

Cosspin About Plays, Players and Playhouses

TILL the clamor dies in our ears about the evil days on which the stage and the drama and its exponents have fallen. In this time of almost unbroken peace in the volume and intensity, the managers, many of whom have been serious offenders in their own times and their own ways, are urging that the immorality of some plays now being offered is such as threatens the very being of the people as a whole. The demand for the pure and wholesome is so eloquently phrased that an outsider—and one this far from New York—is surely an outsider in the accepted sense of the term—feels as did Agrippa when he spoke to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me." But a little lingering tinge of doubt still hovers, the dubitable aspect being in a measure ascribable to the fact that "It was not like this in the olden days." It is unfair, perhaps, to suspect the sincerity of the men who are splitting their voices in behalf of the good that is, or ought to be, in mankind. So, raising no question as to their motives, nor asking of them further pledges than they have given, Messieurs Burnham, Thompson, Klaw & Erlanger, and all their fellows, will be welcomed to the ranks of those who have striven in the past to keep down the ever surging tide of evil. Maybe with their help something can be accomplished.

Mr. Thompson, in his article, which is republished here, refers to a number of very successful plays that have been clean and wholesome, and cites for one example "Way Down East." But doesn't the real interest in this episode "Way Down East" around the "Way Down East" because she was accused of doing wrong? She hadn't sinned, but she had the appearance of having sinned, and so she was driven out into the night and the snowstorm that is so realistically pictured on the stage. Yes, to be sure, the denunciation is a vindication of that famous old story of Bartley Campbell's, that "Rags are royal raiment worn by virtuous men." And, by the way, how many of you can recall the applause that bit of sentiment ought to receive? The lesson is that virtue ought to triumph. In "The Eastest Way," which is so generally denounced, the lesson is the same, only the heroine doesn't have the rugged stamina of her who was driven into the snowstorm. Such comparisons might be made indefinitely, and to no special purpose. The only question that seems to be under discussion at present is, "Shall certain phases of social life, well known to exist, be offered publicly for inspection by mixed audiences at the theaters?" As this question has been debated time out of mind, and is still unanswered, the present multiplication of words is not likely to seriously affect it in any of its several aspects.

Most of the present managerial uproar seems to be over Mrs. Fluke and "Salvation Nell." At least this is the play and the player most frequently referred to. The fact that Mrs. Fluke's husband has long been a thorn in the side of the "syndicate," and has very recently been expelled from the New York managerial combination because of an unsettled dispute with another manager over the right to produce in America Molnar's superb exposition of the drama of sweetness and light, "The Devil," it may be that in considering the case of Mrs. Fluke we are getting somewhere near the heart of the matter. It is admitted that the scene of "Salvation Nell" brings before the audience a bit of life in a large city that is not at all pleasant to contemplate, but one that all who know anything are fully aware of. Very little that is inspiring may flow from a brawl in a low saloon, or the raving of a brothel on the stage. But the slum sights shown on the stage in "Salvation Nell" are not of the kind that attract any one to enter on that sort of life. The picture is only presented to show where Nell and Jim started, and to give a background to the height to which they ascended through the redeeming power of love. Henry Miller, who would not produce "Paid in Full" because he did not want to see the picture of a woman even pretending to barter her honor, did not hesitate to produce "The Great Divide," with its tawdry suggestion of the impending ravishment of a woman, because he saw in it the lesson of redemption through love. And Mr. Miller was right. "The Great Divide" was dramatic force and intensity, while "Paid in Full" is tawdry melodrama, almost wholly devoid of the tramping of drama, and depending for its climax on the accident to which Mr. Miller objected. If the action of "Salvation Nell" depended for its impulse on the saloon fight or the raided brothel, then the objections urged against it by the managers who oppose Mrs. Fluke because of her husband might convince. These points are not incidents in the drama, of epic importance only, and bear but slight relation to the main theme. The theme is the redemption of the woman through the love that brought her under the influence of religion, and then the redemption of the man through the love that brought him under the influence of the woman. If this pair had started in the upper walks of life, and the catastrophe of the opening act had occurred in a ball room, as in "The Walls of Jericho," it would be the subsequent course of their salvation as it is worked out in silence and suffering would be accepted as a part of real life. But "Salvation Nell" is a portion of that great world that throbs and pulsates with the heartaches and the choked aspirations and the stillborn ambitions of millions, whose existence is a struggle to exist, so strenuous, so hopeless, that one whose eyes are seldom if ever turned to the seamy side, must wonder why they try to exist at all, so little does life hold for them. It is a story with more than one moral that is told in Mrs. Fluke's present play, and the chorus of denunciation that is aimed against it is not likely to have any very serious effect, because of its apparent insincerity.

