

FILM CENSORSHIP.

DAME ARTHUR STIGANT.

OPERA IN ENGLISH.

ELIMINATING THE SUGGESTIVE.

Since Mr. Jolliffe commenced work as Government Film Censor in September, 1916, he has had under review 11,248,730 feet of film. For the year ending March 31st, 1919, he censored 3,479,860 feet. The year's pictures would be sufficient to reach, in airline distance, from Dunedin to Auckland, and the total output could be stretched from Wellington to Adelaide.

In the year ended 31st March, 1918, 5,761,570 feet of film were censored in New Zealand, but that included many of the pictures which were on circuit when the censorship was introduced, and which were not new importations. Last year's total was also dragged down to a certain extent by the epidemic. In November, 1918, only 79,740 feet were censored, and in December only 183,880 feet. For the first two months of the current year the totals were, as compared with last year: April, 274,260 feet (350,200); May, 368,340 (490,900). Talking to a "Post" representative, Mr. Jolliffe said that the greatest number of the films were still from the American producers. Recently he had had two British productions and one French picture, the first released since the cessation of hostilities enabled the picture industry to start again. Of one of the British productions he remarked that if the British producers kept anywhere up to that standard they would wipe the American market out. From now on more British and French productions may be expected.

The censor was asked if he noticed much change in the type of picture coming to him—whether the effect of the censorship was being studied by the trade. He replied that the picture which was likely to be rejected as a whole because its nature was objectionable was not now being sent to New Zealand. The suppliers had studied New Zealand's requirements to this extent. But the pictures which were not of an objectionable character required as much censorship in details now as formerly. That is to say, as many cuts required to be made now as at the beginning. In April he turned down one picture completely and made twelve cuts from others; in May, no picture was rejected wholly, but 22 cuts were made. Mr. Jolliffe has two deed boxes filled with cuts and another almost full. Any immoral person who may plan to burgle these boxes, and start an illicit picture show calculated to make the flesh creep, may be warned that it is not worth while. The cuts by themselves are most innocent little things—very innocent—babies, for instance. It is only the context that brings them under the guillotine. Sub-titles are often suggestive, and out they come. Besides the immoral there is the horrible, which has to come out—in fact, anything which makes the picture unwholesome or vicious to a broad-minded man. Comedies often come under the ban for overstepping the bounds in details.

Topical, industrial, and scenic films are subjected to the same scrutiny as the drama, not that they often require it, but nothing is left to chance. One occasion when a cut was made from a topical film was when pictures of the trans-Atlantic submarine Deutschland were received. The picture was allowed to pass; but the sub-titles had evidently been edited by a pro-German, for they glorified the exploits of the Germans. Sometimes there are other little things, not so objectionable, but which should be modified on broad patriotic grounds. For instance, there has been extravagant praise by sub-titles of America at the expense of the Allies. For American consumption it may be quite good; but here it would make the picture unpopular, and even offensive. At one time there was a fear of German propaganda conducted through the moving pictures; but Mr. Jolliffe said he came across no instance of anything approaching it save in the Deutschland case referred to.

In war pictures the military and naval authorities abroad exercised their own censorship for scenes likely to divulge information of value to the enemy, and as the genuine war pictures were mostly branded "official" that censorship proved sufficient. In only one case that Mr. Jolliffe recollected was the military censorship exercised in New Zealand—that was in a series of pictures of Timaru, produced for the borough council. There was a hospital ship lying at Timaru wharf, and, though the film censor thought this quite harmless for exhibition in New Zealand, the military authorities stopped it.

