

HOW TO CELEBRATE "A SAFE AND SANE FOURTH"—A SERIES OF CONTRASTS

NOT always, when gay and frivolous youth flocks to the moving-picture show, can you say that it is going merely to pass an idle hour and watch some too-too thrilling drama of wild adventure. Sometimes the young people have their minds improved even as their pulses are stirred. And at any time now, if you happen to have inexpensive theatrical tastes and patronize the five and ten cent palaces, you are likely to see a fine new addition to the sort of thing the big firms advertise as educational drama, nothing less than a plea for a "safe and sane Fourth" staged in such fashion as to attract good folk who positively refuse to read circulars, pamphlets, or any pages of the magazines that aren't fiction.

It is a good idea and well carried out. There is no prosy argument in favor of the abolition of the insidious cannon cracker and the fatal pin-wheel. There is a stirring drama of love and danger, with a moral attached so cleverly that the audience has swallowed it before the fact that they are being educated up to a new idea has come to cloud their enjoyment. It is an idea of the Sage foundation, and when last accounted for it was doing well over the whole moving-picture circuit.

This is the tale that is set before the patrons of the ten cent shows, and if any one could take exception to the delicately insinuated moral he must be indeed callous to elevating influences. There is, to begin with, a good-looking young Mayor of a town and a pretty young widow. The Mayor is a widower with a little daughter, and the widow's solitudo is cheered by the company of a promising boy. They are next-door neighbors, with only a board fence to separate their respective yards. This same

fence plays a leading part in the events that follow.

The lovely young widow, who has been receiving the chivalrous attentions of the Mayor and has a feeling toward him more tender than she is willing to admit, feels strongly on the subject of the fire-cracker. Her small heir is not more mischievous than the average child, but she has premonitions. A widow is hardly competent to wrestle with fireworks, she thinks, so she decides that they should be eliminated in the interests of her boy and other youngsters, and she leads a safe and sane Fourth movement.

There is a thrilling moment when they call on the Mayor and show placards effectively decorated with "Let us get together and stop killing and maiming," and similar devices. The Mayor, as a humane man and not indifferent to the widow, thinks well of the proposition. He will support it. Joy of the committee. The widow glances at him with renewed tenderness.

Enter the villains. They are fireworks dealers and worse—they are corrupt politicians. They, too, call on the Mayor. They shake angry fists in his classic face (he is really very good-looking—one cannot blame the widow; and she is pretty, too; so there is plenty of human interest), and they swear by the nine gods that if he favors the safe and sane ordinance he shall never again be Mayor.

Anguish of the chief magistrate, for, though an honorable man, he is ambitious, and we all know what that leads to. He loves the widow, but he loves glory, too. He thinks, like many a man before him, that he can have both; but he little suspects what fate has in store for him. However, in his blindness, he turns against the ordinance. He makes a reactionary speech and the cause is lost.

The Sage Foundation Puts a Thrilling Drama of the Old-time Celebration in Moving Pictures.

The widow averts her face that he may not see she is cut to the heart.

The Fourth comes. It does not seem a difficult matter for a big man to control a small girl, and the Mayor tells his daughter that she is not, under any circumstances, to buy large fire-crackers. She says she won't, and she doesn't. But there is the widow's boy, a quite different proposition.

He, too, has been warned, but he slips into a store and buys big, murderous cannon crackers, advertised to go with a soul-stirring detonation. Not being a selfish boy, though somewhat disobedient, he bethinks himself of his young neighbor. He "shins" the board fence with ease and grace, drops down before the admiring little girl, and sets off the cracker.

You have heard of defective fuses? Such, alas, was the fuse of the widow's son's cannon cracker. As the children bend over it it explodes with a hideous roar, and that is a great moment in the play, as you will have no difficulty in believing.

Well, to cut a long story short, there is the boy in bed threatened with blindness, with the remorseful Mayor beside him and mother distracted, not abusing the Mayor openly but just looking. The little girl has only a slight hurt, and her father is not worried at first—but, misfortune piling upon misfortune, we now behold her with symptoms of tetanus. Despair.

A year elapses. This drama is advertised as "not morbid, although serious,"

so there is reason to hope that things were not as bad as they seemed; and so it turns out. When the Fourth comes again there is daughter, all right, and son, as good as new. Only the Mayor has been profoundly changed. No longer will the threats of politicians hold him back from his duty. There is now a safe and sane Fourth.

