

*To the Honorable Members of the*

*LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MARYLAND:*

May it please your Honorable Body to carefully consider the bill of the Honorable Senator Blake, regulating the admission of minors to places of amusement. The object of this bill is doubtless the much needed improvement of the morals of the youths of our city, by prohibiting, as so expressed, their witnessing, when unaccompanied by parents or guardians, dancing at public places of amusement.

The measure is evidently sectarian in character, as dancing is the only objectionable feature in theatrical entertainments it points at with the inferred purpose of suppressing by debarring of a certain amount of juvenile patronage, in relation to males only. As most of the dramas of the present day are arranged to exhibit the specialties or display the versatility of those for whom they are written, and as the majority of such embrace dancing of some sort, must such plays, and the places where they are enacted, be called in question because of this dancing.

The question naturally arises: Is dancing an evil? *i. e.*—Is it sinful? Most assuredly it is not, for the Bible tells us it was indulged in by the Children of Israel as a mode of worship, and in which exercise the goodly King David frequently participated. We also read that he and all other ancient rulers had in their household young girls whose duty it was to dress fantastically and dance before the princes of the land. There is no reason to believe that they were called ballet girls in those days, but if we had them here at this time they would doubtless be best known by that seemingly appropriate appellation. If dancing then is sanctioned by holy writ, it cannot become sinful when executed in a play or before or after it. Nothing favorable may be said regarding the low places of amusement in our midst, but in such acknowledged respectable places as the Front Street Theatre and the Grand Opera House, it is a matter deserving of your worthy consideration whether the youths of our city are not greatly benefitted in witnessing the performances of such establishments, where the rules by which they are governed provide against improprieties by fine and dismissal, when within the jurisdiction of the stage, and in ejectment when appertaining to the auditorium. If such entertainments are fit to be seen by young persons, when accompanied by parents or guardians, they must be equally so when unaccompanied by them. As it is frequently inconvenient for parents to attend theatres with their children, they therefore send them alone, to keep them from the corrupting influences of abandoned youths who infest street corners, indulging in all manner of disgusting habits and unseemly conduct amongst themselves and towards passers by, and who are often found in the vicinity of the numerous haunts of vice with which our city abounds.

You will, therefore, please have the goodness to act adversely in relation to the bill referred to, so manifestly calculated to jeopardise the secular interests, if not the moral and spiritual welfare of the rising generation.