"Goody Two Shoes" will be chiefly remembered as a triumph for Mr. Arthur Stigant, says the "Sunday Times" (Sydney). It hardly seemed possible that Mr. Stigant could give us anything new in pantomime, and yet here he is as fresh as ever, and using his experience just to round off the performance. Pantomimes, like circuses, usually claim a little license in the way of old and favourite jokes, but Mr. Stigant scorned such preferential treatment. His witticisms brought that spontaneous laugh that breaks forth when even the most blasé hear a good thing for the first time. Already Arthur Stigant has achieved an Australian record with his successive Dames under the Williamson banner. But this, after all, is only a small slice out of his pantomime career, which extends over the past 29 years. Mrs. Tutt, of "Goody Two Shoes," has, on occasion, played in two pantomimes in the one year. The popular comedian has not always been the dame, and is of the belief that his greatest success was his Will Atkins in "Robinson Crusoe." The following table gives an idea of Mr. Stigant's remarkable record. It will be noticed that he has played in five different versions of "The Babes in the Wood." Mr. Stigant has appeared in "Bo-Peep," as dame, one version; "Robinson Crusoe," Will Atkins (three times) and Dame, four versions; "Dick Whittington," Idle Jack and Dame, two versions; "Blue Beard," title role, one version; "Babes in the Wood," Boy Babe, Baron, and Dame (three times), five versions; "Aladdin," Widow Twankey (twice), Chinese part and Vizier, four versions; "The House That Jack Built," Dame, two versions; "Cinderella," Baron (twice), Sister, and Baroness, four versions; "Goody Two Shoes," Dame, one version; "Mother Goose," title role, one version; "Jack and the Beanstalk," Dame, one version; "Red Riding Hood," Johnny Stout, Dame, and Mr. Dignun, three versions; "Sinbad the Sailor," Sammy, one version; "Boy Blue," Dame, one version; "Sleeping Beauty," The King, one version.



MR. HARRY J. COHEN (son of Mr. A. E. Cohen, Dunedin), who is at present manager at the Garrick Theatre, Chicago, for Walter Hast's productions.

Harry Lauder, who is now enchanting great audiences at the Melbourne King's Theatre under the J. and N. Tait engagement, might have succeeded on the legitimate stage as a Scotch character actor if he had not thoroughly proved his merit as a "comic." Harry Lauder's talent as an actor, of which the audience gets gleams in his present programme at the King's Theatre, would be strong enough to carry him to a very high position on the British stage. It is not generally known that he once appeared in London in Graham Moffat's "Scrape o' the Pen," which will be recalled by many who saw the piece out here with the Graham Moffats. In the play there is a character, Geordie Pow, a humble farm hand, who creates great diversion by his marriage with Beenie Scott. Lauder appeared in this part in the English capital, and contemporary reports of the event mention that he was the hit of the show.

It is strange but true that no revue has yet got a scene called: "Jazz you like it."—London "Opinion."

(By Dame Nellie Melba, in the "Daily Mail.")

At last we have opera in English, installed at one of our historic theatres, and not a day too soon. It has always struck me as absurd that I should have to sing in every language but my own. I have never even learned an opera in English, simply because there was nowhere for me to sing it. Sir Thomas Beecham has done wonderful things, and I can hardly express the pleasure I felt on hearing that Drury Lane is packed every night for opera in our own language.

But it must not stop there. We must have a National Opera. We must have operas by English composers with English libretti, and with English singers to sing them, not to speak of English conductors, like Sir Thomas Beecham and his assistants, to direct them. We must take our right place among the musical nations of Europe.

There are plenty of talented English composers. One of my greatest delights on returning to England is the prospect of getting into touch with them.

I have heard a beautiful piece entitled "Night Fancies," by Benjamin Dale, one of the Ruhleben captives. He is very highly gifted, and I am looking forward to knowing more of his music.

Then there is Eric Coates, whose song "Who is Sylvia?" is one of my favourites. And I have heard so much of the songs of Arnold Bax that I cannot rest till I know more about them. His accompaniments are difficult, but he writes as he feels, and that should be no drawback, considering how difficult are some of the foreign songs which are constantly heard in our concert rooms.

There are many other important song-writers, some of whom, like Mr. Landon Ronald, are old acquaintances, while even the names of others are new to me. I have returned burning with curiosity to see what all these composers have been doing.

There never was such activity as reigns in English music to-day, and we must learn to profit by it. In the first place, we must realise its artistic value, for if we do not have a little faith ourselves we cannot expect to convert others.

