

Ibsen Dramas in Motion Pictures

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The dramas of Ibsen are being prepared for motion picture use in the Scandinavian countries. At the announcement some of the Norwegian "high brows" raised a cry of sacrilege, which was answered by Sigurd Ibsen, son of the great dramatist, in the following manner:

"It appears that a number of literary people are exercised over the prospect of seeing Ibsen's plays 'dragged in the mire through the motion picture theatre.' I myself am not at all opposed to kinematograph productions of my father's plays, provided only they are intelligently and artistically presented. The only reason that negotiations for such production here failed is that I did not approve of the methods the film company pursued in reproducing 'The Commander's Daughter,' by Jonas Lie, a Norwegian author of high rank.

As a result, I will not have the opportunity, as I had hoped, to control their reproduction, which in any case cannot be prevented. 'A Doll House,' 'The Lady from the Sea,' and 'Terje Vigen' have already been filmed in foreign countries, without asking my permission, and I understand the same will be the case with 'Lady Inger from Ostraat' and 'The Vikings of Helgeland.' I have no legal means in my power to prohibit this, and, to tell the truth, neither have I any fault to find with it. My only concern is that the representation shall be artistically defensible, which is not at all impossible.

No one can deny that there is artistic value in much of the material borrowed from literary masterpieces and reproduced in the kinematograph. I have only to call to mind the motion picture dramatization of Victor Hugo's 'Les Miserables,' recently seen in the cinematograph theatres in Christiania.

I say that if my father's plays can be given in that way to the masses, so much the better. A good film drama can give them a conception of a literary work they otherwise would have no idea of, as the prices at the regular theatres do not permit them to attend. The masses should not be denied this privilege, so long as the public authorities, as in ancient Athens, do not make the theatre a common gathering place for all alike.

Film representations are not always as they should be, and the film companies leave much to be desired. Time will cure many of the present blemishes. But after all has been said and done, the film is about to become a factor in cultural development of far reaching importance. International and democratic as it is, the film will undoubtedly contribute to bring humanity closer together and to bridge chasms both between nations and the economic groups that constitute nations."