

Virtue Made in Pennsylvania

By BENJAMIN DE CASSERES

THE Pennsylvania Board of Film Censors would walk a thousand miles to smoke out a "Camille."

It was from this same musnud of moralists that the edict was issued last year that no picture could be shown that portrayed a mother making a layette for her unborn child. In Pennsylvania children are not born in the usual way, but are bootlegged over the roofs by storks or moonshined into the world through a cabbage leaf.

It was the same Sanhedran of Sages who ordered the title "It is a boy" cut out of "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse." If it had read "It is a Republican" it would have passed—in Pennsylvania.

Anyhow, "Camille" arrived in Pennsylvania on the celluloid. It was not called "Camille. It was called "The Red Peacock." The story was the story of "Camille" done in Germany. It was originally called "Poor Violette." Pola Negri was the star who coughed her way into eternity in the fifth reel in the way the younger Dumas had arranged it

head in her lap and she is fondling and kissing him, subtitle, "Come to me, Violette; we will be married at once and say nothing about it."

REEL 5—(a) Insert a subtitle after "I love Alfred—he is all I have in the world. I cannot let him go," when Violette sinks in chair and Claire goes out of the room, to this affect, "Realizing that for his own reasons Alfred had not told his father of his marriage, Violette loyally kept the secret."

(b) Insert a subtitle during the views showing Violette leaving her home and before she goes to Gaston du Pont, to this effect: "With a courageous determination to find some means of honestly earning money to aid Alfred."

(c) Eliminate subtitle, "I am here, ill in body and soul. Take me away, anywhere," and substitute "I am here, ill in body and soul. You offered to help me. Are you good friend enough to take me, unselfishly, where I can learn to dance so that I may earn money?"

(d) Eliminate subtitle, "My dear Alfred: Forgive me. I am leaving you. My illness will become a greater and greater burden

within a radius of 300 miles of Harrisburg. She may have a fiancé. The fiancé must not be a satellite—but a satellite may become a fiancé. So the Home is conserved.

Count Girgy (Reel 3, a) cannot just see an opportunity. He must see an opportunity that involves an act of humanity. There can be no objection to this, as it follows the philosophy of McGuffey's Reader.

Violette and Girgy (Reel 3, c) are not allowed to embrace or kiss throughout the picture. That these changes practically destroy the picture is of no moment. Girgy and Violette, although in love with one another, are not married; therefore all contact is null and void. This is based on an old Pennsylvania tradition that one may only kiss his wife or his dead aunt.

Alfred (Reel 4, b) also loves Violette. But, as you observe, he is not permitted to shake his head "no." This is abstruse. I believe it may be explained that since the advent of prohibition "no" has become an obsolete word. It remained for the Pennsylvania Board of Film Censors to make it official.

The board marries our Camille in the fourth reel. When the time comes they will marry Hamlet and Ophelia in the second reel. They may allow Faust and Marguerite to trot along as far as the third reel before the matchmakers at Harrisburg perform the ceremony—without Papa Goethe's consent, of course. It was fortunate for Shakespeare that he got Othello and Desdemona spliced. In Pennsylvania a man may smother his wife, but not his mistress.

When I showed the above sketch of our New Freedom to Howard Dietz, the poet laureate of the Goldwyn Pictures Corporation, he wrote the following and mailed it to Harrisburg:

THE STANDARDS OF THE BOARD.

"That the theme or story of a picture is adapted from a publica-



"Bootlegged over the roofs."

tion, whether classical or not; or that portions of a picture follow paintings or other illustrations is not sufficient reason for the approval of a picture or portions of a picture."—Excerpt from Standards of the Pennsylvania State Board of Censors of Motion Pictures.

It doesn't always follow that if Venus or Apollo Or the nudes of Zuloaga are translated to the screen That the censors so omniscient will consider that sufficient Ground for passing on the picture as quite fitting to be seen.

Just because a Rembrandt etching is considered more than fetching, Still the version in the movie might not meet with the accord Of the Pennsylvania censors, those infallible dispensers Of morality—according to the Standards of the Board.

In this age of smut and slander, where a play is prone to pander

To the basest and the vilest and the cheapest that's in man There must be the chosen mortals who have passed through Virtue's portals And have stood out from the others as the molders of the clan.

So this censorship committee shall prescribe to each Penn city Just the proper set of morals that the pictures shall afford. They are trained in all that's flirty—they know vice—they know what's dirty. And they know by heart the rules they call the Standards of the Board.

It is a curious etymological fact that Board is Wood and Wood is Board. If the Great Pennsylvania Idea spreads to the public press and the theatres, the only blameless literature in the country will be your income tax blank and your apartment lease.



The Censors So Omniscient.

some years back. The names of the characters were changed, but the play is essentially the same that millions of people have seen and read.

As soon as the Pennsylvania board saw the picture they put their ivories together and ordered the following changes in "Camille," alias "The Red Peacock." I here reproduce verbatim the order. It is my most precious literary possession. As a bit of Americana, I believe it is unique:

REEL 1—(a) Eliminate subtitle, "Gaston du Pont, her satellite," and substitute "Gaston du Pont, her fiancé."

REEL 3—(a) Eliminate subtitle, "Count Girgy sees an opportunity," and substitute "Count Girgy sees an opportunity to vary his hectic life with an act of humanity."

(b) Eliminate subtitle, "Violette, you may remain as maid in this house if you wish to," and substitute "Violette, my house is lonely. Let me do an unselfish act—be my ward and enjoy the comforts of my home as a sister would."

(c) Eliminate views of Girgy embracing and kissing Violette after bringing her wrap to her and all views of Girgy kissing and embracing Violette in any other reel throughout the picture.

REEL 4—(a) Eliminate subtitle, "Alfred, I love you. Take me away from this," and substitute "Alfred, I love you. I was happy as Girgy's ward until you returned. Take me away."

(b) Eliminate views of Alfred shaking his head to express "No."

(c) Insert, after Alfred has fallen at Violette's feet with his

on you, and our financial troubles are growing each day. You have your future to consider. Violette," and substitute "My dear Alfred: Forgive me. I am leaving you for a time that I may earn money to overcome our financial troubles, which are growing each day. I love you and hope for the future. Violette."

(e) Eliminate all views in this and other reels following of Gaston du Pont embracing and kissing or making love to Violette.

(f) Eliminate subtitle, "We will go South and there will soon be roses in your cheeks," and substitute "You may trust me. We will go South and there will soon be roses in your cheeks. You shall learn to dance there."

REEL 6—(a) Eliminate all views of Gaston du Pont making love to Violette, kissing or embracing her.

(b) Eliminate subtitle, "You'd better not dance this evening—your cough," and substitute "You'd better rest this evening—your cough."

(c) Eliminate the word "you" from subtitle, "It was my money you loved, not me—you—"

(d) Eliminate subtitle, "Now I know you for what you are—and I'm through with you," and substitute "I'm through with you forever."

A careful analysis of this remarkable document will disclose to the future excavators and archaeologists of the ruins of American liberty the wheels in the mental processes of those who gave to the world the Great Pennsylvania Idea. Rare pickings for a future Taine or Gibbon.

It may be noted (Reel 1, a) that no Camille is entitled to a satellite