Let us, therefore, work together for the establishment of National Opera, for the cultivation of the best English music, and above all for English song. We are a singing nation, and we have a singing language. Instead of a modest English group tacked on to the end of a recital of foreign songs, let us have English recitals with reasonable hospitality to the best songs of other countries. It is time that our appreciation, like charity, began at home.

Miss Muriel Starr is playing in "The Silent Witness" at the Theatre Royal, Melbourne, at present. In the cast are Frank Harvey, Lou's Kimball, Marion Marcus Clarke, Frank Hatherley, J. B. Atholwood, Bertha Ballenger, Norma Mitchell, Sidney Stirling, Ethel Harrison, Arthur Styan, Norman Lee, Edwin Lester, Fred Coape, James Hughes, William Buckley, Harold Moran. The play is by Otto Harbach, one of the writers of "Katinka." The silent witness is a blood-stain which plays an important part in clearing up a murder mystery.

Mr. Len Barnes, the Wellington baritone, intends to leave New Zealand shortly to try his fortune in America. Probably he will make his final appearance in "Il Trovatore" with the Choral Union at the end of the month, when he will take the role of the Count de Luna.

The theatrical world of Europe and America received a shock on the publication of the fact that the late Mr. Charles Frohman, the international impresario, had left an estate less than £100 net in value. Mr. Frohman conducted his business on such enormous lines on both sides of the Atlantic that no surprise would have been expressed had it been announced that he had left a million sterling. The London "World" seems to have put its finger on the spot when it said anent Mr. Frohman: "The real explanation of the matter seems to be that Charles Frohman was not in the true sense of the word a commercial man. Though he neither looked like it nor talked like it he was at heart an artist, and his artistic soul rebelled against the calculating spirit

which enables men to amass money and keep it. Frohman never shackled brains. He never made long contracts with promising actors or actresses at a modest figure, and then turned their increasing popularity to his own profit. He always bought in the open market. His starring of different artists was to a very great extent unselfish." Yet such was the name and fame of Frohman that many an actor and actress would have accepted lower salaries than they could command to be under his banner.

Miss Muriel Window, the "Little Peacock of Vaudeville," who is making heaps of friends and admirers in Melbourne, where she is appearing with the J. and N. Tait Company in support of Sir Harry Lauder, is said to be a most original stage frocker. Miss Window does not wait upon the fashion—she is always designing and conceiving new combinations of colour and new effects in "cut," so that the women are kept jumping with interest as the artist comes on in dress after dress, the likes of which have never been seen before. Yet each of her dresses has character, and their character is always suited to the particular song or bit of mimicry she is engaged in.

Mr. Allan Wilkie, supported by Miss Frediswyde Hunter-Watts, has just commenced a repertoire season of modern and classical drama at the Theatre Royal, Sydney. The opening attraction was "The Silver King." This was to be followed by "Romance," "The Squaw Man," and "The Sign of the Cross."

Caruso has just paid over £30,000 income tax. To the Internal Revenue Collector he wrote: "I am very proud to send you my cheque for income tax. I am glad to do my part in contributing toward paying the expense of the war. America has done much for me, and I am happy to reciprocate."

It looks as if we are not to see Miss Emelie Polini after all, as the brilliant young Tait actress, who made such an outstanding success in Australia in "De Luxe Annie," is announced to leave for London early next month. But there is always hope of plans being altered.

One morning recently, the story goes, there was quite a run on lemons at Covent Garden Market, London. During the morning three men enquired the price of a small crate on the premises of a wholesale dealer. One of the men tendered a ten-shilling note, and was about to hand it to the dealer, when it vanished. He picked up a lemon from the crate and cut it open. Inside was an egg, and within the egg a walnut. He cracked the walnut and showed the amazed dealer a ten-shilling note. "Number correct; you have won your bet," said one of his companions, and they left. It appears that one of the three men had made a bet of £20 with Mr. Austin Temple, the conjuror, who is appearing at Maskelyne's Theatre, that he could not do this same lemon trick that he had done at the theatre at Covent Garden in his (the wagerer's) presence. The number of the note was taken beforehand and corresponded to that found in the walnut.

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