Salome, unfortunate daughter of Herodias, no less unfortunate in her love than in having for a dramatic biographer Oscar Wilde, has also been cited as an example of the decadence of our public wants and tastes in matters dramatic, operatic, acrobatic. Maybe if Maude Allen had exhibited her nudities as Phryne, and Isadora Duncan had danced as Antarte, and Eva Tanguay had pretended she was Cleopatra, can you imagine Bill and Gertrude Hoffman, if they had been killed as Aphrodite, maybe the result would have been the same. Yet this was not to be. Premasted had in a large measure disclosed her voluminous charms during a single performance of the Strauss opera based on the Wilde drama, and Salome, poor girl, is condemned forever as a degenerate and an unmentionable. Such is the irony of fate when it comes in the form of sublimated prudery. In the days of Herod a nude dancer was not a novelty. Before that time, for some centuries, it had been so, and it was not always looked upon as cause for condemnation. If the same book that first gave us our knowledge of Salome is to be relied upon, the nude dance once had another very direct and very important influence on the career of the Jewish race. Once when King Ahasuerus was feeling his oats after a seven-day banquet with his no-

ble, he ordered that Queen Vashti come before him and his guests and exhibit herself. Vashti had much more dignity and grace than her two sisters, and she declined to do what Maude Allen and Isadora Duncan did for shekels in London and New York, and straightway the king's anger burned within him. He took counsel with his guests and his advisers, and with one accord they agreed that the conduct of madams was most unbecomingly and unbecomingly. If it ever became known that the queen had refused to dance before the king and his guests for the purpose of showing her physical charms and perfections and had gotten away with it, not a husband in Persia would be able to dominate his household. So there was nothing to do but to depose the recalcitrant Vashti, and Esther came to the throne. It is not known that she was asked to do the "altogether" stunt for the edification of the king's guests, but she did find favor in the eyes of Ahasuerus, and through her the plot of Haman to massacre the entire Jews was thwarted, and Captain Haman was hanged on what dear old Barnaby used to describe as a "highly ornate and commodious gallows," the same having been erected by himself for the purpose of elevating Mordcael, the brother of Esther, to the position of prime minister, recalled by erudite persons who refer occasionally to someone or something as having been hanged higher than Haman, while the brother of the queen is brought to mind each time Miner Brown goes in to pitch for the Cubs, the miner's given name being Mordcael also.

Probably no heroine was ever set before the public more unfortunately than Salome has been. Coupled with the unsavory memories that attach to the name of Oscar Wilde, the suggestion accentuated by the lascivious music of Strauss, and the whole exploited by sensational headlines, who sought only to emphasize the libidinous, all the while a tragic aspect of the drama is eclipsed by the cloud of suggestive prudery raised about her by these means. Then the further fact that a host of shameless women have paraded themselves in nakedness on the stage in pretense of dancing as did Salome has added to the prejudice against her. When the

