



Firetraps in Local Theaters.
Knocking the Supervisors.
The Fight Against Billboard Atrocities.
Nature Collecting Her Price.

A recent fire scare in an eastern theater, begun from the explosion of a film fire in the operator's box, resulted in a score of lives trampled out beneath the heels of a frenzied mob fighting for egress from the theater, and in the serious or less serious injury of more than a hundred, principally women and children. After the firemen and the police had sent the dead bodies to the morgue and the injured to the hospitals or to their homes, an examination of the place was made, resulting in the discovery that some of the doors labeled "Exit," as required by law, could not be opened!

The Bystander has frequently visited the various Honolulu picture shows with a view to noting fire conditions. Of course, the Honolulu fire chief has gone over these buildings and so has the city building inspector, but there always appeared to me to be the possibility of the fire chief's original orders having been disregarded or neglected and the plans of the city building inspector being altered to suit convenience. The Bijou theater, where the majority of Honolulu go these days, seems to be a perfectly safe structure in all respects. It is fireproof, it is open all along one side, the operator's box is far away from the main exits and the aisles are fairly roomy. Regarding the other places, with the exception of the little used Park theater, I had my doubts. The Park is quite safe.

The theater I most fear, next, that is, of those under haole management, is the Savoy. That place is funnel shaped, with the main exit in the very neck of the funnel, while the operator's box is where people have to pass within five feet to get out. Across this neck is fixed a gas-pipe railing, bringing down the exit space near the film room to less than four feet. On top of this, I noticed that the seats were not fastened to anything, the floor, in fact, being of earth. In a panic these seats would be scattered at once and the aisles would be clogged.

Last night I visited the show houses with the specific purpose of reporting on conditions.

I found that Honolulu is just as ripe for a theater horror as possible. In practically every theater except the Bijou and the Japanese Asahi Theater, the red "Exit" lights intended to show where a quick getaway could be found, shone lying over locked or barred doors. In some instances the keys to their doors were not even in the theater. In one theater the moving picture operator violated every rule for safety. The film was exposed, the door of the operating room was open for the spark from any cigarette. Criminal carelessness was exhibited on every hand.

The Asahi Theater was the safest, I found, although even here there is room for all the tramping on women and children necessary to create a horror. One exit, near the main exit, led into a blind square with a fifteen-foot locked gate shutting you in from the street. The exit at the back of the hall was closed by chicken screen, which could not be seen by an excited person until he or she had run into it and been thrown back for the next one to trample on. There were several other available exits, however, two in the basement and one leading from the rear of the stage. The only exit from the gallery in this hall is a narrow one, with a right-angle turn at the bottom, a beautiful place for a crowd to pile up in.

The Chinese theater on Ala street is fairly safe, fifty times more so than it was a few months ago, when it was an ideal firetrap. Now there are wide doors opening outward, while the gallery stairs are so arranged that a crowd coming down would not jam with the crowd leaving the main hall.

The Chinese theater on Hotel street, which last night held nearly a thousand men, women and children, has only one small exit in the whole building. This is only to be reached from the main hall after two turns, while it is so arranged that the gallery stairs—crooked and flimsy—opens in such a way that those coming down would meet face-to-face those rushing to get out of the narrow single doorway. This place is in a horribly dangerous condition, especially in view of the excitable nature of the ordinary Chinese audience.

The orientals may be excused, to a certain degree, because they are not supposed to know what to do, but there is absolutely no excuse to be made for what I found last night at the Savoy, Empire and the Independent theater. To say that the managements of these places are guilty of criminal negligence would be putting it mildly.

In the Empire there are two doors leading to Bethel street, each marked with a red light as "Exits." The signs shone throughout the performances as an evidence to the patrons that should there be any panic ways were provided for a quick cut to safety. I tried each door. Each was locked. I asked the head usher about it. "We don't often use those doors," he said. "Well, supposing you had to use them in a hurry? Where's the key?" I asked. "Oh, I don't know. I think that perhaps Mr. Congdon has them," he said. And Mr. Congdon was not even in the theater!

