

Evening Ledger

AMUSEMENT SECTION

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Dog-town Goats

IT'S great sport to be a dog town. New York knows nothing of the remarkable experience which is Philadelphia's every now and then when a new show comes here to be whipped into shape for Broadway. We have been having two experiences in the last fortnight, the repairs on "Stop! Look!! Listen!!!" and "Ruggles of Red Gap." What would life be on the road if the managers couldn't get our goats once in a while with a few surprises for those people who "get around" to the new shows when they are aging?

Now You See It and Now You Don't

"Ruggles" did a metamorphosis this week. It took several months for it to turn into a musical comedy after its first production as a straight farce in Wilmington. But in Philadelphia "Ruggles" quite outdid the fabled hair that turns white in a single night. The piece at the Lyric lost all its musical comedy trimmings between Tuesday evening's performance and the Wednesday matinee.

Yet somehow one can't help feeling that this comedy of amusing characters and amusing lines really ought to be a full-fledged, 16-song musical comedy after all. It has so little plot.

Time Out!

The process of "taking time out" of "Stop! Look!! Listen!!!" has been a good deal more remarkable. The movies are not the only things that need expert cutters. "Stop! Look!! Listen!!!" which lasted till 11:45 the opening night, has been under the surgeon's knife ever since. Unfortunately, the producer didn't do what he might have done—cut out the whole third act. He would have bagged the only two poor sets—not by Mr. McQuinn—and J. M. Barrie's silly and slow skit, which has evidently been introduced from "Rosy Rapture," the revue he wrote for Gaby in London.

Instead, Mr. Burnside and Mr. Dillingham have been pursuing more complicated methods, which will probably work out better in the end, even though Philadelphia suffers in between. They have hacked away bits here and there. They have completely removed, for instance, that real discovery, Marion Harris, who made the first night glad with her infectious smile and her "I Love a Piano." That song, one of Berlin's best in the present score, has fallen to Harry Fox, while Joseph Santley has absorbed the "Hula" ditty, which was once Miss Harris'. Fortunately, Gaby has ceased teaching Mr. Pincer about love. Unfortunately, Barrie's skit still threatens to be the death of the piece.

But the most interesting effect of the cutting so far is the annihilation of the mild little plot, so far as Sunshine and Tempest go. They have disappeared from the first act, songs, dialogue and all. Mr. Lalor, however, still goes on talking about his lack of children and preparing the audience for the discovery—which it can no longer make—that Sunshine and Tempest call him "dad."

The Impatient Star

Not every rising star of the theatrical firmament is content to go on securely year after year in some successful part as George Arliss has done in "Distract" and Hodge in "The Man From Home." Otis Skinner deserted "Kismet" after the second season for fear it would become a Rip Van Winkle to him. And now the town is much surprised to learn that next week is Elsie Ferguson's last in "Outcast." Although she has played it only a little over a season, the star feels that she has got as much out of the part in the way of technical development that it can give. Keeping on would only be putting off the chance of new and ambitious parts in the years when her talent is most rapidly developing. So, with the aid of managers who appreciate her point of view and have, to boot, a play for her in which timeliness is an important item, Miss Ferguson goes on to fresh conquests. She is doing the best she can to get the benefits of the repertory system which has made so many fine players on the Continent. Bound on the wheel of the long run, she can never get a half dozen new parts a season, as a player at a German theatre could before the war. But she can do the next best thing, change her play. Unfortunately, that means a financial risk that not every manager or every player will face. The more honor to Miss Ferguson and her backers!

The Authors Rebel

Over in Germany a few seasons ago the omniscient Government put through a uniform contract law of a most enlightened and efficient character for the protection of the actors. American players have been striving for a similar reform here, and with much hope of success. Now comes the Authors' League of America demanding a fair and uniform agreement for the protection of the novice far more than the experienced and successful dramatist. This whole matter of contract is something the lawmakers should regulate as abroad; but if they won't do it the individual initiative of organizations among actors and authors must step in.

