

RUSSIAN BALLET PERPLEXES BIRSKY AND ZAPP

Zapp Wonders if It Was as Bad as the Police Said, and Birsky, Who Saw It but Doesn't Know, Tries to Explain.

seeing such a thing would get a *Schreck*," Zapp commented.

"They would if they was there," Birsky said, "but actresses and actors is got to go a long way to shock a New York audience. In fact, Zapp, if the police knew their business they would arrest the two front rows of a New York audience on looks alone, for the bad effect the faces has got on the morals of the actors and actresses. However, Zapp, supposing that the people which goes to see the Russian ballet is as innocent as the police claims, Zapp, it wouldn't make no difference anyhow, because a ballet is like the deaf and dumb language, Zapp, people has got to study it for years before they know what it means. In fact, Zapp, if the police continues to find this here Russian ballet is immoral, Zapp, you would see advertisements in the paper:

LEARN TO BE A RUSSIAN BALLET AUDIENCE AT HOME.

New method. You pay only for the diagram and postage, which is small. Everything illustrated. Plain, simple, systematic. Write for free booklet to-day.

Because as it stands now, you've got to take the police's word for it that it's immoral. Even the fifty cent books which the ushers tries to sell you don't help you any, which I picked up one in the aisle and read it going home in the subway, and I give you my word, Zapp, that book was just so good a description of 'Within the Law' oder 'Camille' as it was of the Russian ballet."

"That's because you've got to get imagination to enjoy a ballet," Zapp said, "and the trouble with you is, Birsky, that you ain't got no imagination."

"Maybe I ain't," Birsky agreed, "aber when the book says: 'Mrs. Fatima Harris is the favorite wife of Sultan Charles Z. Harris,' y'understand, and a couple

of hundred young ladies comes out and dances it for you, for all you understand what they are driving at they might just so well be dancing: 'This theayter with every seat occupied, *das gebe Gott*, can be emptied in three minutes. Look around now and walk, not run,' or that the management requests the ladies to remove their hats. I claim to got just so much imagination as anybody else, Zapp, but with this here Russian ballet it ain't enough that you should be a mind reader. You've got to be a leg reader and that's all there is to it."

"Might it's because you ain't acquainted with the Russian language maybe," Zapp suggested. "You take a Russian ballet which ain't in the country two weeks, y'understand, and naturally they couldn't even talk the English language let alone dance it."

"Then how did the police get on that it was immoral?" Birsky asked.

"Probably they sent a policeman there which speaks Russian," Zapp said. "They've got such fellers on the police force, Birsky. There is even policemen which can shake down saloon keepers in every European language, and Chinese and *loschen Hakodesh* also, Birsky, and besides, Birsky, what business do you got supporting a Russian ballet? I thought you was against the Allies."

"Me against the Allies?" Birsky exclaimed. "How can you say such a thing? I've got just so many customers which is for the Allies as against 'em, Zapp—more even, and I am perfectly neuter about this here war. Furthermore, I've been an American sitson now going on twenty-two years, and I think that that oitermobile factory out in Detroit is quite right which wouldn't give jobs except to sitsons."

"Aber if everybody done the same thing, Birsky, what's going to become of the green-horns?" Zapp asked. "It takes five years to get to be a sitson, and in the meantime they must got to starve. Is that the idee? It's like all them advertisements you see for experienced salesmen. If every concern done the same thing, Zapp, a salesman would got to start in as a new beginner with at least five years' experience as a salesman."

"Or else lie about it," Birsky said.

"Aber you couldn't lie about being a sitson," Zapp continued. "You've got to show the papers."

"Well, maybe this here oitermobile concern says that they wouldn't promote nobody unless he becomes a sitson," Birsky admitted.

"Even so," Birsky went on, "my idee is that a feller should become a sitson like he gets married. He should do it for love, because if a feller gets married for money and his wife should *Gott soll*



"They would arrest the two front rows on looks alone."

"Would We Be Better Off if Instead of Vaudeville We Would Got Russian Ballets, for Instance?" Zapp Wants to Know.

asked. "It takes five years to get to be a sitson, and in the meantime they must got to starve. Is that the idee? It's like all them advertisements you see for experienced salesmen. If every concern done the same thing, Zapp, a salesman would got to start in as a new beginner with at least five years' experience as a salesman."