I went into the Savoy, packed to the doors, with the aisles filled with people standing up. I wormed my way to the big exit on the Ewa side of the hall. Over it shone the "Exit" sign required by law. The door was locked, a big iron hasp fastening it, with a brass padlock snapped through the staple. The combined efforts of a dozen men, with all the time they required, could not have budged that door. There was another exit marked by a red light and I tried that. It too was fastened with a hasp and padlock, but I noticed that the padlock was not snapped shut. I was told later in the evening that one of the employes of the Star had "exited" through this door recently and stepped out to a drop of six feet! Imagine what would happen to a crowd using that way to safety!

The worst conditions were found in the Independent theater on Hotel street. There are three emergency exits on the Waikiki side of this theater. Last night every one of them was locked tight, although each bravely carried the red "Exit" sign. These doors, if they had been open, lead into a narrow lane, without lights. The film box in this theater is in the middle of the main entrance, leaving one side for entrance and the other for exit, each passage-way being about four feet wide. As I watched the operator through the open door of his box, he unwound one used film and the highly inflammable stuff was trailed all over the floor, and this at a time when the machine was turned on. Imagine what would happen in that narrow entrance, divided by this box, should that film ever take fire! The only egress would be past the very fire itself. In this place, too, the chair were all loose, ready to be kicked over in a panic.

Honolulu has not had a fire horror, with the victims piled ten deep around locked doors bearing the mocking "Exit" sign. Other places have had them. There is no reason to suppose Honolulu will not, unless our authorities vigorously enforce the law and make examples of the first triflers with the lives of those who patronize them.

Last night, after I had found what was what at the Savoy, I went to Captain Kahanaumoku, of the Honolulu police force, who was in the hall. I told him what the condition of the exit doors was.

"That's not my pilikia," he said, when I urged him to do something. "That's the business of the ushers!"

About a year ago, when Doctor Ramus remarked before the local medical association that "Those most interested should not forget that Nature will exact later a high price for this cheap Philippine labor," he had in his mind just such an item as appeared in the papers yesterday afternoon, that: "A death from amoebic dysentery, followed by the discovery of two other cases of the disease, is the somewhat disquieting situation which the board of health finds itself called upon to handle at the present time."

I believe that the board of health should at once issue a warning to the

public that the vile Philippine disease, the practically incurable dysentery that has killed hundreds of white men in the Philippines, which makes the use of fresh vegetables in that country impossible, which makes the drinking of un-boiled water a risk too great to run by anyone not a fool, is here in Hawaii. I think this is a very proper occasion, too, to remind the public of the fact that the Filipino object to the microscopic tests being made at Manila, the test to determine whether the emigrant for Hawaii has or has not amoebic dysentery, and that to oblige our little brown brothers our authorities have agreed to forgo the test there and make it here.

It is an unfortunate thing that the interests of the plantations and the health of the community have got upon opposite sides of this Filipino immigration question, but they have.

The Honolulu supervisors who believed themselves secure from popular disapproval some time ago when several newspapers "came down on them" for their various sins and who said at that time that this was the usual "knocking" to be expected from those "sheets," must have been astonished during the week to find themselves so smothered in popular disapproval that not a single friend was in sight.

First wildly stamped by the residents of Nuuanu into providing, in some manner, money for the Nuuanu avenue that they declared could not be secured, they again attempted to reseat themselves in their chairs and blush with conscious pride.

The haste with which they again arose, however, indicated that they had forgotten to remove the tack placed on the city throne by the residents of Kaimuki who originated the idea that all the present supervisors should resign and who are now preparing a campaign slogan to the effect that the next city government must be drawn from the Red Hill district.

Manoa Valley had already delivered several very telling broadsides which injured supervisory feelings very much and the city dads were about satisfied that they were cruelly misunderstood in those districts, looking with loving pride on that Paradise of Politicians where Charley Clark is St. Peter, Kalihi.

Alas, during the week Kalihi rose up in wild wrath and has appointed committees to meet the territorial government to devise means to COMPEL the supervisors to do some very necessary and inexpensive work to the school buildings. Mind you, they did not even honor the supervisors with their direct attention. And that while they were still in the Watertown mess! It now seems that the supervisors are understood only in Kakaako and there is no telling what will happen there in the next few weeks.

That is the actual state of affairs at the present time. Roughly speaking, this is the cause: Since county government went into being in a new incarnation, the sole tenet of government has been to maintain the almighty party in power and to commence on the first day after election to smooth the way for sliding the party back again into power at the next election.

