

It was a squat, clumsy, glass bottle. Robert allowed no sentiment to delay the climax. Walking to a distance of safety, he hurled the bottle on a flint and broke its neck.

'No!' she had cried, protesting against this act iconoclastic. It seemed she would have remained content with the bottle still buried and guarding its hoard; but he had not been a gunner for nothing.

He came to her eagerly with the splintered torso; his hands trembled with exactly the same tense excitement as when he had brought her the robin's nest he had found among the laurels — which still were there!

He rattled the bottle, and released a farthing dated 1872. They had both forgotten that! There followed the solitary joint of a doll's plaster leg; which she did remember. A blob of crumpled paper rammed in proved a mere fragment of newspaper — signifying nothing; and then — then — something else, forgotten by neither. An elaborately folded half sheet of colored note paper, in the fashion of the period.

He opened this with all the delight of attaining a new discovery. She tended to draw backward — the sign and measure of her equal interest.

'We, R. P. and M. D., swear that we will marry each other some day. This is a sworn secret.'

It was signed with a sprawling 'Robert Pardon' and 'Margaret Evelyn Deane.'

'To think I could write as atrociously as that!' said he.

'To think I could set my signature to such nonsense!' she declared; but her face was rosy, and looked wonderfully youthful under the silvery hair.

'Oh, come now, Meg!' said he. 'Why not?'

'Why not?' she echoed, and looked at him aghast.

'I've never forgotten, anyhow,' he declared.

'Oh, fibber!' she retorted.

'Never!' he persisted, with the rapid energy his characteristic. 'And egad, I keep you to your word!'

'But Robert, I'm —'

'For goodness' sake, Meg, don't tell me again that you're a grandmother! It does n't interest me, my dear. I don't care a — a buried farthing what you are — I've never loved anyone else.'

'And I — oh, Robert, there was always a corner of my heart, but — at our age —'

'Fiddlesticks! Our age! We're hardly grown up. Think of the years we did n't live. We — we must n't disappoint the old garden.'

And that evening the spirit haunting the leafy place, in its wonderful peace, knew that never had its grass, flowers, leaves, and branches been illumined with a happier light. The robin, perched upon a forgotten spade, beside an upturned heap, twittered for joy. . . . The garden was, anyhow, undeniably happy.

[*The Anglo-French Review*]

HUMORS OF THE DRAMATIC CENSORSHIP

BY FRANCIS GRIBBLE

THE case of a man who declared that he could live neither with his wife nor without her probably represents, with rough accuracy, the normal attitude of most people in most countries toward the censorship of plays. On the one hand, it is easily made to seem monstrous that a mere functionary — a bureaucrat, obedient to the behests of a political superior — should have authority to prohibit the production of a work of art, or to require its modification. On the other hand, the theatre

lends itself so readily to the demonstrations of the disaffected — as well as to the indecorum of the depraved — that few governments feel strong enough to deny themselves the right of controlling it.

A few rulers have done so, even when they have themselves been sufferers from the comedian's satire. Louis XII is, perhaps, the most famous of them. His counselors urged him to chastise the insolence of some playwright who had offended; but he replied that he allowed freedom on the stage, and was only too pleased that abuses committed at his court, or anywhere in his kingdom, should, in that way, be brought to his notice. His attitude, however, was quite exceptional. As a rule, it has taken a revolution to overthrow the censor; but it has not always needed a counter-revolution to restore his office. The revolutionists themselves have often felt constrained to revive it as a barrier against reactionary suggestions.

That, for instance, was the course of events in France in 1791 and the immediately succeeding years. Mirabeau then swept the censorship away with a magnificent gesture and a splendid peroration to the effect that 'it would be easy enough to fetter every kind of liberty by exaggerating every kind of danger, for there is no action that may not result in license.' But Mirabeau was hardly in his grave before his Republican successors were fettering liberty in the very way which he condemned, and often on absurdly frivolous grounds. 'Citizens,' wrote the authorities to a company of actors in the second year of the Republic, 'we have duly received the piece, *Entrevue des patriotes*, but we cannot authorize its representation, seeing that it is full of dukes, duchesses, and abbés, and that National Guards are represented as drunkards.'