What Love in the Slums Means

NE of the poignant scenes in "Salvation Nell," Mrs. Fluke's vehicle, is the meeting of the regenerated slum girl and her lover after the latter has been released from prison. The old love exists between them, but for Nell not in the old way. The dialogue runs: Nell—Yes, I understand. I suppose this is the last time we'll meet on earth. Jim—if I could only make you see it before you go! Jim—See what? Nell—(Softly stroking back his hair)—I don't remember how we met each other first. Jim—Dunno—I do—it's a long time ago. Nell—In that little place where I worked before I came to Sid's. You used to sit at the table, and I'd sit at the same table. After a while I sort of grew to expect you. I think I'd been married for a long time before I knew it myself—I was a awful young thing. One night you came in drunk. Jim—(Interrupting)—Wot's the good o' rememberin' that? Nell—An' I couldn't help myself. Jim—I done wotever ye wanted—al ways. I don't want that wot ye want. Jim—I didn't treat ye bad, did I? Nell—No, but then ye drank so much! Jim, there was once, only one time when we was really happy. Jim—When was that? Nell—The Sunday we went out into the country. I'd saved up for weeks I'd get a new hat, an' I thought it was awful stylish. We took our dinner with us, an' we went across the river an' got a trolley gun' way into the country. D'ye know, Jim, it was the first time I ever felt like a free woman. You remember that big tree where we had our dinner? An' how ye

heard of before—have jumped into such fame that they have for numbers of months commanded salaries equal to those received by our finest dramatic and musical artists. I am not a moralist, and do not wish to be considered one, but believe that cleanliness of mind breeds the best mentality; that cleanliness of body is necessary; that bringing about a person's or nation's maximum efficiency in work; that cleanliness in literature and art are to a great degree responsible for all mental and physical uplift, and that cleanliness in all sorts of theatrical representations, not only has a profound influence on the morals of a nation, but also is the necessary condition which makes for financial success. Writing from a managerial standpoint, I may as well blot this all down and start by saying that I am for cleanliness in amusements because I am convinced that it pays best in the long run. Only a decade ago the American stage was as clean as the scenery as Coney Island is today, but during the last several seasons the pernicious weed of immorality has been planted in it and has grown to such proportions that it is high time American playwrights, American managers and American playgoers were asked to stop a minute and become acquainted with what is going on. Coney Island was not reformed from without, but from within. It washed itself as soon as it noticed the financially good effects of a vigorous dose of soap and water. The present rapidly growing evil practices in theatricals must be killed in the same way, if they are to be killed at all. To point what will be my argument and to demonstrate how close is the relationship between the sidewalk and the theater, I beg leave to present a timely and interesting brace of facts. One is this: the Salome dance has done much to lower the tone of the American stage is nothing more than the notorious "hootele-koochele" dance of sidewalk fame, and the second is that Salome would never have been heard of in the theaterland if the regeneration of Coney Island had not made it necessary for it to find a home outside the realm of sidewalk amusements. The conditions obtaining in certain theatrical affairs—conditions which make it possible for a half dozen almost-naked young women to transpire this suggestive dance to the most historic playhouse in America—must be wrong, else they would not exist. But they do exist. At present there are cropping up in all kinds of theatrical things similarly sordid and similarly dangerous. The morals of the American theater is on the decline.

The most successful plays and the most successful musical entertainments, not only of recent years, but of all time, have been clean. This is a statement which goes with absolutely no qualification or reservation. It applies also to players, playwrights and managers—just why I don't know, unless, as I said before, cleanliness of all kinds is a tremendous factor in final success. And by success I, as a manager, am still talk-

ing of dollars and cents. Klaw and Erlanger's "Ben Hur" and "Little Nemo," and William A. Brady's "Way Down East" have made more money and will live longer on the forty-weeks-a-year boards than any two cleverly written but suggestively immoral French or English or German or American plays which you or any one else can name. "Brewster's Millions" and "Polly of the Circus," both of which I am proud to have produced, have been, are now and will continue to be, productive of bigger returns than any two American plays of the present day which deal with indecency. Miss Maude Adams is the greatest drawing card in the whole theater firmament. She is more respected and is wealthier than Madame Bernhardt—not does mean that Bernhardt is not the greatest actress of the last or present generation. "Florodora," "Little Johnny Jones," "The Red Mill" and "Mademoiselle Modiste" have made more money than a hundred "Queens of the Moulin Rouge" have or will.

THEATER MUST BE KEPT CLEAN

Frederick Thompson Adds His Voice to the Protest.

