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

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PHILADELPHIA, SATURDAY, MAY 6, 1916

The Censorship Quarrel Again

THE enterprise of J. Howard Reber, the courtesy of Manager Strakosch and the enthusiasm of Messrs. Brent, Irwin and Woodruff and the Revs. Wheeler and Lallou produced a variegated afternoon of pro- and anti-censorship discussion for the members of the Drama League who assembled in the Walnut Street Theatre Wednesday. But did it all produce enlightenment? At the most it established only two facts—the low and violent nature of most of the film stories today and the general incapacity of the State Board of Censors to deal with them.

The Question of Violence

Yes, the movies are violent, very violent. So is literature. So is the drama. So is the press. Possibly a larger proportion of crime and "sex" is exhibited on the screen than has been or is being utilized in various forms of cheap fiction, cheap plays and cheap newspapers. But it is an open question and it doesn't justify the pruning knife,

It may also be true that the films make a much sharper and more vivid appeal than any other form of expression; but that sharpness and that vividless battle as hard for the gentle, heroic and unquestionable elements in the films. And it is almost invariably these brighter aspects on which the movies close and upon which their whole final emphasis is flung.

For the "Crown of Asses' Ears"

As for the faults of Pennsylvania's own Board of Censors and State boards in general, the meeting backed up the whole case against a system of 48 separate political censorships. It showed the impossibility of finding in all the many States any such body of intelligent, skilled and disinterested workers as now constitute the National Board of Review and as might be drafted on a Federal Board. It showed that these State boards are not representative of the art they control or sympathetic with its aims as a popular entertainment. It showed that from their very nature as units antagonistic to each other as well as to the moving picture they cannot be constructive. It supplied the material for the conclusion-which it unfortunately failed to make-that the boards' mad desire to prove their usefulness by cutting right and left, instead of making the few eliminations that might be desirable in the genuine interests of morality, leads into inconsistencies that hold them up to public ridicule and stultify their work.

It might have demonstrated further that many of the silly alterations made in movie captions lead to a positively prurient result. The substitution, for instance, of the relation o. secret marriage for a less legitimate one, without changing the actions of the characters, leaves the audiences sure that something was wrong and wracking their brains to imagine a thing bad enough to suit the censor.

The Children the Crux of It One other thing the discussion hinted at. It is the child angle. Obviously the average film for a grown-up, just as the average book for a grown-up, is bot suitable for a child. The child should not be admitted to

moving picture houses except when his parent takes him there. He should have his own movies, as he has his own books. On these lines construction will pay better than censorship.

Mad Mischief But there were graver matters and more trenchant arguments that the meeting never touched. It hardly scratched the real philosophic and social evil of "pre-publicity" censorship. Not only is it undemocratic; not only is it at variance with our well-proved policy in the regulation of books, pictures and plays; not only does it threaten a political control of one form-and a powerful form-of human speech. It does something far worse. On the purely moral side it aims to fossilize ethical judgment. It makes the laws of the past the only laws. It makes no allowance for a growth in man's ideas upon right and wrong. Obviously a question of the morality of a film should be judged by the public's reaction to its exhibition, not by somebody

else's guess based on the evidence of a year, a decade, a month or a day ago. According to the "pros" and the "antis" alike, the film's influence on morality is immensely powerful. If that is true, then to bind it with bonds that have never shackled the book is desperately mischievous folly.

Man Is a Decent Animal

Of course, the whole thing comes down to a fundamental belief or a fundamental disbelief in the decency of mankind. Those who want censors feel and say that mankind flocks to the indecent and is corrupted. Ctherr of us feel and say that man may flock when some one-such as a censor-calls his attention to it; but that he is then either grievously disappointed or plainly disgusted. The censorious believe that mankind has reached its present level of morality by some power not within it and not powerful enough to eternally guard it. The rat know that mankind's progress is a K. M. sufficient diploma of decency in this 20th century.

THE MASSES DETERMINE OUR DRAMATIC GROWTH

Continued from Page One

ing money to become patrons of the drama. Slow at first, then more rapidly, and finally in a flood, the newly sprung play-goers announced their advent. Theatres upon theatres were built not in New York only, but all over the country-and still they seemed few.

The celebrated theatrical "trust," which had hitherto pretty much controlled taxi, and things, could no longer keep its dams in order. And still the tide of the new audience continued to rise. Plays had to be found to feed them—and players were found; but from the quality of the dramatic fare they obviously reliabed and he. To demanded we gauged the quality of the dra-matic fare they obviously relished and demanded we gauged the quality of the new patrons. And we found, to car regret and yours, that it was not the intellectual public that had quintuplet—; was the less intelligent. They were inno-cent of dramatic standards and of cul-ture. To them a niav was just a "show," matic fare they obviously relished and demanded we gauged the quality of the new patrons. And we found, to car regret and yours, that it was not the intellectual public that had quintuplet—: was the less intelligent. They were innecent of dramatic standards and of culture. To them a play was just a "show." They cared nothing for such things as character delineation or psychological analysis, or subtleties of dialogue—in short, for the things that make drama fiterature. They wanted a good "show"—and their definition meant merely a sim-

ple, rapid, exciting story, told in terms of action.

of action.