Censor-made Sensation

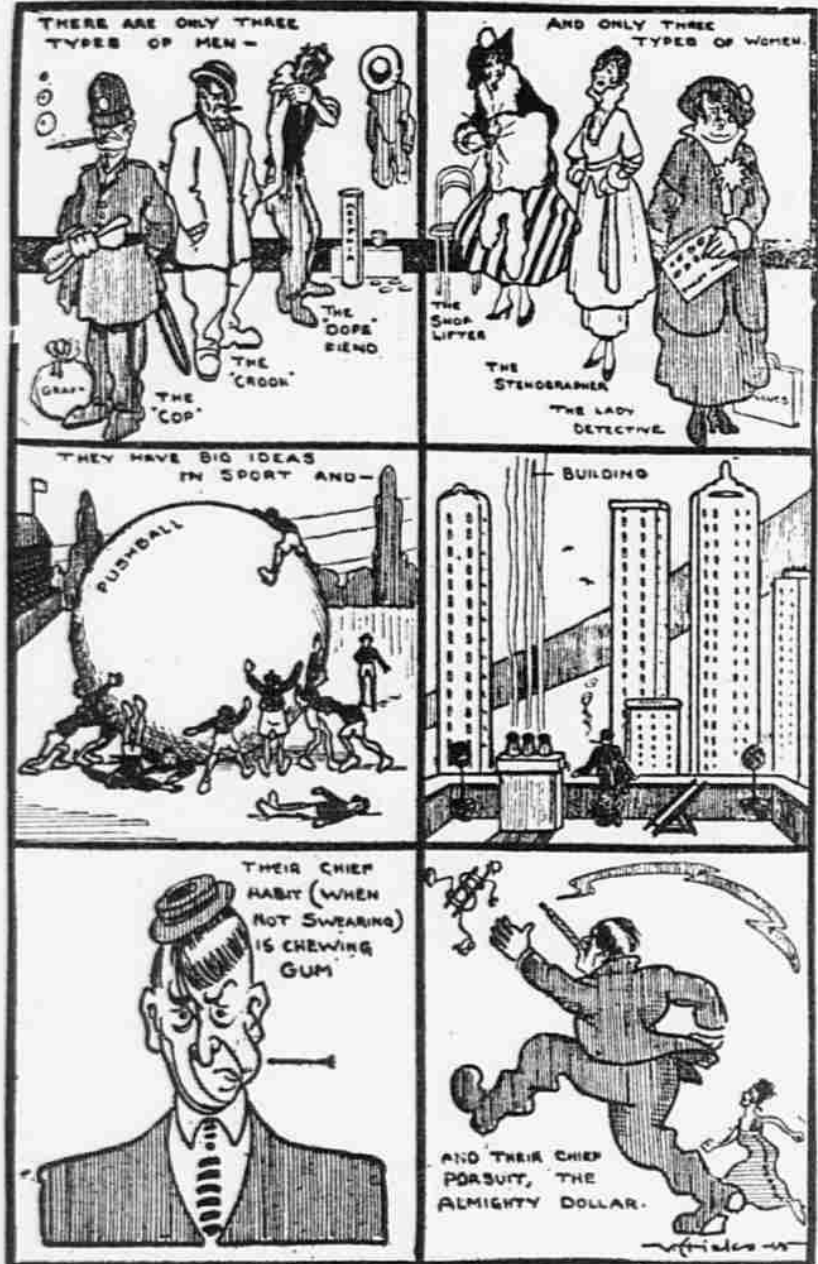
The dilemma of photoplay censorship has the usual number of embarrassing horns. On the one hand it threatens artistic freedom and public expression in a well-meant attempt to protect the public from exploitation by sensation-mongers. On the other hand, it lays the people open to that very same exploitation in an aggravated form.

Without censorship certain unscrupulous producers would doubtless try "to put something over." It is entirely probable that their attempt would fail, that the public would react against it, that the theatre which tried to coin money by the exhibition of such films would find itself in bad odor with the general mass of the paying public. But with censorship the efforts of the sensational producer are greatly aided. All he has to do is inject a little "spice" into an otherwise inoffensive and commonplace story. The censors object to the whole film or to large portions of it. Thereupon the news columns and advertising columns of the papers all over the country are filled with stories of this "sensational" film. Out of a curiosity that could not otherwise be aroused the public in the uncensored States sees the film—and is fooled. The courts of other States overrule or modify the censors' decisions; and the public is fooled again.

A Double Fight

Censorship means a chance for lying, trickery and deception. It clouds the issue and makes the straight fight of public opinion against evil films impossible. The powers in the photoplay would have to fight crooked producers and crooked advertising just as much as the censorship out of which these spring.

