

## DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE

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simple-minded maidens, had been given this picturesque part, whereas Lana Turner, who has specialised in being somewhat of a lass, had landed the role of Dr. Jekyll's lily-souled fiancée. Interesting but not regrettable; for quite the best bit of acting in the film is Miss Bergman's portrayal of the unfortunate girl whose physical allure plays such havoc with Dr. Jekyll's libido, with the result that she finds herself in the clutches of the bestial Mr. Hyde. Miriam Hopkins did this part with Frederic March, but here at least I prefer the new love to the old.

Miss Bergman, in fact, is so attractive that one can hardly blame Dr. Jekyll for being tempted—or for having succumbed, for that matter. Anyway, isn't the whole moral—a moral which has been a godsend to many a parson in search of a sermon—a trifle one-sided? Poor Dr. Jekyll deservedly comes to grief for allowing his evil nature to get out in the daylight and go on the loose, but apart from one good scene at a dinner party when the presumptuous doctor arouses the indignation of a bunch of smug, strait-laced Victorians by the mere suggestion that they are all occasionally capable of naughty thoughts, there isn't much criticism of the social hypocrisy which is as much responsible for producing Mr. Hyde as Dr. Jekyll's chemicals. And it might even be argued that if Dr. Jekyll hadn't been so deucedly high-minded when he said good-night to his little barmaid that first time, none of the subsequent trouble would have arisen. But then, of course, there'd have been no story for Stevenson to write or Hollywood to make three pictures about—though there would still have been plenty of material for sermons!

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HOWEVER, let me not myself be led astray by psychology from my argument that in a morality play like *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the accent should be plainly on such simple emotions as fear and horror. Quite possibly you'll disagree with that, in which case you'll likely enjoy the film more than I did. Or you may think that there's quite enough horror as it is. I must admit that, from the gasps and giggles all around me in the audience, a good many people were apparently having their money's worth of sensations—particularly two sweet young things in the row just behind. So obviously were they impressed by all this evidence of latent wickedness in the male sex that I could hardly forbear to creep up behind them in the crowd as we went out and say "Boo, look out, I'm Mr. Hyde!"

The inspiration of many a nightmare and many a sermon, "*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*" was itself the product of a nightmare. The story goes that in 1886 R. L. Stevenson was very sick with tuberculosis and awoke one night from a particularly bad dream. "I was dreaming a fine boggy tale," he told his wife, and there and then he began sketching out the plot of *Jekyll and Hyde*. His dream took him only as far as the transformation scene, but within three days, despite his illness, Stevenson had finished the first draft of the story. Within three days more the whole novel was completed—a phenomenal average of 10,000 words a day. It was a best-seller from the moment of publication, became a classic of the stage, and subsequently a popular subject with Hollywood film producers.



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