

## THREE STARS MAKE MERRY IN CLASSIC

Real Pep and Glorious Fun Is Injected Into Shakespeare's 'The Merry Wives of Windsor,' by Mrs. Fiske, Otis Skinner and Henrietta Crosman.

BY WALTER D. HICKMAN

Three names associated with the better things on the stage for many years have brushed the dust off of Bill Shakespeare's "The Merry Wives of Windsor," given it an artistic pat here and there and often a kick of the slapstick.

In other words, Mrs. Fiske, Otis Skinner and Henrietta Crosman have found the real theater in Shakespeare's yarn of how at least two wives may be merry and good at the same time.

When it is all said and done, it is Sir John Falstaff who will linger in your memory. It is

slapstick comedy to see Mrs. Fiske and Henrietta Crosman chuckle as Sir John in a big clothes basket and then cover him with dirty linen. It is then that Sir John and the basket are carried out of the house while a jealous husband is trying to find Sir John. It is high comedy that

Mrs. Fiske takes three attempts to win the favor of Mistress Ford (Henrietta Crosman). It is delicious comedy to see Skinner all decked out in orange colors to go a calling upon Mistress Ford. It is just plain hokum to see Mrs. Fiske as Mistress Page read her love letter from Sir John and it is equally exciting to see Henrietta Crosman read a similar letter addressed to herself. It is the beauty of the dance that we get in the last act when ready to make fairies attack poor Sir John in the woods. And it isn't high comedy to see Sir John wear a headdress to resemble a deer.

In other words, this three-star combination have placed modern pep and dash into this aged farcical comedy and it is pleasant to realize that Shakespeare really isn't so profound and so weighty as some Shakespearian players desire to con-

vey. There is real life, fun and a lot of hokum kidding in this play that is delightful as done by the three stars. At times this play is noisy just hokum as done by this cast but it is always theater. And that is just what Shakespeare is—theater. In this case it is laughing at the theater, and the three stars know

their theater. Skinner may not be the historical Falstaff, but I do not object to this brand of Falstaff. Sir John was a conceited all boy who loved strong drink and women who kiss. And he enjoyed encounters, especially when somebody was paying the bills.

As to makeup, Skinner is a splendid Falstaff. He comes mighty near taking up the entire big chair in the inn. I really believe that Skinner's Falstaff could have lived at the time Shakespeare created this comedy.

Mrs. Fiske hasn't so much to do but what she has to do is done in that famous nervous mood that belongs to Mrs. Fiske alone. She makes a charming picture.

And Henrietta as Mistress Ford is a charming fumaker who has not permitted the years to slow up her artistry or erase her fine sense of comedy. It is a treat to see these three famous people on the stage giving their ideas of Bill Shakespeare's characters.

A big cast is carried as well as a big production—the play being done in five acts. Bendtsen, remembered for his work with Stuart Walker, is Abraham Slender; Rodolpho Badaloni creates a noisy and explosive Doctor Caius; Eleanor Gordon is a clever Mistress Quickly and Lawrence H. Cecil and splendid Francis Ford.

Always Ahead

LOOKING OVER NEW EVENTS AT KEITH'S

Here is an act that was built by the House of Hoken. Bert Fitzgibbons has returned to Indianapolis again and is still in the business as the "Original Daffybill." He is assisted in this silliness by Laura Pierpont.

There is nothing to the act but a lot of nutty stories and some worse songs, on Fitzgibbons part, but he has the personality to put it across. And a spontaneous wit to help it out. It is still, to my notion, one of the biggest laugh acts that ever was on the vaudeville

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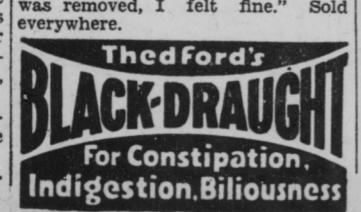


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stage. And he would be lost if it weren't for Miss Pierpont.

Frank and Milt Britton present their band, the Brown Derby Band with Ray Loomis dancing. Loomis is a tap and eccentric dancer of some rare ability. The orchestra is like any other until they give their latest, "Our Musical Ancestors," in which various composers and directors are shown lifelike and the music in accordance with the composer. Bizet, Liszt, Wagner, Brahms, Mendelssohn, Gounod, Shubert, Verdi and Susa are presented in rapid succession.

Emmett O'Mara, who is said to be lately one of the soloists with the U. S. S. Leviathan orchestra, has a program of original and old-time songs mixed with a few of the present-day class. He gives as an encore a scene from Pagalacia. He is accompanied by Melisse Ballou. This is high-class and well worth while.

Here is straight comedy of the old kind. The modern girl makes her man, and then one year later she wishes she hadn't. Fisher and Gilmore give their presentation of "Her Bashful Romeo." There is quite a few laughs in this and it is good clean comedy.

Bege and Quipe have a skating act in which something new is presented.

This borders on the slapstick, but it has a lot of good laughs and is a new twist to an old idea. It also is a song and dance turn and has a good comedian in the troupe.

De Sylvia's Night Club, I must confess, failed to come up to the expectations that I had aroused. There was good dancing and singing, but somehow the act failed to ring true. Chief among the entertainers is Alice Corde, I believe the name is, who is a toe dancer with some ability. Just a fair act.

Here is an act that has a female impersonator and a person who burlesques that art. I don't know which is which, but the female impersonator is a real clotheshorse and has a better voice for this sort of thing than most. In fact, the high notes were exceptionally good. The other member of the company is the clown. They give a scene from "Samson and Delilah," briefered. Pearson and Anderson have a won-

derful act with a five piece jazz band coming over the radio.

Mayme Gehrie is not only a good drummer, but she is a fine tap dancer. She shows the drummer in the pit just how he ought to play the base drum. She dances on it. She has several new steps in tap dancing. Her own violinist in the pit plays a solo while she makes a change of costume.

Winchill and Briscoe have one of the old comedy acts that still gets there. Just a lot of patter and a new song or two, but they are fair.

Gardner has a trained animal act which he calls Gardner's Maniacs. The animals are well trained, and there are no new tricks in the bag.

At the Lyric. (By C. G.)

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