

The New Play

By Percy Hammond

Miss Ulric Performs a Vivid Monologue as an Appealing Demi-Vierge in Mr. Belasco's "Kiki"

THE CAST

Victor Renal	.....	Sam B. Hardy
Baron Rapp	.....	Max Figman
Brule	.....	Thomas Findlay
Joly	.....	Sidney Toler
Sinette	.....	Saxon Kling
Adolphe	.....	Thomas Mitchell
The Doctor	.....	Harry Burkhardt
Paulette	.....	Arline Fredricks
Lolotte	.....	Pauline Moore
Susanne	.....	Florence Lee
Claire	.....	Gertrude Bond
Marcel	.....	Mignon Ranser
Florine	.....	Jean Scott
The Cook	.....	Jane Ferrell
Kiki	.....	Lenore Ulric

In undertaking his study of the character of Kiki, the cocotte, Mr. Belasco confesses an understandable bewilderment. She is, he says in the playbill at the Belasco, a puzzle, the solution of which he is pleased to leave to an indulgent public. Though a "universal little creature," to be found almost anywhere, from a shop counter to a gypsy's wagon, she is yet provocative of speculation. What will become of her "he asks himself as the curtain falls, with Kiki in the arms of Victor Renal, a Parisian impresario? Is earnestness the keynote of her mood, or jocularly? Will she grow up, or has she grown up already? Where is she now, and why? Was she telling the truth when, with great embarrassment, she admitted her chastity in the final scene, or was she feigning virtue as she did catalepsy? Since the non-plussed Mr. Belasco has had the character between his thumb and forefinger for many studious months, and since his powers of scrutiny are unusual, it is best, perhaps, to join him in his perplexity and to leave Kiki among the entertaining, if not important, mysteries of the womankind of the theater.

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Of one of Kiki's attributes, however, we all may be assured. She is cute. She is cute for three solid hours at the Belasco, performing most of the beguiling capers of the more roughish of the kittens. Coy, gamine, graceful and not ignobly feline, she jumps through all the cute hoops. It is no faint tribute that one pays to Miss Leonore Ulric, therefore, when one testifies that, beginning to be cute at 8:30, she continued last evening to remain so, with few intermissions, until 11. This, no doubt, is a record for endurance in cuteness, and Miss Ulric is to be felicitated for her achievement in a difficult endeavor. Her charm and her sultry beauty, added to her histrionic sagacity, to Mr. Belasco's fascinating legerdemain and to the public appetite for such things, made the evening a happy triumph for all of us.

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Kiki enters the play (which is adapted by Mr. Belasco from the French of André Picard) as a vivid little chorus girl who has a determined adoration for her manager (Mr. Sam B. Hardy). She has worshiped him from the curb, as, in the tall hat and fur coat of his calling, he makes his way to and from his theater. Her persistence, her personality and her beauty distract him, and, being a divorced and lonely manager, he takes her to his rooms. Their association, however, is without the customary improprieties, and, so, after a while, it irks him. Kiki is evicted in a fine exhibition by Miss Ulric of gutter pride and aristocracy, during which she removes much of her clothing. In order to remain in propinquity to her hero, she counterfeits a catalepsy, and great sport of a farcical kind is made thereafter as Kiki is carried to and fro about the apartment in her spurious unconsciousness and rigidity. It was a little reminiscent of the oldtime minstrel afterpieces.

Miss Ulric is very appealing, a while later, as in pretty pajamas she sits on the side of Renal's bed and reports to him her clean philosophy and the story of her life. Her love-making is irresistibly frank and child-like and though lengthy and a little repetitious, it held us last evening, spellbound, as they say. Mr. Hardy, as the man in the matter, was handsome and not much affected and it pleased us to see him at the end understanding Kiki's character, even if we and Mr. Belasco did not.