

**SHOCKING AN  
AUDIENCE.**

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**Individuals Not So  
Easily Hurt.**

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**SEX AND THE CENSOR.**

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**FAMOUS AUTHOR ON THE  
THEATRE.**

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**From Our Own Correspondent.**

LONDON, Thursday.

Mr. Desmond MacCarthy, addressing the Congress of the World League for Sexual Reform, dealt with "The censorship of literature."

He said it was utterly impossible to eradicate sex from art and literature, and what was more important the public had never stood very long for any very drastic attempts in that direction.

They had soon turned, and ignored or jeered at the purifiers. A curious thing about the present situation was that the majority of the anti-censors and the majority of the censors wanted to compromise.

The censors did not really want to suppress works of art or prevent the publication of works of scientific inquiry.

The anti-censors did not want the shops and the bookstalls flooded with works of pornography. But with much of the best literature the censors did not know where to draw the line.

### **SHOCKING AUDIENCES.**

Mr. John van Druten, the dramatist, author of "Young Woodley," spoke on "Sex and the Censorship." The theatre, he said, was at least twenty years behind contemporary thought. He suggested that the censorship was hardly to blame. It made an honest attempt to keep the theatre in line with public opinion.

The ease, however, with which an audience could be shocked by things which would in no way shock each individual member was quite extraordinary.

"Certain themes and certain situations cannot be treated on the stage, at all events if they are treated seriously, because the serious consideration of them shocks the audience," he said.

## LOVE WITHOUT SEX.

"The average member of the theatre-going public is not unlike the old lady who asked the circulating library for a nice love story without any sex in it.

"Apparently it is not only what is too silly to be said that may be sung, but also what is too shocking to be taken seriously which may be sung, or made the ground for jest.

"There are a number of people who are perfectly capable of reflecting on matters of sexual conduct by themselves or of discussing such matters in private with one person, but are shy at the idea of discussing the same problems with more than one person.

"The person who suffers most at the hands of the censorship has always been the serious playwright with something to say.

## **A BANNED PLAY.**

Would it be possible to divide the theatre into two—one theatre subject to censorship, where the audience could be protected against either having their sensibilities shocked or their intellect assailed, and another where, free from censorship, they entered at their peril.

“Public opinion is not unchanging, but the censorship has too long retarded it by being the instrument of the majority. And as it is the majority that the commercial manager is out to please, he, too, has been a hindrance to its expansion.”

Mr. Lawrence Housman related how a play he wrote on George IV. and Caroline was banned.

“For fifteen years my property was destroyed by the arbitrary decision of the censor,” he said. “The only reason given finally being that the play dealt with a sad episode in the life of an unhappy lady (laughter).”

## **"UNDER A CLOUD."**

"I explained that the lady had been under a cloud for 108 years and that my play would remove the cloud."

Eventually he was told that the ban would be removed if he made two

agreed upon.

He removed the censorship because it was essentially unfair and dishonest.

## WAVE OF PURITANISM.

Mr. H. F. Rubinstein, speaking on "Censorship and Commonsense in England," said that English laws on the censorship of art and letters were in a wobble. As the law stood, it was passing under a wave of puritanism, he supposed almost everything.

The same censorship was originally intended purely as a device against political reform. It was converted to moral use during a wave of puritanism.

There followed a period of greater liberalism, but recently the old legislation had been invoked again. It was not likely that the present tendency would amount to or have any very harmful effect on art.

The law would probably not be changed, but it was necessary that the authorities should show more intelligence in using it. As it stood everything came under its ban except *Illustrated Almanack* and the telephone directory (laughter).