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THE B. V. D. COMPANY, NEW YORK

'THE EASIEST WAY' TELLS STORY AS OLD AS HILLS, WITHOUT SOLUTION

Little Lie Causes Much Piliikia, and Show Exposes Large Amount of Muck

THE CAST.

Laura Murdoch...Miss Oakley
William Brockton...Guy Hittner
John Madison...Mr. Webb
Annie, a servant...Marie Baker
Jim Weston...Jack Belgrave
Effie St. Clair...Inez Ragan

"The Easiest Way," the current offering of The Players at the Bijou Theater, is billed as "A powerful sociological drama." Possibly it is, but from a close observation of last night's performance it is hard to find any legitimate excuse for the offering. "The Easiest Way" might as well be billed as a dramatization of the one-time popular melody "A man was the cause of it all." Or it might be presented as "The drama that leaves a dark-brown taste."

About the only positive lesson carried by "The Easiest Way" is one that would shake the faith in human nature of the most optimistic. Although the cast is small, each of the members proves to be a character that could be thoroughly detected, with ease—the single exception being Jim Weston, former circusman and advance-agent, who never had any large opportunity to enter the crooked ranks.

Eugene Walters undoubtedly was writing for the coin and figured on striking a popular chord by laying down four acts of high-toned filth. New York's Stanford White-Harry Thaw ring was undoubtedly drawn upon by the dramatist as also was the George Graham Rice episode of the early Goldfield days. The muck that is raked in "The Easiest Way" is most positive but Walters fails to point a remedy. He portrays the filth and leaves an open festering sore. He has probably worked well for box-office receipts and the royalty but has failed to offer any improvement of a condition that is as old as the ages—but has had a better opportunity to blossom into a studied profession under the present day economic system of mammoth fortunes and indolent millionaires. "The Easiest Way" is a play without an excuse for being.

We Meet the Crooks.

The action opens in Denver and introduces an actress, Laura Murdoch, minus ability but long on looks, who holds her job and lives on the fat of the land through the "friendship" of William Brockton, a wealthy Wall street manipulator, of crooked inclinations.

Laura meets and falls in love with John Madison, a young newspaper man, who is as poor as Brockton is rich. Laura decides that John is the only man and that she will renounce the life of ease for which she has bartered herself to Brockton. The actress goes to New York; the newspaper man stays in the West. Laura goes to "make good" in the chorus—and proves a dismal failure. Madison stays West to make a fortune, and, reversing the traditions of the newspaper game, he makes it. However, it is only a drama.

Before the parting of the ways Brockton promises Madison that, should Laura tire of the straight and narrow path she has chosen to tread and decide to return to the luxurious life that Brockton has to offer her, he, Brockton, will insist that Laura notify Madison that "love's young dream is over." When the time comes for this action, Brockton dictates a letter which Laura writes to Madison and then proceeds to feed it to the flames.

Peevish Over Little Lie.

This, it appears, makes Brockton out to be a liar and on this particular point he is very peevish. Living a life that is a lie from beginning to end; admitting that he is a "within the law" brand of crook and that he barbers in women, this one particular little lie that he has, inadvertently, told, appears to have a peculiar effect upon the man. He takes this particular lie real seriously and as above stated it makes him particularly peevish. Thereby hangs the plot of the play.

Act II. shows Laura in her hall bedroom. No work, no chance of getting any for the reason that Brockton is blocking her every effort. Another woman of the kind Laura has been, pays her a visit at about the time the landlady is demanding the back rent. With but a little coaxing Laura is willing to return to Brockton and the letter is written.

The third act shows Laura and Brockton in a fashionable hotel apartment, paid for by Brockton and enjoyed by both. A little "morning after" fight is in progress when a telegram arrives for Laura. More lies and more fighting result in Brockton learning that the message is from Madison, announcing the arrival in a few hours of the erstwhile newspaper man—now a Goldfield bonanza king. The secret of the letter that was never mailed comes out. A scene ensues and Brockton grows most peevish over that single lie. Brockton leaves and Madison enters, all set for the marriage ceremony, and, once more, Laura overlooks an opportunity of undoing that lie. She is given every opportunity but is afraid of losing the man she loves. The curtain falls with Laura packing trunks preparatory to her wedding and honeymoon trip West.

Just Can't Tell the Truth.

In the fourth act Laura continues to refuse to clear herself of the persistent little lie, adding to it with other lies to Madison—a most glib

young man. Brockton returns and without addressing Laura or Madison, removes his overcoat, throws it across the foot of the bed and annexes one of his favorite cigars from a boxful that has been reposing on Laura's table, unnoticed by Madison. There is almost a killing at this point and the lie is exposed. Brockton purges his soul of that fearful lie; Madison repulses the advances of Laura and the latter prepares for a "big night" at Rector's, with further conquests.

In the third act Miss Oakley is particularly good but last night slow action on the part of the handler of the curtain spoiled her climax and compelled her to continue acting after the curtain should have dropped on a splendid finale. Aside from this act the popular leading lady of The Players slightly overacted her part, as did George Webb, as the newspaperman. Each was a trifle melodramatic.

"Raffles" the Next Bill.

Guy Hittner, in the role of Brockton, was good, as was Miss Inez Ragan as Effie St. Clair. As Annie the servant—who also proves entirely in keeping with the company of the play by her petty pilferings—Miss Marie Baker was exceptionally clever. Jack Belgrave, as Jim Weston, a minor role, was good.

It is probable that The Players would extend themselves a little more were they receiving the support of which they are worthy on past performance. The aggregation has presented some sterling offerings and presented them in first-class manner and the small house of last night was not conducive to the best efforts of the actors. On the other hand, should the performance commence at 8:00 instead of 8:30 it is possible that a larger house might be the result.

"The Easiest Way" will continue tonight and tomorrow night, to be followed by that popular detective play "Raffles."

—W. W.

BOOKLOVERS CROWD CROSSROADS TO GET MANY BIG BARGAINS

When the doors of the Crossroads Bookshop opened this morning for the inauguration of their mammoth removal sale, there was such a scramble for opportunities to view the various bargains that late comers were forced to wait quite a time before aisles were sufficiently cleared to allow actual sales to be made.

And it is no wonder that so many booklovers thronged into the store. Prices on sets of standard works have been mercilessly reduced; recent fiction has been cut until profits went glimmering; gift books, some of them very beautiful and all of them worthy, were selling for only a fraction of their cost—in fact, every book in the store is a genuine bargain.

It was noticed that army folks were there in strength, they being the ones who greatly appreciate good books. The sale will continue for several days. And there are thousands of bargains left—though the most important ones are expected to be quickly snapped up.

DR. KARL KELLAR formerly of Lima, Keul, announces that he has opened offices for general practice in medicine and surgery, Cottage 1, Hawaiian Hotel, Richards street.—advertisement.

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