An arbitrary proceeding truly; but mild and reasonable compared with the action taken, a little later, when François de Neufchâteau produced a poetical drama in five acts, based upon Richardson's *Pamela*. All went well, on that occasion, until Pamela turned out to be the daughter of an Earl by a secret marriage. That could not be tolerated in an age which insisted that all men were born equal; and the author was promptly arrested and charged with 'incivism.' Not only was his play suppressed, but he himself was sent to prison, and did not get out again until after Thermidor.

These stories show that, where dramatic censorship is concerned, there is little to choose between the attitude of autocrats and democrats; and if anyone imagines that the autocrats, at any rate, do not give such ridiculous reasons as the democrats for the exercise of their power, he may be invited to study the annals of the Burghtheatre, at Vienna.

He will find in them an account of an application for permission to produce Schiller's *Maid of Orleans*; and he will also find an illuminating list of the conditions on which the permission was accorded. These were:

1. Agnes Sorel must be represented as the wife, and not as the mistress, of Charles VII.

2. In order to avoid the consequent suggestion of bigamy, the King's actual wife must be represented as his sister.

3. The Bastard of Orleans must be transformed into a vague 'royal cousin.'

4. The title must be altered to *Joan of Arc*, because the word 'Jungfrau' savored of frivolity.

5. The author's name must be omitted from the bill because he was a person notorious for his revolutionary tendencies.

That is, indeed, a good example of

German thoroughness; and this is, perhaps, the place in which to remark that German organization has always played its characteristic part in this great business of theatrical censorship. The author of the remarkable prescriptions just quoted drew up a manual of censorship for the guidance of the successors to his office. One of his rules was that 'a pair of lovers must never make their exit from the stage together, unless accompanied by some person of mature years.' Another forbade the dramatic presentation of *mésalliances*, and added a gloss suggested by a play in which a Count espoused a gardener's daughter:

'Such catastrophes,' runs the note, 'unfortunately occur in real life; but that is no reason why they should be represented on the stage.'

Another feature of German censorship used to be that the censor's sanction, when once obtained, was final, and could not be withdrawn; and the maintenance of that rule had a very interesting consequence in the years of Franco-German friction preceding the Great War.

A certain M. Dinter then submitted to the censor a play called *The Smugglers*, written in the Alsatian dialect. The censor knew the dialect; but it bored him to read it. His examination of the piece was, therefore, cursory. He satisfied himself that it was neither morally objectionable nor politically seditious, and he passed it without minute scrutiny. Unobserved by him, however, there lurked in it three treasonable words: *Vive la France!* That single exclamation made the fortune of the drama. It was cheered to the echo; and horrified officialdom called upon the author to excise the offensive sentiment. His rejoinder was to produce his permit, flourish it in the faces of the police, and challenge them to do their worst. They referred to the

law, and found that they could do nothing at all; and the Alsatian stage continued to ring with the cry: *Vive la France!*

That, perhaps, is the best of the stories of the evasion of the censorship, but there are many others. Of one of them M. Henry Bataille is the hero. One of his pieces was returned to him with an urgent demand for certain excisions. He made the excisions, but then reinserted the excised passages on the next page of his manuscript, and returned it, to be censored a second time. The censor satisfied himself that the phrases to which he had drawn attention had been struck out, but did not look to see whether the rest of the manuscript had been altered. It duly appeared, therefore — objectionable passages and all — and nobody was one penny the worse. Thus did Anastasia nod like Homer; and the story may remind one of another, of which the English stage was the scene.

The play concerned was an English adaptation, produced by Miss Janet Achurch, of Octave Feuillet's *Julie*. Its tone, like the tone of all M. Feuillet's work, was moral; but it contained incidents to which the censor took exception. Miss Achurch and her husband, Mr. Charles Charrington, decided to argue the point with him; and after much discussion, a compromise was arrived at. The story was told, years afterward, by Mr. Charrington himself, in a letter to the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

'Between the first and second acts of the play,' wrote Mr. Charrington, 'the heroine "falls," as the censor would put it, and the whole of the last two acts depends on the remorse she feels for an act of unfaithfulness which, at the end of the play, she confesses — the excitement bringing on a heart attack that kills her. Husband and lover meet over her dead body.'

