She, the gem of the booty, is mine. Yes, Sadoe, the Jew, I have paid for her with an ounce of burning brain.

You have seen me, Valar, rush upon them. The shafts of my ears burned in the earlocks. I boarded the Saracen barque amid-ship.

I struck them so close that the blood splashed in my face. As I fought my way to the poop my face was all red with slaughter, yet I was still without hurt. I had all my life in my Christian soul, with the lives of all these dead men, and I know not what other strange lives.

When under the poop bending I have seen her, and she gushed over my spirit like the great foam thrown up by the galley's oar. Woman, do you remember? Speak and testify in Christ! She did not cry.

When I placed my hand upon her shoulder, colder and smoother than a ship's ballast stone, but she threw her head back like the rower who throws himself backward and falls on his bench. With what oar strokes have you then driven my life, woman, towards what billow? Suddenly the axe struck me. See; my blood ceases. Not to flow.

Obert Embriac, a Genoese knight, desperately wounded in capturing her, is madly in love with her and demands her for himself. Here are striking passages from this scene:



Ida Rubinstein, who now plays the part of the Pisan Courtesan in D'Annunzio's Strange New Drama. Drawn by Leon Bakst, the famous Russian artist.

(He feels the bandage with his left hand and draws it back covered with blood.)

Is she not mine, comrades? (The grimace of death again curls up his purple lips.) But you are misers.

You are lovers of gold. I will give you gold. I will give it to you, little hucksters. Take my share of the prize. Take my sarge of wheat, which is coming.

Into port! Take my aloes wood and all my balm of Gilead. Then do you wish a city? (Madness takes ever greater hold upon him.) I will give you one.

I am an Embriac, With arms of three lions sable. I have taken Arsouf and Caesarea and Acre.

I will give a quarter. At Joppa, another at Tripoli. And all my houses and my churches, and all my money, and my fountains, and my docks from Tyre to Gibraltar.

And from Laodicea to Antioch, and from Tarsus and Caffa to Trebizond! A whole troop of Tartar slaves, worth three hundred ducats a head, gentle and submissive as hounds. For this woman!

The orchards of Taurus with walls of enamel and doors of silver. For this woman! Three isles which perfume with mastic the archipelago and bubble with must like wine vats for this woman!

And is that not enough? The emerald, the sacred hollowed emerald, which Embriac, the stormer of cities, withdrew from the flame without burning his hand. I give to you.

For this woman! And I press out the blood in which I have soaked this cloth (He makes a movement to tear away the bloody bandage. He staggers in the vertigo of delirium.) That she may drink of it (Without releasing his grip of

"Ida Rubinstein, the dancer and Gabriele D'Annunzio, the dramatist, are collaborating in his new drama of death. 'The devil has them for good now,' say the cynical Parisians."

his sword he falls heavily on his face.) in Christ. (He makes no further movement. He is dead.)

The Prince of Tyre also claims the captive, but the King then arrives with wagonloads of provisions for the suffering people. They acclaim him with joy and think they see in the beautiful captive the legendary maiden who is to marry him and relieve them from their misery. By the King's orders they carry her in triumph to a convent.

In the second act the suns are seen climbing a ladder to peer through the window of the Blessed Maiden, as they call the captive. To their surprise they find her adorning herself, painting her eyebrows and coquetting before a mirror. She is preparing herself for the King.

Then the Prince of Tyre arrives, followed by a band of courtesans who declare that the strange woman is one of their own kind formerly notorious at Pisa, in Italy, whence she is called the "Pisanella." As the Prince is about to seize her the King enters and strikes him down with his sword. The Prince cries:

You have killed me, but you are doomed to the fire of hell. For this is the enemy, she is your statue of marble.

The young King loves the Pisanella madly, believing her to be the maiden of legend. The whole island is torn into warring factions fighting for or against her. She brings death and ruin to the great and rich, but the

poor still regard her as their salvation. The court is distracted by the reports of her charms. Blancheflor, a lady of honor to the Queen Mother, thus describes her charms to the court:

She has a proudly raised head like that of some sweet serpent I have heard of. Her eyes I have described. Her eyebrows hold the loveliness of the world as a new leaf keeps the tears of its first rainfall. Often she seems to breathe through her hair. Her mouth seems to ask her breath back again from the soul which has closed it. And there is nothing else. That is the cause of all.