"Or else lie about it," Birsky said.

"Aber you couldn't lie about being a sitson," Zapp continued. "You've got to show the papers."

"Well, maybe this here oitermobile concern says that they wouldn't promote nobody unless he becomes a sitson," Birsky admitted.

"Even so," Birsky went on, "my idee is that a feller should become a sitson like he gets married. He should do it for love, because if a feller gets married for money and his wife should *Gott soll*

huelen go broke, he ain't going to stay faithful to her very long, and if a feller becomes a sitson to get a job, y'understand, all such a feller needs is to lose his job and right away he becomes just so good an American sitson as von Papen or the Hamburg American Line. Then if we should have to go to war and would got enough of them oitermobile factory sitsons around, you wouldn't be able to hear yourself think for the powder mills exploding."

"That's neither here nor there," Birsky said. "There's only one way to look at it: if a feller makes his living in a country, he should be a sitson."

"Is that so?" Zapp retorted. "Well, if all the Americans living in Mexico would of taken out sitson papers there, what would of happened to 'em?"

"The same as happened to 'em when they didn't," Birsky said. "But, anyhow Zapp, might if all the Americans which went to Mexico would of become Mexican sitsons, they would of Americanized the country maybe, and instead of revolutions down there they would now got direct primaries and referendums and conventions and all that *Stuss*, and instead of bull fighting they would got moving pictures and vaudeville."

"Then take it the other way about," Zapp insisted. "Supposing all the Russians which comes over here becomes sitsons and starts in to Russianize the country, would we be better off if instead of Congressmen and conventions we would got grand dukes and pogroms, and instead of moving pictures and vaudeville we would got Russian ballets, for instance."

"Russian ballets!" Birsky cried. "T'phooee!"

"Then what the devil you are talking nonsense, Birsky?" Zapp said.

"Aber the United States is a real country," Birsky protested, "while Mexico—that's something else again."

"You bet your life it is," Zapp said, "and when a feller goes to make a living in Mexico, Birsky, there's only one thing he should ought to take out down there—not sitson papers but life insurance."



"A policeman will hide his face and holler for the police."

"The Police Thinks," Says Birsky, "That Everybody Is from a Place Where Dolmans Is the Latest in Women's Garments."

By MONTAGUE GLASS, Illustrations by Briggs.

Copyright 1916--The Tribune Ass'n.

"I SEE where the police gets after the feller which is running the Russian ballet," Barnett Zapp said as he glanced over the bill of fare in Wasserbauer's Restaurant.

"Some theayter managers is very lucky that way," Louis Birsky, the real estater, said.

"Warum lucky?" Zapp demanded.

"Because what the police calls bad, looks awful good to a whole lot of people. Yes, Zapp, all that a show needs is for the police to call it immoral, and a couple of orchestra seats down front becomes right away as valuable as two perfect matched pearls from ten carats apiece," Birsky said. "The next time I get roped in for such a thing I would go to an optician not a speculator and buy a pair of hundred dollar field glasses, and stand up for a dollar in the back of the gallery. I could save a lot of money that way."

"And was it so bad like the police said?" Zapp asked.

"Well, I'll tell you," Birsky replied.

"You wouldn't think it to look at a policeman what a delicate disposition such a feller has got. A New York policeman will get red over something in a theayter which for years respectable young fellers in the old country has been taking their mothers to see and neither of 'em turned a hair, y'understand. Also down at Coney Island a policeman will hide his face and holler for the police because a lady has got on a bathing suit which if one of them actresses wore it in a Follies where they walk across planks over the heads of the so-called two dollar seats, y'understand, compared with the other ladies in the show you would think she was dressed for starting out in an open oitermobile to call on her husband's *Fronmier* relations."

"Aber was the show so bad like the police said?" Zapp inquired once more.

"Well, I'll tell you," Birsky repeated: "When the police receives a letter that a

show is immoral and they should please look the matter up and oblige, Zapp, they try to put themselves in the place of the average theayter goer; but the only thing is, they got an idee that people which goes most to the theayter was never in such a place before in their lives. In particular, when it comes to a show like the Russian ballet where the orchestra seats would cost five dollars apiece at the box office if they was for sale there, the police thinks that excepting the ushers everybody in the theayter is visiting New York for the first time from a place where they still got an idee that dolmans is the latest up-to-the-minute design in women's outer garments, y'understand, and, not being experienced in posters by this here Bakst, they don't know whether it's 'Ben Hur' or 'David the Shepherd King' till the curtain goes up and shows the inside of the harem with all the ladies not yet dressed to receive company."