Why this should be done is something absolutely unknown. There has been a gratifying absence of any signs of graft in regard to the supervisors so that the "party" can stand for no interests that make money out of it, as is the case on the Coast, barring that same old "yellow dog coterie" which gets paid at the rate of \$150 per month per unit, to "keep the party together."

It means nothing to anyone (unless again it is that little measly crowd of peanut grafters) and yet the same thing is done year after year with a loyalty to "party" that would be most commendable if transferred.

But, although it sounds strange in this place, the members of the four improvement clubs mentioned—may their years never grow less—are as responsible as the supervisors for they have tolerated that definition of government instead of whacking it at the start. Now that we "kneekers" are all in line together, the chances are that after next year we will not only have honest supervisors, but wise ones, and will have inculcated a brand of loyalty to a few more citizens than those who are at present "holding the party together."

President Taft heads the fight on the mainland against the billboards and in the army of those who would preserve the country against more of the scenic blotches and eliminate the majority of those now up are to be found the leaders in higher thought in every State. Of course, the gross materialist sneers at those who would preserve the natural scenery, just as he sneers at those who would purify politics, and the white slave traffic, improve the child labor laws or accomplish anything in the least altruistic. The man who is after the dollar and doesn't care a cuss who is hurt by his getting it, naturally fights for his right to display his billboards where he pleases, believes that the end justifies the means in vote-getting, believes that young men must sow their wild oats even on the graves of other men's daughters and refers to the children of the poor as "spawn." Whenever anyone would do anything for the general good of a community he rises with a sneer and asks: "What's the job?" or pats a fat paunch and denies that there can be anything higher than the satisfaction of an appetite.

Fortunately the people are awakening to many existing evils that were once taken for granted and are commencing to question the right of "Business" to predominate in all things. Americans are learning. They appreciate the fact that one of the reasons American dollars flow Europeanward is the fact that because the people of France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland know enough to sell their scenery and not spoil it. Beauty is a commercial asset, valued at its worth in Europe and thrown like pearls before swine in other places where billboard atrocities are not only tolerated but defended. In Honolulu, for instance, one newspaper refers to the billboard as "The poor man's art gallery," lending additional significance to the old saying, "Ain't it hell to be poor?"

This antibillboard agitation, I am glad to note, has extended into the far East. In the old Spanish city of Manila, immediately after the American occupation, the billboarders got busy and soon the town was plastered with big beer signs. The authorities admired Yankee enterprise until the tourists began to draw attention to the fact that the looks of Old Manila were being spoiled. Then, down came the most objectionable of the boards.

Now the fight has extended to Japan. Yesterday, in the Japan Advertiser which the Siberia brought, I notice this good example from Kanagawa-ken:

The Governor of Kanagawa-ken today issued a prefectural notification prohibiting the display of advertisement boards at prominent places in this prefecture. Glaring pictorial advertisements of medicine, liquor, etc., have of late been increasing in numbers at various hot-springs and seaside resorts throughout the country. These tend to detract from the scenic beauty, and are distasteful, giving a very bad impression to tourists. The districts where the display of such advertisements is prohibited by today's notification include the public gardens and the precincts of Shinto and Buddhist temples, as well as the districts of Enoshima, Katase, Koshigoye, Kamakura, and Hakone, Doshimura and neighborhood. The authorities, however, grant from two to twelve months' grace to enable advertisers to remove their signboards.

Governor Sufu is to be warmly congratulated on the steps taken in ordering the removal of these ungainly signboards.

Small Talks

JIM QUINN.—It takes more than a dedication to make a city park.

R. W. BRECKONS.—Instead of conferring on the corner hire a hall.

JOHN WATERHOUSE.—I expect next season to be a great year for Hawaiian sugar.

JOHN SMITH.—It seems to me that patriotism does not entirely consist in paying tribute to a steamer trust.

RAY RIETOW.—Rowing is booming better than ever in Honolulu, and next year there may be races at Pearl Harbor.

E. BERNDT.—There is so much prosperity in Honolulu just now that it is difficult to get a carpenter to do work in a store.

GINGER MAYNE.—Of course, the Star did not mean that I was lacking when it said that the Healanis "lacked ginger."

