

AT THE THEATERS.

The third season of the Grand opera house was inaugurated last night with a degree of success characteristic of that theater since its dedication. The play was "The Soudan" and the audience was big enough to fill the theater and noisy enough for a circus throng. But for that matter, the most circumpect theatrical gathering would be demonstrative over some of the exciting scenes and imposing pictures of this play. It can be readily understood why "The Soudan" had long and profitable runs in London, Boston and Chicago. Its plot and passion have nothing significantly original, many of the lines are commonplace, and the characters need impressive actors to make them interesting; but there are wealth and picturesqueness of scenery, appropriateness and elaboration of pageantry, and smoothness and quickness of action rarely seen in combination, while there are several incidental episodes beautiful in idea and clever in handling. Noticeable shortcomings are succeeded by unexpected excellence, and on the whole it is an immense show on popular lines.

The story of the conspiracy against the domestic peace and worldly possessions of Captain Temple, of the English army has its variations in a large number of the melodramas and society plays of the modern stage, and there is nothing sufficiently new in this treatment to merit particular attention. The best lines, artistically considered, are those of the scene representing Stonefield farm, and much praise is merited by the colloquy between the two young starvelings in this scene. From a popular standpoint there are many good patriotic and sentimental catch lines.

The comedy is not above the ordinary. But the mounting of the play is admirable. The big settings are those representing Trafalgar square, London; the Zereba by night, and the desert city, where the English soldiers charge over the walls upon the Arabs, keeping up a continuous roar of Winchesters. But all the scenes, eighteen in number, are elaborately set, and the changes were made last night with remarkable quickness and absence of confusion.

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The weakness is in the cast, taken as a whole. James Horne is hardly an actor of sufficient force to represent the limited but significant character of Captain Temple, although he is much better than Emile La Croix, whose Paul De Vigne is not subtle enough to consist with the lines in description of that villain. He is too self-evident a scoundrel ever to have become the trusted friend and partner of a man like Temple. Horace Lewis' Matthew Hawker is better, but there is still room for improvement. Miss Jean Harold played the conventional adventuress well, and the emotional role of Nellie Temple was in some respects well acted by Miss Annie Barclay. Two strong character parts, Mr. and Mrs. Lambkin, were in excellent hands. They were impersonated by M. J. Cody and Mrs. J. B. Porter respectively. The comedy parts were only acceptably done by E. W. Morrison and Miss Portia Albee. The children, Alice Hunt and Walter Lewis, were especially clever. Master Frank was given a very difficult task, but showed exceptional comprehension in the character of Dick, the foundling. Ralph Payson brought into prominence Father Bonini, a character of three minutes' opportunity. The auxiliary force included two companies of the Third Regiment, and there were nearly 200 people on the stage in the Trafalgar square scene. The play will run for the week.