

CHINESE ACTORS AT THE WINDSOR.

There have been many strange things seen in New-York theatres, but assuredly the strangest was that offered last night at the Windsor in the performance of the Swingtien Lo Chinese Dramatic Company. It was the first time that Chinese actors had ever appeared in this city, and several hundred Chinamen and one Chinese woman assembled to welcome their countrymen. The welcome was silent, for it is against Chinese etiquette to applaud or even to laugh aloud, and Americans who violated the rule were treated to glances of scorn and contempt from the representatives of the older civilization.

The drama presented bore the name "Shee-Long-Tan-Moo," and is the work of Koong-Wing, a descendant of Confucius. B. C. 10 is the period of the play. Whether or not the dialogue smacks of the period, the action proves that several practical jokes that are still current antedate the Christian Era. The two genii who were represented by the comedians pulled chairs from under each other, and pretended to read books held upside down in a way that would not have been out of place in one of Hoyt's farces.

A synopsis of the action was printed on the programme, but this thoughtful consideration was not of much avail, as the points of Chinese acting do not make themselves evident in pantomime. The actors walk with swaggers and struts which would make genuine English "dudes" turn green with envy. One General had a bearing that was the exact counterpart of Pat Rooney in his most grotesque moments. Of facial expression they seem to be entirely devoid, and their pantomime consists principally in twisting and untwisting their long sleeves, and after painful efforts to extract their hands, thrusting one or two fingers in the faces of their companions. This is occasionally varied by pulling and twisting of their long and conspicuously false beards, and the shaking of gay-colored wooden hoops worn round their waists. In the most excited moments they hauled up their skirts and showed each other their silk stockings.

Tak-a-Wing, who is announced as the "greatest female impersonator in the world," wore false feet, which conveyed the necessary impression that they had been squeezed to the requisite smallness for Chinese feminine beauty. He and his attendant slave were plastered on the cheeks with the most brilliant imaginable rouge. Their choicest and tenderest attentions to Tak-a-Wing's lover consisted in blowing his nose with their fingers, a deed performed with an observance of detail more faithful than pleasant. Tak-a-Wing wore a most marvellous head-dress, composed of four rows of many-colored pompons, and from behind stuck out two Chinese pheasants' tails, each about six feet long. Four crimson silk flags protruded from her shoulders, and she carried two swords, a fan, and a gayly painted staff some seven feet long. Yet despite all these impedimenta, she danced, prouctted on her false stumps, kicked up in true can-can fashion, fought a double combat, and flirted her fan with the grace of a Mexican maiden. This he-she was the one feature of the performance that seemed to unaccustomed eyes even to approach nature. When he tapped his comic would-be lover with his fan, one almost expected to hear the words, "Go away, you naughty man."

An orchestra of six Chinese musicians sat at the back of the stage and played incessantly. Nearly all the dialogue was chanted, something after the fashion of recitative, but occasionally there were songs with well-defined melodies for the female characters. All the actors had falsetto voices, which did not seem to vary in pitch or force with any change of passion or sentiment. Only one scene was used, though occasionally different little "properties" were brought on. When these had served their purpose they were packed away in a trunk by the property-man, who stood at the right-hand corner of the stage in full view of the audience. When a change of dress had to be made the action stopped. A general who took off a wonderful head-dress to make his obeisance had a looking-glass held in front of him for several minutes while he again adjusted the elaborate structure. Nearly all the dresses were of marvellous richness and beauty. The two genii wore faces of black and white and red and white in stripes, which had quite as comical an effect as the traditional paintings of our clowns.

The first act began at 7 and ended at 9:45. It was said that the play would not be finished before 1 o'clock this morning. The same piece will be repeated to-night. About 200 white auditors were present.