'The compromise took this shape: Julie was to say somewhere — never mind where — "Thank God, I have only sinned in intention." As it made complete nonsense of the whole play, perhaps Miss Achurch may be excused for not saying it very loud. But she *did* whisper it, and no doubt it is still in the copy which reposes upon the shelves of the Censor's Office.'

One could have no better example of hypocrisy as 'the homage which vice pays to virtue.' Appearances were similarly saved, on one occasion, by an unofficial censor — Dr. Butler, the head master of Harrow School. Some amateur performances were being arranged at the school; and, as a head master, he naturally stipulated that all the pieces which it was proposed to produce should be submitted to his judgment. 'One of them,' writes G. W. E. Russell, to whom we owe the anecdote, 'was *The Palace of Truth*, and at a critical point in the story, the hero said to the heroine, "Meet me outside the garden gate at nine o'clock to-night." Dr. Butler ran his pen through the words and substituted "at three o'clock this afternoon." Two or three years ago,' the narrator adds, 'Sir William Gilbert was a guest at Harrow speeches. In replying for the visitors he said that it was with peculiar interest that he found himself at Harrow, for it was the only place where any line of his writing had ever been vetoed as indecorous. Everyone asked his neighbor what in the world was meant; and only one could answer.'

Stories of that sort amply account for the general tendency of authors to deride the censorship. Yet they have not always done so. On the contrary, many distinguished dramatists have defended the institution. Dumas *filis*, for one, defended it resolutely, in spite of the fact that *La Dame aux Camélias* suffered at its hands; and a greater

name than his can be quoted in its support. Cervantes not merely accepted the principle of dramatic censorship, but called aloud for a censor. He puts the plea into the mouth of a curé in *Don Quixote*; and as he himself took orders before he died, any sentiment which he attributes to an ecclesiastic may be presumed to be his own. Actors, he points out, in his great romance, are perpetually getting into trouble for 'acting things obnoxious to the Prince,' and he continues:

All those inconveniences might be redressed if there were some understanding and discreet person ordained at Court to examine all comedies before they were acted, and not only such as were played at the Court itself, but also all others that were to be acted throughout Spain, without whose allowance, under his hand and seal, no town should permit any comedy to be played. . . . By this means would good comedies be written, and the thing intended by them most easily attained to — namely, entertainment of the people, the good opinion of Spanish wits, the profit and security of the players, and the saving of the care that is now employed in chastising their rashness.

Nothing could sound more plausible; but nothing is more notorious than that things have not always worked out like that in practice. In practice, dramatic censors have generally taken themselves too seriously, have erred grievously by their lack of humor, and have often shown themselves more royalist than the King. Louis XII, for instance, frantically applauded a piece which the censor had tried to stop because it made fun of the Pope. Henry IV released comedians who had been imprisoned for ridiculing his counselors. Louis XIV sanctioned the production of *Tartuffe*, after the Archbishop of Paris had prohibited it, and Napoleon III interfered personally to override the censor's prohibition of plays by Dumas *père*, Emile Augier, and Jules Claretie.

In England, again, the censorship, as we know it, was the creation, not of

a despotic monarch, but of a corrupt minister. It is true, indeed, that an Act of Henry VIII prescribed that no player should 'sing in songs or play in interludes anything that should contradict the established doctrines.' It is also true that an edict of the same reign laid down that 'no play should be openly enacted within the liberty of the city till first perused and allowed by the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen.' It is true, further, that, in the times of the Stuarts, the Master of the Revels wielded considerable powers of censorship, suppressed 'preaching plays' by Puritanical propagandists, and derived a portion of his emoluments from 'benefit' performances. But the real thing did not come till later, and was due, not to anyone's zeal for public morality, but to a minister's dread of public ridicule.

Sir Robert Walpole had been mocked on the stage, first by Gay, and then by Fielding. He did not like it, and determined to stop it. So he prepared a bill, and supported it in the House of Commons by drawing the attention of the members to some very indecent passages in a very indecent farce supplied to him by the manager of Goodman's Fields Theatre. It is by no means certain that that farce was a *bona-fide* composition, really intended for the stage. It was freely alleged — and it is not at all improbable — that Walpole had hired a man to write it, in order that he might be able to show the house something so licentious that it could not reasonably oppose his measure. At all events, he carried his measure — the famous Act of 1737.