Now, alas! if you want an intellectually aristocratic drama you must have an intellectually aristocratic audience. The thing is as sure as suprise. Russia has the most advanced stage today; and in proportion to its population Russia has the fewest theatres and audiences almost exclusively drawn from the upper classes. Do you suppose that the man who drives you in a drosky to the Art Theatre in Moscow ever dreams of going inside? He'd as soon expect an invitation to the Czar's garden party. Yet not a month ago I drove to a New York theatre in a taxi, and as I paid my fare the driver asked: "Boss, what time does this show begin?"

"Ha!" past eight." "Just got time to make he garage and get the wife," said he. "I'm going, too." Well, there you are! "the taxidriver and Mrs. taxidriver

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KEITH'S-Adelaide and Hughes, Anna

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NEW PLAYS

GARRICK-"Through the Ages," with Madame Yorska and Robert T. Haines. A drama by Dr. Jerzy Zulawski, depicting the struggle of the body against the soul. The six acts show six cras in the world's history. Staged by Richard

BROAD-"The Devil's Invention," with William B. Mack, Gustav von Seyffertitz and Elleen Van Biene. A drama by Hiram K. Moderwell and Carl Freybe, telling of a conflict between two doctors, one the old school physician, the other a young man just rising to prominence. The triangle situation with a medical twist.

CONTINUING PLAYS ADELPHI—"A Pair of Silk Stockings," with Sam Sothern and Eva L. nard-Boyne. An English farce-comedy all of

good lines and lots of English slang.

LYRIC—"Alone at Last," with Roy At-well, Harry Conor, Letty Yorke and John Charles Thomas. An operetta with the book adapted by Smith and Herbert; music by Franz Lehar. An ambitious Vien-nese importation of the "Merry Widow"

WALNUT - "Twin Beds," return engagement of the popular farce by Salis-bury Field and Margaret Mayo. First popular price engagement.

PHOTOPLAYS

STANLEY—All week, "Maria Rosa," with Geraldine Farrar. A film version of the play by Guldo Marbury, with Farrar as a Spanish peasant. ARCADIA-Monday, Tuesday and Wed-

nesday, "The No-Good Guy," with Will-ian Collier. Thursday, Friday and Satur-day, "Sold for Marriage," with Lillian

PALACE-Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, "Her Maternal Right," with Kitty Gordon. Thursday, Friday and Saturday, "Molly Make-Believe," with Marguerite Clark

VICTORIA-Monday and Tuesday, "At Midnight," with Norma Talmadge. Wednesday and Thursday, "The Good-Bad Man," with Douglas Fairbanks, Friday Man," with Douglas Fairbanks. Friday and Saturday, "Snowbird," with Mabel

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Hawkins, Georgia Earle and Company, Trout, Mermald and Bubbles, the Lander Brothers, Raymond Wilbert,

CROSS KEYS-First half of the week-Charles Ahearn, in "Cycleland"; Browning and Morris, "The Evil Hour"; Delmore and Moore, Edith Ward, the Sidonias. Second half of the week-Wilmer Walter in "The Late Van Camp"; the five

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BURLESQUE DUMONT'S-Dumont's Minstrels, I satire and on matters of current interest.

COMING LYRIC-"Town Topics," with Bert Les-lie and Sophie Tucker.

KEITH'S, May 15—Eyelyn Nesbit and Jack Clifford, "Pettleoats"; Albert Whelan, Howard, Kibel and Herbert, Harry and Emma Sharrock, Al Herman, the International Girl, Rhea Hees and Hettle Hyde, Musical Johnsons, Sellg Tribune Pictorial News.

SHALL THE BANDBOX VARY ITS OFFERINGS?

Cantinued from Page One

which has remained a classic through all the years, as done at the Bandbox is so cut and mutilated to reduce the playing cut and mutilated to reduce the playing time, and, furthermore, the staging is so mannered and freakish, that the real values of the piece are quite lost, and it isn't worth while to spend any time discussing it. Not only is this production a traversty on the original, but it isn't even amusing on its own account. It was far better acted and staged at the Drama League Convention in Philadelphia two years ago.

Convention in Philadelphia two years ago.

However, the three original pieces are worth while and well done; on the whole, we think, better acted than any yet seen at the Bandbox. In certain instances others have been well acted, but on no bill have three plays, one after the other, all been presented with so little hint of the amateur, so professional an ease and as

It is worth noting, too, that the Wash-ington Square Players are drawing re-cruits from other parts of the country. In the first play the negro mother is played by Miss Mary Morris, of Boston, while the small girl friend of the suffering child in "The Age of Reason" is played by Miss Elinor M. Cox, of Indianapolis, who was doubtless discovered there by Samue Ellot, Jr., when he was director of the Indianapolis Little Theatre. Both players justify their inclusion in the ranks of the Bandbox Company.

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