

Banning Of Books

The old controversy may be awakened as to whether literature—and by that we mean something that is well-written and has passed the test of time—can be pornographic.

Recently, 5,000 copies of the 'Arabian Nights' were confiscated by the Egyptian court as posing a threat to the morals. The unexpurgated edition of this book has long been available in the western world and may be purchased openly from any reputable bookseller. No prohibition has been put upon its sale and it must have been read by thousands of scholars all over the world, without let or hindrance. It is doubtful that English is known to the lower orders and so the question of corruption need not arise. Expurgated editions can be used in English medium schools as is done elsewhere.

Should masterpieces of literature be castrated in the name of public morals or prudery? Questions of this nature have often come up before the courts and experts asked to give their opinion. Invariably the answer has been that literature can have no ill-effects on the morals. When books have been banned on this account they have later been released for readership, without any mutilation of passages. Even Shakespeare at one time was produced in expurgated editions only to be redressed in its original form. No decline in public morals was noticed before this.

Classics, we feel, should be left alone. It is only those ephemeral productions that deliberately cater to the lower instincts that need to be repressed. Pornography for its own sake is intolerable. The susceptibilities of scholars cannot be shocked by the description of natural functions in books that have passed the censorship of time.