He did not carry it without opposition from the politicians and the public. Lord Chesterfield denounced it eloquently, and theatre audiences rioted — going so far as to silence a French company appearing under distinguished patronage, by singing Field-

ing's, 'The Roast Beef of Old England.' But all in vain. Fielding, in consequence of Walpole's measure, ceased to write for the stage; and prohibitions, based upon reasons sometimes improper and sometimes ridiculous, rained thickly. Here are a few instances:

A revival of *King Lear* was forbidden because George III was mad. Brooke's *Gustavus Vasa* was forbidden because 'there was a good deal in it about liberty.' Theodore Hook's *Killing no Murder* was forbidden because it was disrespectful to the Methodists. Another comedy was forbidden because it alluded to the advanced age of the ladies of the court. Miss Mitford's *King Charles the First* was forbidden because of its 'title and subject.' It might be hard to say whether the climax was reached when objection was raised to the use of the word 'angel' in love scenes, because angels were sacred personages, or when the word 'gammon' was struck out of a farce because the censor 'had a friend in Hampshire of that name.'

The history of the theatre is strewn with anecdotes of that kind. Even those who defend the censorship as a necessity or a convenience have to admit that censors have shown a remarkable propensity for making fools of themselves. Indeed, knowing their own weakness, they have sometimes made desperate efforts, in doubtful cases, to shift their responsibilities on to other shoulders. A Lord Chamberlain, for example, once asked the Archbishop of Canterbury to look over a play of Foote's and mark any objectionable passages; but the Archbishop scented danger, and begged to be excused.

'If I were to do such a thing,' he replied, 'Foote would be sure to publish his piece as "corrected and prepared for the press by His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury."'

His Grace was quite right about that. A hardened practical joker like Foote could have been trusted not to miss such an opportunity. Moreover, archbishops can no more be expected to deputize for examiners of plays than examiners of plays can be expected to deputize for archbishops. To each his function and his responsibilities; and the 'cuts' which examiners of plays, unaided by archiepiscopal advice, have insisted upon, are sometimes brought to light when the plays are published. Here are a few passages which Mr. Zangwill is said to have been invited to delete from his censored play, *The Next Religion*:

The God who will send tuberculosis even through the Communion chalice.

That shrine of superstition in Westminster.

I've got my eye on a workmanlike little place in a commanding position with a ten-year lease — it was in the Baptist line before.

In this last passage the censor is said to have suggested the substitution of the word 'Nonconformist' for 'Baptist.' Perhaps he thought that, as Nonconformists are more numerous than Baptists, the intensity of the affront would be weakened by its wider distribution. But he did not say so. He guarded his own secret; and that was the wisest course. The case, he may well have felt, is one of those in which he who stops to argue is lost.

[*The Times*]

SPEECH AND SPELLING

OPINIONS may differ as to the reason for the increased interest taken in late years, not only in academic circles, in the English language as it is spoken and written. The war may be named as one reason of this interest; the incursion of American words; the spread of popular education and the popular newspaper, both instruments await-

ing the manipulating hand; the phonetic spelling movement, which is even more a cause than an effect of investigation. The fact remains. We have before us two tracts and a prospectus which give evidence of the attention which is being increasingly devoted to the English we actually use: to its present character, its future development, and the possibilities of beneficent interference with it. This awakening is very welcome. At most we may contrive to prevent some decays and establish some improvements; at least we shall, after a period, have learned something.

Language, said Johnson, began by being oral, and a purely oral speech was very variable. 'When,' he continues, 'this wild and barbarous jargon was first reduced to an alphabet, every penman endeavored to express, as he could, the sounds which he was accustomed to pronounce or to receive.' The delusion that writing was originally phonetic, or meant to be phonetic, is still commonly cherished among the unlearned, and the assumption is often implicitly made by those who know better. We find in Dr. Bradley's pamphlet a brief sketch of the ideographic origins of writing; but this sketch leads up to a less familiar but convincing demonstration of the extent to which our written language is ideographic still — the extent, that is, to which our written words are symbols of meaning, in no relation, or only an incomplete relation, phonetically to the words we speak.

Figures for numbers are an extreme instance. But the language is thick with them. If [Dr. Bradley says] we were to form an adjective phonetically from Bacon it would not be Baconian. We pronounce the vowels in these words differently; it is a convenience that, for purposes of easy identification, they should be similarly spelled.