

Censorship Menaces Stage But Producers' Own Fault

Vile Plays And Revues On This Season Have Set In Motion Forces Of Reform That Will Not Be Stopped Until Stage Is Cleaned Up Or Shut Up

By ROBERT T. SMALL
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New York, December 1.—Censorship, gaunt and puritanical, threatens the American stage.

The reform forces which have combined in an attack on the vile plays and revues produced in New York this season, are in such full cry at this time that nothing short of a state censor is likely to appease them.

Theatrical managers have failed to heed the many warning signs held up to them. They have insisted that the public wanted risqué comedy and costumes as near the nude as artistic considerations would permit. The boldness of some of the producers has been little short of startling.

But now they are in a fair way of reaping the whirlwind. Not only are the professional reformers aroused, but various church organizations which work quietly and without ostentation, have taken a hand in the movement to clean up the stage and it is not likely they will stop until the job is completed.

A state censor here in New York would be the stage censor for the entire country because of the fact that more than ninety per cent of theatrical productions nowadays are planned and put on in this city. The New York stage has its influence on all American drama. A New York "run" is the hallmark of dramatic quality. Lately it has been in too many instances the hallmark of indecency. So true is this that most of the New York productions have had to be toned down for the road. Two pieces which were not toned down recently were suppressed—one in Philadelphia and one in Los Angeles. Many persons in the "business" thought that nothing would shock Los Angeles, but "Getting Gertie's Garter," after an uninterrupted and unexpurgated run in the Eastern half of the country, got the goat of the homes of the movies and the police stepped in.

Augustus Thomas, the eminent playwright, who a year ago was named as the Will Hays of the spoken drama, has not had the same right of censorship over plays that young Mr. Hays had exercised over movie production. Mr. Thomas has been inclined to stand aside and let the managers try out almost anything they wanted on the Broadway "dogs." Some of these dogs are now about to turn around and bite them.

In the extremity of the danger that confronted them, the producers are clamoring today to have the citizens' jury plan placed in operation. They realize that is the most liberal element in all the reform ideas which are abroad in the city. The jury idea was evolved something more than a year ago and was generally accepted at that time, both by the managers and by the officers of the commissioner of licenses for his guidance in granting permits to certain play houses to continue in operation. The stage wasn't so very bad a year ago and so the plan fell into innocuous desuetude, or something akin to that.

Now the stage is about at the depths and the jury agreement has run out. The managers want it restored at once and Mr. Thomas is leading them in the hope that an active jury may shut off the more furious and narrow minded of the reformers.

Certainly the established panel from which the play juries of 12 men and women are to be drawn has a liberal enough personnel.

Prominent among those near the top of the list is Bernard M. Baruch, the distinguished chairman of the war industries board under President Wilson. It also includes Colonel Tillinghast L'Hommedieu Huston, until recently half owner of the New York American League baseball team, a man who believes in the doctrine of live and let live. Christopher Morley, the scrivener; Owen Davis, the playwright; Mortimer Schiff, the banker; Prince Pierre Troubetkay, the artist; Will Irwin, the writer; Otto H. Kahn, international financier and head of the Metropolitan Opera Company; these are some of the panel of 150 prominent citizens suggested for jury duty.

The managers today are eager to place themselves at the mercy of the jury. They beg that some one protect them from the sating storm and show them, miserable sinners that they are, just how they can put their houses in order.

Until this new furor against the stage arose there has been organized

Wrote of Travels And Discoveries

Columbus and Son Ferdinand Gave World Interesting Travels

Washington, Dec. 2.—Ask your friends to name a few of the great travel writers of all times and you will get many names—Marco Polo, Richard Hakluyt, Henry M. Stanley—probably none will mention Columbus.

If he did and you inquired "which Columbus" he would conclude you were asking a trick question.

"The fame of Christopher Columbus as the discoverer of America has both overshadowed his own remarkably observant account of what he found among the Indies and the biographical narrative of his son, Ferdinand Columbus," says a bulletin from the National Geographic Society.