Sometimes she throws back her head, and it suffices. That she moistens her lips with the tip of her tongue. That suddenly her whole cruel face seems to be steeped in a marvellous liquid.

Which effaces her features. At that instant her face is nothing but the miracle of a lovely pool in which swims a spray of rose.

And there is nothing else. That is the cause of all.

The desperate Queen Mother determines to free her son forever from the fascination of this terrible woman.

She gives a great banquet in his honor, to which all the great lords and ladies of the island are invited.

The Queen Mother asks the "Pisanella" to dance.

This dance is Ida Rubinstein's triumph of art and sensuality.

While she dances with wonderful fire and seductiveness, negro slaves, directed by the Queen Mother, surround her with arms full of roses.

They throw them upon her as if in homage to her skill. Thicker and thicker they throw them, until she sinks under the weight of perfumed tributes and is crushed to death.

This is the perfumed death of the Pisan courtesan. Two fierce leopards in a gilded cage are held in readiness to finish the work that the roses have begun.

As the Pisanella lies silent under the mound of roses the young King enters and confronts the Queen Mother. These are the words that the audience thought they caught amid the sonorous splendor of the scenery:

THE KING.
Strange rumors send me hither, Aghast, yet unbelieving. If aught of ill has here befallen The Christian Maid—

THE QUEEN MOTHER.
See you this? Mound of votive garlands, These leopards still in leash? What ill can roses do to Christian Maid—

Or painted Venus? 'Tis true, with nimble feet She danced, the while with carmined lips She smiled—the very smile that once in Cyprus—

THE KING.
She's not that same. The Lord of Tyre found death In self-same slander of the Maid By Heaven sent To save this land From famine, pestilence and ruin.

THE QUEEN MOTHER.
(As though the King had remained silent.) So graceful was her dance, so sweet Her carmined smile, I bade my slaves to deck her well With garlands she had won. Behold! So well was she rewarded You see her not—but only Votive roses

In the towering heap, of which, mayhap, She is the swooning heart.

THE KING.
Murderous! (He digs frantically among the garlands. Then, realizing that no life could survive in that suffocating heap, he rises and denounces the Queen in a frenzy of rage and despair.)

At the end of the King's denunciation, which includes a panegyric on the Pisanella, he falls upon the mound of roses in a swoon—and thus the play ends.



Gabriele D'Annunzio.



Portrait of Ida Rubinstein by A. de la Gandara, Made When a Remorseful Mood Was Upon Her.

"Beauty Sleep" Means 9 Hours.

By ELIZABETH SLOAN CHESSER, M. D., Lecturer at the London Institute of Hygiene.

EVERY woman desires to be beautiful. Many who are not, would be if they did not let less important matters infringe on their due allowance of sleep. Beauty sleep means nine hours out of each twenty-four—no less.

Every human being who works during the day needs nine hours of sleep at night to restore expanded vitality. The claims of society upon fashionable women are equivalent as vitality absorbers to the daily tasks of working women. Nothing takes the place of adequate sleep in obliterating the unbecoming signs of vitality over-expended, in work or pleasure.

There are other pointed reminders for women troubled by signs of fading beauty. If women paid at least as much attention to their teeth and their digestions as they do to their complexions they would be better looking in consequence.

There would be fewer invalids in the world to-day if more work, rather than rest cures, were prescribed for hypochondriacs.

It is work that makes life interesting, healthy and worth living.

Apart from recent unhappiness or bereavement, the natural human being ought to be happy. A certain number of people who worry require more work in their lives.

Many women are unhealthy because they have no definite plan of life, because they are self-centred, and because their time is not sufficiently filled up with domestic duties and family responsibilities to use up their energy. Every woman should determine to concentrate on optimism, healthy-mindedness, and not allow herself to sink into despondency, depressing thoughts and emotions.



One of the Negro Slaves Who Smother the "Pisanella" to Death with Roses. Drawing by Bakst.