Frederick Thompson, who has been high in the amusement world since he disguised the structures on the Midway at the Trans-Mississippi and International exposition at Omaha, adds his voice to the managerial clamor against the immoral and impure in the drama. In the theater, under the heading of "After the Salome Dance—What?" Mr. Thompson airs his views in the following fashion: The regeneration of Coney Island has been kindly ascribed to me by friends and the public. When my partner, Dundy, and I started to build Luna Park, Coney Island was referred to as a cesspool of depravity and immorality. That was six years ago, and for the last four years this greatest of all amusement rendezvous has been as clean as the proverbial whistle. For the last six years the "hootele-koochele" has been trying to find a resting place on Coney Island. I was there once, on the land of sidewalk shows, the Metropolitan Opera house. With the help of Oscar Wilde and Richard Strauss the bare-legged dancer made her initial bow to Broadway in the foremost American palace of amusements, where, before an audience made up of the social hour hundred and the moneyed five thousand, she appeared for one consecrated night as Salome. Since that widely advertised performance the most indecent of all Topsy-turvy exhibitions has gone through the country like wildfire. Vaudeville has been literally demoralized by it, and a dozen young women of indifferent ability—several of them had never been

talked 't' that old man? An' me 'bout it bunched o' my take home? I made ye wear one in yer button-hole, but ye didn't want to a bit! Why, that Sunday, I never kin forget it, Jim.

Jim—Sure, I remember! Nell—Well, I don't see any ol' glimpse of the green fields. An' oh, how short it was!

Jim—Well, we couldn't s-kept on livin' out there.

Nell—No, we had 't' come back to work—an' drink—an' the city streets.

Jim—Ye talk 't' if I could help you—Nell—Dear, I'm not blamin' you—I'm not even blamin' myself. We was just like yeeps o' others. 'Twasn't a bit our fault!

Jim—Well, what about it, then?

Nell—Do ye know, Jim, after everythin' has happened, what yer cousin told me, I think I feel that I'm across the river! I feel, that's the way I feel. The other some one else—(Pause). An' then, Jim, I began 't' love ye!

Jim—Ye began!

Nell—I thought God would let me be the one to save ye. But I know now that I can't. 'Cause it's our love—the love that's between us—that's the way I pray! 'Twas 't' I care 'bout bein' saved?

Nell—We've lost each other in this life, but dear, this life ain't all! Some day, we'll meet soul to soul. Oh, I believe in that! I'll break the skies!—An' Jim, we'll be together—always!

Jim—But I want to know what ye mean? D'ye know what I'm goin' to do? Nell—'I'll pray for ye—

And through the influence of the Salvation Army good comes out of bad, in the end.

Mr. Sothorn appears at Boyd's theater Monday evening, March 1, in "Hamlet," in which play he was last seen here in conjunction with Julia Marlowe. On Tuesday evening he will play "Richelleu," and on Wednesday will be seen as Lord Dunderbush. This character has proven the most popular of any which the great actor has yet given to the public and was the rage of New York last season. To see Sothorn interpret the eccentric humor of Dunderbush, as well as to witness the greatest comedy character of the American stage reappear upon it, has everywhere attracted to Sothorn's performance the liveliest sort of a crowd.

Mr. Sothorn presents this play with the original manuscript used by his father, and besides the original "busyness" which the older Sothorn had carefully elaborated, Sothorn breathes into the character of Dunderbush his own individuality. The play is given with a reproduction of the costumes used at the Theater Royal, Haymarket, London, presentation, and Sothorn brings here the same organization associated with him during the run of the play in New York last season.

"The House of Bondage" is the new starring vehicle of Miss Florence Roberts, who opens a three days' engagement at the Boyd theater on Thursday evening, March 4. She has an excellent supporting company and a magnificent scenic production.

"Sapho," which character Maude Leone is to portray the second week of her engagement at the Burwood, starting this afternoon, is a dramatization of Daudet's great novel as played only by Olga Nethersted. Sapho combined all of the attributes that go to make up what is known as a "man's woman," and yet Fanny LeGrand (Sapho) was but a sourest of the warm friendships among her woman associates. So wondrous were her charms that

of the characters in the play says of her: "Artists have painted her; sculptors have modeled her." Miss Leone has found Sapho one of her most congenial roles, and it certainly is a broad test to an actress' versatility to go from the buoyant, good-natured All-of-a-Sudden-Fraggy to Sapho, the demi-mondaine. The first act transpires at a French ball masque, and it is in this act that Miss Leone will wear her gorgeous crystal gown, which will radiate with double sun-top brilliancy the effulgent rays of a specially prepared 5,000 candle-power arc light, whose entire power will be directed upon her. Beyond all doubt, this marvelous dress is the most superbly resplendent creation ever worn on any Omaha stage. The cast will be greatly augmented and it is promised that "Sapho" will go one record as Miss Leone's second successive triumph. Matinees will be given Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Extra holiday matinee tomorrow, Washington's birthday.