"Naturally people from the country



"They sent a policeman there which speaks Russian."

Why You Can't Get a New Maid

"THIS bureau was founded to help girls out of work find places; but it's becoming more of a first aid to helpless housewives. We have our troubles."

The speaker was a little, fair-haired young woman whose blue eyes bubbled with sympathy and patience for poor old human nature. She sat at her desk in a great, airy room on the first floor of the office building at 55 Lafayette Street, a room filled with rows and rows of cane-seated chairs. On some of the chairs women, young and old, were sitting and waiting for work.

I had heard the lament of a friend who had advertised for a maid in three newspapers—in one of them three days running—and at the end found his wife still doing her own work and taking care of two children. So I had come to Miss Catherine G. McAvey to ask her what the matter was. To give her her official title, Miss McAvey is in charge of the mercantile and industrial department of the Public Employment Bureau of the City of New York; motto: "Free to all."

"Of course, it's the war primarily," she said. "Before immigration was cut off we had hundreds of thousands of likely girls pouring into New York every year. Now an immigrant girl is worth her weight in gold. For the last year and a half about all the new, untrained

servants we have been getting have been a few Swedes and other girls from Scandinavian countries. The German girls, who were in the most demand of all, have quit coming entirely.

"The lack of immigrants has caused a great shortage all along the line. Girls who would have come over in the latter half of 1914 by this time would have had a year's training, know some English and be able to command \$13 a month with the usual perquisites."

"The girls can pick and choose—and they do. They shun any family in which there is more than one child. If they find their mistress is fond of entertaining they leave. They won't go to any quiet, suburban place—they want to be near the moving picture shows. And they absolutely won't quit New York for another city!"

"The servant famine didn't start right after the war began. We had hard times then, you remember. It was the prosperity, added to the war, that has done it. Just before his sudden death in December last Walter Lincoln Sears, who established this bureau, wrote an article in which he proposed that we bring over war widows and orphans from Europe to fill up the gaps in the ranks of our domestic servants. We could use them all. If they should suddenly troop in here, tens of thousands of them, I

believe we would not take long to find them places. If we couldn't use them all in New York other cities would run special de luxe trains to take them West.

"You see some girls sitting around here. They won't be here long. Not one of them is seeking work as a domestic servant. No domestic ever sits here long enough to warm her chair. I reach in the card index as soon as one appears, and a moment later she is travelling toward a prospective place."

"All the usual difficulties in the way of obtaining household workers are here to aggravate matters. No American girl does housework if she can possibly help it. You can put this down in your book as gospel: Every housemaid hates her work. Girls under thirty-five shun it like the plague. And girls over thirty-five are not desired. The young girls think their chances of marrying are better in a factory or a store. The old domestic servant is 'scrapped,' often remorselessly. Most mistresses won't even consider the woman of forty-five or fifty."

"I often have a girl who comes here to apply for a place as stenographer say: 'By the way, can't you get a maid for my mother?' The first time it almost took my breath away, but we get used to funny things here. The stenographers are in clover, too. Last winter we

could supply experienced young women for \$12 a week. This winter they are getting \$18 and \$20."

"I'm afraid the women who employ servants are largely to blame for their own troubles. If I send a very young girl to some women they not only try to get her for nearly nothing, but they presume on her innocence to hold her down to the longest hours of labor, and not give her a single afternoon off! I could give out many other instances of the tyranny of housewives, but I do not want to seem to complain."

"Here is a case which touched my heart. There came here a Hungarian woman, speaking fair English. She was big and strong, but quite aged. She had been in here several times, and I sincerely wanted to help her. I knew that the Charities Department employed several charwomen over on the Island, paying them small wages. It was a kind of charity, but charity disguised as real labor."

"Why don't you go down to the Charities Building? They might—I got no further."

"A look of anger and disgust came over her dark features."

"I don't want charity," she cried. "You have no right to speak to me in that way."

"The poor woman went out the door and we haven't seen her since."