

# VALENTINO GOES BACK *Telegraph* TO THE ARGENTINI

"Sainted Devil," at the Strand, Shows Star  
at His Best but Story Is  
Poorly Treated.

By PETER MILNE.

Rudolph Valentino returns to the atmosphere of the Argentine and the tango in "A Sainted Devil," his Paramount picture, which opened at the Strand yesterday.

The expected crowds were on hand. The box offices stopped selling tickets midway through the 2 o'clock show, and the tapes and the lobby were jammed.

"A Sainted Devil" gives the star his greatest acting opportunity, and he rises to it splendidly. The degree of mental suffering he manages to portray is high on the scale and altogether effective.

To me "A Sainted Devil" falls short of the complete entertainment goal it aims at because of the treatment accorded it. The very first scenes are confusing. So many dons and donas are introduced in the early subtitles and there is so much handshaking that no incident or character registers clearly.

Even when the star and his heroine make their appearances there is little to arouse the interest in the early reels of the production. The first actual development of the story is the marriage, and it should have come far sooner. Too much concern is evinced in behalf of atmosphere.

Subsequent to the marriage a terrific dramatic incident enters the story but its total effect is not gained. The bandit kills the hero's family, lays waste to his home and abducts his bride. The episode was not properly prepared for. It comes as too much of a shock. A story that has started out to be romantic and light stumbles sharply over tragedy. Moods have been mixed too rudely.

The Don Hero hastens to rescue his bride and he believes he sees her responding to the bandit's caress because another woman wears the bridal comb and shawl. I think this trick a rather cheap one to employ in such an important point in the story. The heroine was a good dancer and the bandit loved to watch dancing. Something could have been concocted from those ingredients that would have

been more effective than the mistaken identity scene.

Don Hero is disillusioned after it and spends a year wasting himself. He is where the star receives and meets his greatest opportunities. He plays an effective sequence with Dagmar Godows who appears as a metropolitan vamp. It is well done but it adds not one iota to plot or characterization.

The climax comes when the bandit again enters the story. The crises come into the picture swiftly, a little too much so, it seems to me. The story ends with the final reunion of the Don and his wife, who, believing him dead, had taken refuge in a convent.

At best this story of Rex Beach which was titled by the author, "Roy End," is pretty familiar material. Forrest Halsey brought few refinements to it in his adaptation. Its pace is uneven, its moods mixed and interest uncentered.

The star carries the whole burden, it is to his credit that the picture interests in the manner in which the murders will probably give him a first reception despite the picture's faults.

Joseph Henaberry's direction is good. Helen D'Algy makes a beautiful, convincingly French heroine. Nita Neri carries her burden of villainy creditably while George Siegmann gives a portrayal of the bandit.

A large cast, including Jean Del Val, Antonio D'Algy, Roger Lytton, Asa West, Louise Lagrange and Raphael Bongini appear in support of the principals.