"Both documents are accessible and known to geographers and historians, indeed the latter's authorship has aroused considerable controversy, yet they are not read so popularly as are many other travel classics."

Trees "Stretching to Stars"

An example of the descriptive style of Columbus is quoted from his remarks about Cuba, which he called Juana, and at first believed to be a part of the China coast. Columbus wrote:

"This island is surrounded by many very safe and wide harbors, not exceeded by any others that I have ever seen. Many great and salubrious rivers flow through it. There are also many very high mountains there."

"All these islands are very beautiful, and distinguished by various qualities; they are accessible, and full of a great variety of trees stretching up to the stars; the leaves of which I believe are never shed, for I saw them as green and flourishing as they are usually in Spain in the month of May; some of them were blossoming, some were bearing fruit, some were in other conditions; each one was thriving in its own way. The nightingale and various other birds without number were singing in the month of November when I was exploring them. There are besides in the said island Juana seven or eight kinds of palm trees which far excel ours in height and beauty, just as all the other trees, herbs, and fruits do."

Visitors Were Celestial

Of the natives of the islands Columbus wrote:

"These people practice no kind of idolatry; on the contrary they firmly believe that all strength and power, and in fact all good things are

a pretty general demand for the abolishment of the state censorship of films. It looks now as though that movement were doomed to defeat and instead the censorship may be broadened to include every stage production. Legislation to that effect already is being prepared for introduction at Albany. Under such a censorship the stage might easily lose much of its legitimate virility, but the producers will have only themselves to blame.

in heaven, and that I had come down from thence with these ships and sailors; and in this belief I was received there after they had put aside fear. Nor are they slow or unsullied, but of excellent and acute understanding; and the men who have navigated that sea give an account of everything in an admirable manner; but they never saw people clothed, nor this kind of ships."

One island which Columbus called Mateague, probably Martinique, he believed to be inhabited only by women.

"These women," he said, "perform no kind of work of their sex, for they use bows and darts; they protect themselves with shirts of copper. They tell me of another island, whose inhabitants are without hair, and which abounds in gold above all others."

A Commercial Report
The explorer's summary of the commercial advantages of the islands said:

"I promise this, that if I am supported by our most invincible sovereigns with a little of their help, as much gold can be supplied as they will need, indeed as much of spices, of cotton, of chewing-gum (which is only found in Chios), also as much of aloes-wood, and as many slaves for the navy, as their majesties will wish to demand."

Interesting sidelights on the first trans-Atlantic voyage abound in the biography of Ferdinand Columbus, based on his illustrious father's log. This journal contained a surprising amount of data telling what winds blew, how far he sailed with each particular wind, what currents are found, and "everything that was seen by the way, whether birds, fish-

es, or any other thing."

Lobster Played Part

Every school child knows that the birds gave the mariners their first inkling of their approach to land; the lobster has scarcely had his due for continuing the portent of the birds. Ferdinand Columbus writes:

"Next day (September 17) the seaweed was seen in much greater quantity, and a small live lobster was observed among the weeds; from this circumstance many affirmed that they were certainly near the land."

In addition to his duties as navigator and his task of keeping a young boy's journal Columbus frequently had to keep his men from turning back by raised and incipient appeals. Following the excitement of the voyage the narrator says that Columbus "believed that it was occasioned by the polar star making a circuit round the pole, by which they were not a little satisfied."

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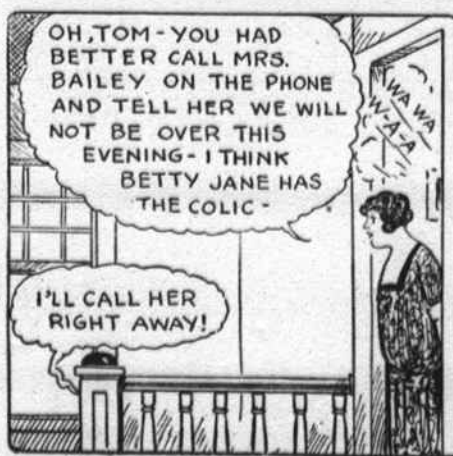
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