AMERICA AS THEATRICAL LONDON SEES IT



The artist of the Daily Sketch deduces this from the American dramas now in London.

CUT-BACKS

Blow Your Horn!

Many music lovers are enthusiastically sure that Irving Berlin is a great lyric writer. But it's a good deal fairer to say that the verses he writes for his songs achieve their energetic purpose just as effectively as his remarkable music. Here is something from "Blow Your Horn," the manager's song in "Stop! Look!! Listen!!!"
Harnum and Bailey were wonderful showmen; In the theatrical world there are no men Who could claim to be their equal—and the equal!
Was they made the "ins," packed them in every season, I know it well, and I'll tell you the reason, They were a pair of handbill throwers—horn blowers.
You must talk about yourself, Or they'll put you on the shelf.

CHORUS

Blow your horn—let 'em know you're comin'; Blow your horn—that'll start 'em hummin'. Just make a whole lot of noise, The only way to collar every dollar is to holler. Mister Harnum said, every other minute There's another one born, You'll strike it just like Harnum; Make 'em like it, gosh darn 'em; Yell out, you'll sell out, If you'll only blow your horn.

Some people argue against advertising; How they can feel as they do is surprising. I'm a walking eight-sheet poster—I'm a lionster, The red, white and blue and its value was doubted, Till George Cohan started singing about it, Now everyone who was against it commended it, You will be a household word, If you just make yourself heard.

LETTERS

Ford Defended by Movie Magnate

To the Photoplay Editor: Henry Ford has been called a Jackass and a clown because he hired a ship and sailed across the sea to stop the most frightful slaughter in the history of the world.

Maybe he can't stop the war. Few expect that he will succeed. Nimble-witted critics are having piles of fun with him because they don't believe he can deliver the goods.

But, to me, the big thing in his action is not the question of whether he will or will not stop the war, but the fact that he is willing to try! It was by trying that he got where he is. And still he keeps on trying!

In the face of overwhelming odds, in spite of a world-wide criticism, he is willing to tackle the greatest job that ever fell to the lot of a human being in the world's history. He brushes aside the thousands of columns of newspaper criticisms, he ignores the public utterances of so-called statesmen, he sets his face toward the most glorious goal that any man

ever hoped to achieve—and goes on his way, trying!

They say he is doing it to advertise his automobile. But still he goes on trying! They say his riches have turned his head. But still he tries! They say he never did anything but promote a good automobile engine and they ask what right he has to undertake the work of diplomats? The present war is the result of a most pitiful failure of diplomacy, and the fact that Henry Ford is willing to try a thing in which the great diplomats of the world have failed only adds to the bigness of his trying!

It looks big to Ford. And maybe looks hopeless to him. But he's got the nerve to try and to spend his own money at it.

Ye gods! what a nation this would be if each industry could be headed by a Ford who was willing to TRY! What chance would any other nation under the sun have in competition with us? What if more of us were willing to try, and less of us were slaves of convention and creatures of habit?

In my business career I've met hundreds of men who could tell me what I COULD NOT DO. But I have met only a few who were anxious to try! I've let the former class out as quickly but as gently as possible. But I've clung onto the other class with all my might. I want the man who CAN or the man who will TRY, but the man who CAN'T or the man who THINKS "IT IS USELESS TO TRY" can't have any of my time.

If any young man happens to read this, I wish he'd let this one piece of advice soak into his brain of brains: There's a word in the dictionary called "can't." Leave it there! Never use it!

Instead say, "I'll try" or, better still, "I'll hennyford!"

CARL LAEMMLE,

President of Universal Film Corporation, New York City, December 8.

Questions and Answers

Florence—Victor Moore was in both "Chimmie Fadden" and "Chimmie Fadden Out West." His best known work on the stage was "Forty-five Minutes From Broadway," by George M. Cohan.

P. N. E.—"The Birth of a Nation" has had the longest run of any theatrical offering this year in Philadelphia.

Frank—As far as we know, Francis X. Bushman has not jumped his contract with the Metro.

D. V. K.—The Patrons, who attended the Exhibitors' Ball en masse Wednesday evening, are an ancient literary society of Philadelphia. It is said that they have been the first to figure in the local activities of the new Hearst-Vitagraph News Pictorial, having offered to let the films record their coming annual banquet, at which Mrs. Charles D. Harris will be the guest of honor.