Reserved seats for the Bispham concert go on sale Monday morning at Beaton's store. Reservations point to a crowded house. Mr. Bispham will be assisted by Miss Alice Barbee, soprano, and will be heard in a program of his best known numbers.

The maximum of song and action crowded into two hours and forty minutes of entertainment for the lover of music, the funny dialogue to season the musical comedy broth, "The Smart Set" brings its batteries, charged with novel features and delightful surprises, to the Krug theater for three days, starting next Thursday night, when it hopes to score another one of those full-fledged triumphs that have been accorded to the Krug every time the love for charming music and spontaneous mirth is strong enough to recognize a very superior offering. S. H. Dudley, known as the "Southern Sunny Boy," and a goodly number of other dark-complexioned individuals whose propensities for laugh making are freely acknowledged, are likewise connected in the Krug with the unfolding of a really funny plot, liberally permeated with occasions for extra fine musical work.

The bill which comes to the Orpheum this week contains several numbers of unusual interest for the lover of music. The well known baritone, Homer Lind, comes with a select company in "The Opera Singer," a little play with music said to afford him a rare opportunity for the display of his voice and histrionic abilities. Rogers and Deely offer a melodious trifle, "The Singer and the 'Lair,'" in which Rogers provides the music and Deely the black-face comedy element. "Married Now" is the title of the concert to be given by Linton and Laurence that has just enough plot to hold together their singing and dancing numbers. Les Amatis are four German girls who are making another successful tour of America. They are musicians and present a program composed of piano and vocal selections for the classic, Delmore and Lee, two American gymnasts, put on their act in black and white, calling it "A Study in Black and White." The juggler Chinks has recently been appearing in Great Britain and returns with many clever tricks to amuse the patrons of the Orpheum. The dainty and graceful cyclist, Minnie Kaufman, will likewise be on the program.

Those who miss the grand concert at the Auditorium tonight by the Philippine Constabulary band will miss a treat. This band consists of eighty-six trained musicians—all Filipinos—and within the band there is a symphony orchestra of sixty-two pieces.

This is the band that has become world famous on account of the concerts given every afternoon on the Luneta at Manila. Travelers from every quarter of the globe have been charmed by its music. This band plays the most difficult music with a finish and spirit both astonishing and fascinating. It is to Manila what the United States Marine band is to Washington. The band is under command of Captain Mark Hersey, captain of the regular army. President-elect Taft liked this band so well while he lived in Manila, as governor of the island, that he has requested it to come all the way to Washington—15,000 miles—to play at the inaugural ceremonies on March 4. The box office at the Auditorium will be open all day Sunday and the concert will begin at 8:15 Sunday night.

S. N. Leek, the noted wild game photographer of Jackson's Hole, Wyo., is in town, stopping at the Merchants hotel. He spent an unusually long and hard winter in the Jackson Hole country and that 30,000 elk are down in the valley in a starving condition and that the settlers have to guard their hay stacks from their nightly depredations, and at present are feeding the elk by subscription, while the Wyoming legislature is wrestling with a bill appropriating \$10,000 to buy feed with which to relieve the situation.

Mr. Leek has 5,000 feet of motion picture film and many stereoscopic slides, including bands of 1,000 elk running over the hills, deer, bear, mountain lions and other game, hunting and fishing views, packing horses and pack trains traveling through the mountains and fording the streams; goysers and falls in the Yellowstone National park, and many other views, all in motion pictures, original with him, that will be shown at the Lyric theater with an appropriate lecture, commencing this afternoon at 2:30. If you love nature, don't miss seeing these views.

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