FRED L. WALDRON.—There is no place I have ever visited where the rules of the road are so much disregarded as in Honolulu.

DR. VICTOR S. CLARK.—Am I in the swim? Well, I'm a member of the Outrigger Club and attend the surf sessions quite regularly.

R. E. BOND.—Anybody would think the bottom had dropped out of the sugar market if it wasn't for the extra dividends coming along so regularly.

FRED WEED.—Those people at Fort Roger certainly do not know much about handling searchlights when they couldn't pick up the Navajo at sea on Friday night.

A. Q. MARCALLINO.—The visit of the Olympic Club to Honolulu should give baseball and athletics, generally, a boost. The presence of Ralph Rose will be a great feature.

CHIEF ENGINEER TUO NAVAJO.—The United States has plenty of colliers for the navy. The foreign vessels are taken because the coal can be delivered cheaper; that is all.

PHOTOGRAPHER WARREN.—This new method of systematizing lust-

SIDELIGHTS

THE SADNESS OF NEGLECT.

I discovered a new park yesterday within a few blocks of the center of the city. At least it was new to me and probably nine-tenths of the people of Honolulu do not even know that there is such a place. Once upon a time Jack Atkinson, territorial secretary, made some board of supervisors believed that the people of Kakaako should have a playground, a park where the children and their mothers could escape from the tenements and shacks of that quarter and breathe in health. They accordingly dedicated an entire block and planted the rim with young pine trees. They also piped water all around the place so that the young trees and the grass could be watered without causing any member of the road or park department to contract heart disease from exertion.

Yesterday I started out to find Atkinson Park. I had heard that it was near the sea with the flashing breakers of the reef on one side and a magnificent view of the mountains on the other. When I finally stumbled upon what eventually turned out to be a park I found that the ocean and the mountains were doing their part to make the place a beauty spot, but evidently nothing else had been done to make the grounds attractive. One little kanaka girl and two puppy dogs were the sole beneficiaries of the park yesterday afternoon. They were playing under an algaroba tree, which it was evident the city had not planted. As for the trees which that old board of supervisors had set out, I counted thirty-seven dead ones or places where they had once stood, but only their grave mounds or broken wooden supports remained.

On the Waikiki side of the park only about half a dozen out of thirty trees remained, on the manuka side there was only one. Along the Ewa side of the park they had better luck, being shaded by a number of algaroba trees, and on the makai side there were a number, but all of them are stunted and will soon die if not cared for. Out in the field itself there were patches of dead or withered grass, due to lack of water, yet there were fine green spots all about the field, where the leaking water pipes had saturated the ground, leaving pools in some places where the mynah birds and sparrows disported themselves by scores. Yet authorities talk of economy in the water supply! I was told that a man was supposed to look after this park. Maybe his name can be found on the payroll, but evidence of his earning any pay is woefully lacking.

With a little trouble and small outlay this could be made a most attractive park playground.

PARK PROBLEMS.

And while I am on the subject of parks I can not resist the temptation to make a few remarks regarding Makiki and other city parks. This should be a city of beautiful parks. Other cities, which have not the advantages in this respect which Honolulu has, are bonding themselves to secure land for parks and some of them have actually spent millions of dollars to secure space for them. But here, almost in the center of the city such spots are allowed to go to waste and become eyesores, or to act as centers for unsightly shacks and billboards. With the growth of Honolulu as a great city, the capital, practically, of the entire Pacific, it is time that a foundation for future parks should be laid, or when it really becomes built up it will face the experience of other cities and regret the time it could have had the ground for these beauty spots at a tenth of the price which will then be necessary to pay for them.

Up in Makiki park steps were once taken to make it attractive, the ground was reploughed and replanted, trees were planted and walks laid out. It was made a park with great possibilities. But what has been done to it or for it lately? So far as I could find out yesterday, not a thing. Many of the trees are dying, while the entire place has a sort of neglected and deserted look. It seems a wasted opportunity and the money spent for improvements almost as good as thrown away.

Then, there is the old Nuuanu park, at the end of the Nuuanu car line, opposite the Country Club. The Spencer house still stands there, but so far as any park attractions are concerned it might just as well be deeded over to the people who live there, so far as any benefits to the city are concerned. The former board of supervisors did some work there with the prisoners, but now the guava bushes have a mortgage on a part, and more than half the people who pass that way do not even know it is city property.

