

THE WAR FOR THE WORLD

act of whose "Richard III." was cut out by the Master of the Revels), Middleton, Massinger, Beaumont and Fletcher, Steele, Dryden, Gay, and the blameless Miss Mitford. What is new in the business, however, is the reinforcement of the Lord Chamberlain by the Foreign Office: an innovation which seems to have begun when "The Mikado" was so ridiculously interdicted to please Japan, and another comic opera, "Morocco Bound," was modified to appease the susceptibilities of the Sultan of Turkey.

That because Russia is in alliance with us it is the duty of the Foreign Office to keep her uncriticized may seem a plausible contention. But on examination it amounts not only to interference in the internal affairs of England and with our British notions of liberty—and that *he* cannot interfere in the internal affairs of Russia is Sir Edward Grey's pet shibboleth—but it also identifies the State with any and every theatre. Now there is *no* State theatre—I wish there was, even at the risk of its having to represent the views of the Foreign Office. But to suffer from the drawbacks of a State theatre and enjoy none of the advantages of its existence is an intolerable situation for the dramatist. It would be so simple for the Foreign Office to say to the Russian Ambassador: "England, you may not have noticed, is a land of liberty, and the theatres are private enterprises, for which the State has no responsibility." An astute Foreign Office would even see the advantage of a medium for conveying hints or suggestions to foreign countries through non-committal channels. So far, however, from recognizing and exploiting this democratic instrument, the Government has even extended the censorship to newspapers, thus staking England's entire fortunes on the wisdom of the official view.

Newspapers, like theatres, have a certain public character, but when, as I understand from high quarters, the Defence of the Realm Act carries over even into the purely individual realm of books, our liberties are indeed in a parlous condition, and the pages I have been compelled to suppress in this very book are an ominous reminder of the distance we have travelled from the doctrine of Milton's *Areopagitica*. They are, moreover, an

¹ The censorship of the Press is one of the worst losses of the war. The notion that the German Staff would spend its days and nights in piecing together *à la* Sherlock Holmes stray items in odd newspapers is childish—not to mention the possibility that would then arise of fooling it fatally. The editorial censorship, whether commercial or conscientious, is surely bad enough without the Govern-