

Evening Ledger

AMUSEMENT SECTION

Address all communications to Dramatic Editor Evening Ledger, Independence Square, Philadelphia.

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PHILADELPHIA, SATURDAY, MARCH 18, 1916

Unionizing The Actors

THE actors are at last aroused. They have laid aside empty "professional" pretensions. They are preparing to stand beside the musicians in the ranks of organized labor.

Until a few years ago the players had no adequate organization for the protection of their interests. Men and artists of the calibre of Francis Wilson and Wilton Lackaye organized the Actors' Equity Association and sought to secure a juster system of contract by consultation and co-operation with the theatrical managers and their associations.

But the movement cannot stop there, if it is to succeed. It must add to its ranks the men and women of the movies. While they remain unorganized, the managers will have a huge mass of "unorganized labor" to draw upon, as in any fight.

What the Fight Is For

So much for the line-up. The object in view is just as interesting. This isn't a direct fight for higher wages. It is a battle for what the players consider an equitable and standard contract.

In particular, the actors want to change, or at least regulate more equitably, the matter of rehearsals. At present the players are not paid for the weeks of labor—and with musical comedies it may run into months—which precede production. Weeks of effort may be spent on a failure which brings them only two weeks' pay.

Regulation or War, the Only Alternatives

Obviously, such organization in the theatre, parallel to organization in industry, is the only alternative to a lack of proper governmental regulation. In Germany, the regulatory system of the theatres removes many of the difficulties over work without pay.

Shall the Drama League Bulletin the Movies?

This is the question to be asked and answered at the sixth annual convention of the Drama League of America in St. Louis next month. The player-organizer who knows no more about the movies than Arthur Brisbane will say no.

The nearer the Drama League can get to the entertainment of the people, without debasing its standards of what is good entertainment, the better for the League.

What Are the Six Best Photoplays?

Arthur Brisbane, in a speech that showed about as much ignorance of the photoplay as any one man could be capable of, asked recently, "What are the six greatest moving pictures?"

Politics and the Censor

There was one pregnant sentence in Arthur Brisbane's speech: "One of the big factors in politics, if it were used, and I believe it is going to be, would be the moving picture."

Censors Versus Vampires

The courts made quick work of the State Board of Censors yesterday. They wisely recognized that such pictures as the Fox "vampire" film, "The Serpent," can be made harmful only by being slashed up and advertised.

The Movie Invaders

The movie actors are invading the stage! Negotiations are under way between William A. Brady and Roscoe Arbuckle for a revival of "Baby Mine," with "Fatty" playing Walter Jones' old part.

LAUGHTER AND TEARS



LETTERS

The Universal View

To the Photoplay Editor: Certain advocates of proposed laws for the censoring of moving pictures are misrepresenting this company's attitude and my personal attitude on the question of suggestive pictures.

They have quoted the following sentence from an article of which I was the author: "If the demand for them (meaning suggestive pictures) is so overwhelmingly great, we will bow to the superior wisdom of the majority."

Taken by itself this sentence seems to damn me utterly. But it should not be separated from the rest of my article, for in it I stated unequivocally that under no consideration would the Universal Company make smutty pictures.

The fact that this company has produced from 20 to 30 new photoplays every week and has not yet indulged in the practice of making smutty ones ought to be proof enough of our determination to keep the screen clean.

But the censorship advocates ignore all this. They gleefully extract one little sentence from a whole article and circulate it far and wide for the purpose of having new laws enacted to muzzle the screen.

Moving picture producers are not bad men, trying to ruin the morals of the people. On the contrary they are just human men with the same sort of red blood in their veins as all other men have.

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To the Photoplay Editor: They know that as long as the pictures please the people, they will thrive, but they also know that as soon as they make pictures which displease or harm the people the whole structure of the picture business will totter and fall with a smash.

We feel that we have as much right to a free screen as you have to a free press—and for precisely the same reasons. Will you help us get it? Sincerely yours, CARL LAEMMLE, New York, March 14.

Censor the Censor!

To the Photoplay Editor: Reading your action yesterday I noticed that you published a letter from one, a fan like myself, I surmise, telling the truth about the censor. Now, while every word this deliverer said was true, still he spoke in generalities.

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their films exposing this "white man's burden." But were the censors so careless as to pass this menace to their jobs and the tender morals of the dear public? Not they. Rising in righteous indignation (and aided in fear and trembling) for the dear public, they cut out the protests from Pennsylvania. Here is the point. The ill-gotten law allows the censors to cut anything indecent, immoral or liable to incite to crime. No grounds for their action there, you will say. But the protests were liable to incite to crime, but an investigation. Hence out they go. But is not this unconstitutional, that they can exercise such authority over printed matter? Suppose the editorials were in your column. No censor can touch you. But throw them on the screen. What is the difference? The crying need just now is the removal of the present board, a board of men only and passed by the Civil Service. In time, with the help of public opinion and the press, we shall be rid of the whole pack. Other States have done it. But the exchanges must fight and secure publicity for the censors, and with publicity will come a wave of disgust. The Pittsburgh Screen Club is already in line, the press must follow. I will thank you for any space you may accord this, for it is space we shall need to get influential Breitliners away from his nobly earned salary. Yours truly, JOHN O'DONNELL, 8115 St. Louis street, Philadelphia, March 13.

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