I believe it would be a good thing for the citizens of Honolulu to get interested in the park problem.

SOFT HEADED LAW.

Of course I appreciate the fact that different prosecuting attorneys have different methods of securing justice on behalf of the People against law breakers, although the method generally followed is to follow the law as it directs. Naturally, in determining just what shall be done in certain cases must be left to the prosecutor, and as a rule the prosecutors see that the punishment fits the crime. In several big cities I have noticed that occasionally political influence will sometimes soften or abate a prosecution, but seldom have I noticed anywhere in America such continued partiality toward the criminal as I have here in Honolulu. In most cases it is in petty crimes that this display has been made in the most open manner. Gamblers are the favorites. In many cases the charges against them have been unproven when the police had more than the usual evidence to convict, but were not allowed to present it by the prosecutor. But what has accentuated this "leniency" is the Toogood case. Here a man of unsavory character murders his wife in the most brutal manner, steals a hack and tries to carry off the body. I saw the body in the hack, followed up the clues and know that the evidence against Toogood would have hanged the man in most any State in the Union, even without his confession, or at the least resulted in a life sentence. Yet what is done to him here? He is permitted—was it as a favor?—to plead guilty to manslaughter. Think of it, manslaughter! Yet people wonder why lynching parties are organized, or that men seek private revenge in the name of justice.

A MYSTICAL GAME.

I wish I could throw a little sidelight on the stock market. I suppose there are others. But in this case it is not for want of nerve to "take a flyer" in Hawaiian stocks, that I am interested, for I believe the great majority are excellent investments at the prevailing prices, besides it takes cash more than nerve to do this here, but simply because I am somewhat mystified regarding the way the game is played. My observation is that at certain times the thermometer goes up and at other times it goes down, but the dividends come right along just the same. Naturally, reported conditions as to the sugar crops and the prices for raws is a considerable influence. But is this all? Of course, in the open market a broker will buy for his client as cheaply as he can; also I understand that a broker will hold out in behalf of a client to get the best price possible for the man or woman who entrusts his or her financial interests to his keeping. This is generally conceded. Beside, when all the brokers are anxious to buy a certain stock for clients because of some peculiar conditions which prevail this stock is bound to go up. But does it always do so in Honolulu? Conditions this year are undoubtedly more favorable for higher prices in certain sugar stocks than last year, yet these same stocks are much lower in the open market than formerly. I sure wish that I knew, at least, to be honest, I wish I knew more than I think I do.

ness down to the smallest details, where every second of time is figured in cost and production, is well worth carrying into even the smallest kinds of business.

SHIPPING MANAGER DREW.—Talk about a busy week in shipping. I'm glad the season is lightening up a little so we can get a breathing spell. The Wilhelmina cleaned up the last of the 1911 sugar for the Matson line from here.

CONGRESSMAN KAHN.—The people of Honolulu should have a little patience and not expect too much at once. If they will be patriotic and not ask to travel on foreign ships, in a short time there will be more American ships plying between Honolulu and San Francisco. Be patriotic and patient.

M. PHILLIPS.—That row of poinciana trees which were planted in Bishop Park under the direction of Jack Atkinson, when Acting-Governor, is one of the finest sights in downtown Honolulu. There is no shadier walk in Honolulu and when the trees are in bloom there is nothing more beautiful. Here's to more such shaded walks.

EDITOR AFFONSO.—Capt. A. Pinto Basto, of the Portuguese cruiser San Gabriel, which visited Honolulu last year on its trip around the world, is doing some good promotion work for Hawaii in Portugal. The Occidente, an illustrated journal of Lisbon, is printing the captain's story of the trip and Honolulu, and the whole Territory, comes in for a generous proportion of the good things said. The last number of this journal at hand contains pictures of the Young Hotel and a street scene of Honolulu (Fort street). The captain, in his narrative, says that his cruiser and her officers did men were nowhere treated as nice and well as they were in Hawaii. The fact remains, on the other hand, that Hawaii never saw a sadder little warship nor a better lot of officers and men than the San Gabriel and her crew.