There is a pageant, and children dance on the lawns of the parks. Then there are athletic contests, and in the evening a show of fireworks under the management of the city itself, with nobody hurt and an immense audience delighted beyond words. The Mayor, in the midst of

the general rejoicing, is sad. Will the widow forgive? He hardly dares ask. But of course he does, and as we are told beforehand that the ending is happy it is unnecessary to say that she concludes he has suffered enough and the last film flickers to the sound of wedding bells, so to speak.

It is really a mighty good tale for moving-picture audiences, and it is certainly an admirable way of popularizing the demand for a reasonable celebration of the Fourth. It is a fine way to persuade people—the People—that even if fireworks have been taken away there is no reason why they should not have all the fun they want. It is all very well to write articles in magazines urging that the annual slaughter be stopped, but the moving picture's the thing.

The agitation for a new kind of celebration has already made a good deal of headway, and the pictures showing pageants and games were taken from life. To take a conspicuous example, for six or seven years the city of Springfield, Massachusetts, has been having safe and sane Fourth's. They have pageants in which the entire city joins—not every human being, of course, but representatives of every class and nationality.

This city of 80,000 inhabitants was so enthused over the new way of celebrating one year that they got in line thirteen different nationalities, from the Scotch to the Chinese, and had them parade in a pageant that showed stirring epochs of their history.

The Swedes showed Leif Ericson discovering America in a splendid viking ship.

The Scotch had Mary, most fascinating of queens, surrounded by her maids of honor and announced by two pipers skirling gallantly. The Germans had William Tell. The French, who in Springfield are of Canadian descent, chose Champlain for their hero. A group of colored civil war veterans presented the attack on Fort Wagner. The Italian portion of the parade was emblematic of a score of great men and was highly decorative. The Greeks introduced Lycurgus, Socrates, Pericles, and other worthies well known and appreciated in Massachusetts. The Irish had one of their kings in evidence. Syria, China, Poland, and Armenia all took part. And last, but not least, there was King John signing Magna Charta. The Jewish citizens could not take part, for the Fourth fell on their Sabbath, but they approved heartily.

It was the first attempt on a big scale to show what could be done in the way of a reasonable celebration of the national independence, and it was really thrilling, so people said, to see the process of the mighty American melting pot set forth there in so simple and effective a fashion. It was good for the proud Mayflower descendants to be made to realize that the poor immigrant brought with him great traditions which even the peerless American might well respect. Like the moving-picture show, there was a moral very ingeniously tacked on to the celebration.

Springfield has a fund of about \$3,000 a year, subscribed by the public, and a city appropriation of \$500 for these celebrations. In a small Western town a canvasser for the safe and sane Fourth found that over five hundred families spent about \$3 apiece in celebrations. They were persuaded to unite their forces and have a pageant which was, from all accounts, a great success.

There was Paul Revere on a Shetland

pony, and a host of worthies acting their parts to the life. After the parade there was ice cream and lemonade and various jollifications, and the whole thing cost, including the services of a man to drill the actors, about \$600. The idea spread rapidly, and now there are scores of small towns given over to pageantry every Fourth of July.

These towns are not in any one place. New York, North Carolina, Texas, and Oregon have all distinguished themselves. Laws have been passed in many cities, and there are few States which have not made some attempt to stop dangerous ways of celebrating Independence Day.

Dr. Luther H. Gulick, President of the Playground Association of America, says that while we are a Nation because we have one government, we are not a people, because we have as yet no adequate social language. By social language he says he means a form of expressing social ideas in action. Our Fourth of July celebrations are not used as a focal point for community life. What was meant to perpetuate a great idea has become a nuisance when it is not a menace.

He suggests that as the day is of all days best suited to emphasize the ideals of our Nation we should try to learn to know one another better by means of some such celebration as that of Springfield, when each nationality shows with proper pride the contribution it makes to the glory of America.

If it seems as if a fire-cracker in the hand would attract more than an ideal in the bush, so to speak, the answer—and it is a pretty good one—is that the thing has been done successfully in communities no more cultured, no more broad-minded than the average, and that the idea is spreading.