

Why Not Tax Foreign Actors?

Wilton Lackaye Complains That Dramatic and Operatic Stars Come Here from Other Countries and Earn and Take Away Enormous Salaries Which Are Free from

Taxation, While American Actors Have to Pay Their Income Tax

What Some Foreign Stars Earn!

Caruso	\$2,500 a Performance.	Harry Lauder	2,500 a Week.
Olive Fremstad .	1,000 a Performance.	Forbes-Robertson .	2,500 a Week.
Emmy Destin . .	1,000 a Performance.	Bernhardt	3,000 a Week.
Cyril Maude . . .	5,000 a Week.	Vesta Victoria . . .	2,500 a Week.
	(Owning His Own Production)	Marie Lloyd	2,000 a Week.
Gaby Deslys . . .	3,000 a Week.	Kitty Gordon	1,500 a Week.
Pawlwa	2,500 a Week.	George Grossmith .	1,000 a Week.
		Leon Errol	1,000 a Week.



Harry Lauder, Jokingly Called "The Plunging Scot," Because of His Economical Proclivities.



Kitty Gordon, Resting Comfortably, Thank You, Secure from the Income Tax, Being Quite English, You Know.

Pawlwa Who Dances Away with an Untaxed Salary While Her American Sisters Pay.

He pays his income tax—which is where his English actors in Yankee parts certainly had the laugh on him.

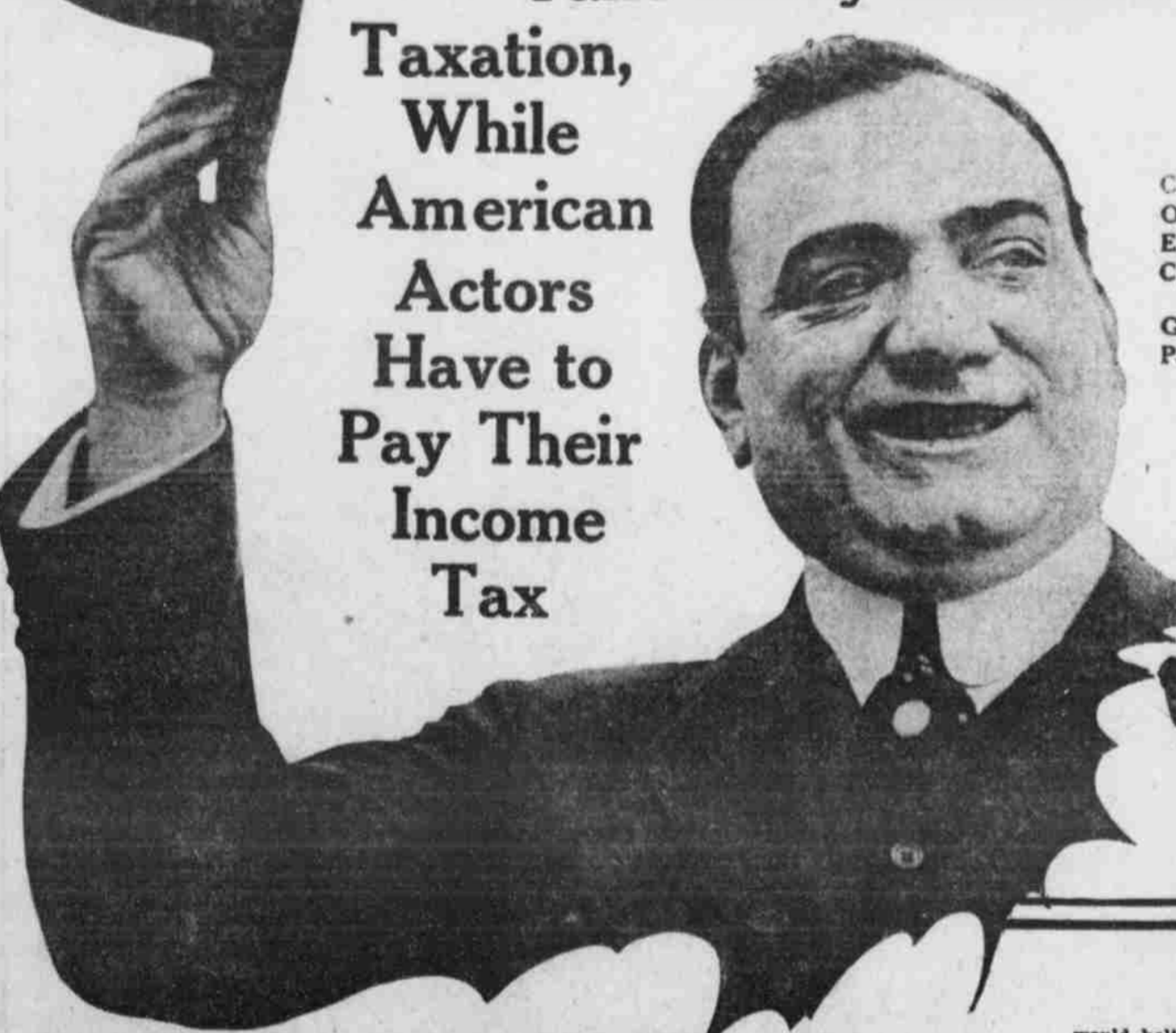
It is small consolation that the production was not a financial success. Who can say that it would have been a financial success with Yankee actors in those Yankee parts?

But the moral is there just the same. If we insist on handing our jobs over to foreigners, why not stop there? Why so overdo the generosity business by letting them off in the income tax department? Americans in my profession have no illusions about the possibility of scaring English actors from these shores with threats of putting the income tax onto them. They could pay the tax and still make twice as much money here as they would get anywhere else in the world. No, they won't lose their enthusiasm for American dollars, they will only lose some of their amusement.

Gather them in under the income tax provisions and they will not laugh at us quite as heartily as they had formed the habit of doing.

In absolute seriousness, this is an economic question. This Government levies a tax upon all incomes in excess of a certain amount per annum. It is robbing ourselves to exempt any foreigner whose income is made in America.

Photo © Ira L. Hill



Caruso "Giving Us the Laugh" as He Sailed Away Last Season with His Untaxed Thousands.

WHY does the Commissioner of Internal Revenue exempt one of the largest classes of foreigners doing business in this country from payment of the lawful tax upon income gained here? This class is composed of actors and other members of the theatrical profession. And, as stated by Mr. Wilton Lackaye in his illuminating article printed on this page, they not only outnumber native Americans in that profession, but successfully exert a competition which actually "smothers" native talent.

As Mr. Lackaye aptly remarks, "The hands across the sea get into our pockets over there and also over here. They get us coming and going."

Mr. Lackaye has promised his fellow "pro-American" actors to go to Washington and see the Commissioner about it. As he shares with Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree the Svengali powers which caused the play of "Tribby" to make a dozen fortunes here and in England, Mr. Lackaye seems to be the logical selection for that mission. Perhaps he will be able to hypnotize the Washington authorities, as he hypnotized Tribby, and have this discrimination stopped.

English competition is the most numerous and the least grateful. If English actors are compelled to pay tax on the incomes they gain here by "making faces for us," possibly—as Mr. Lackaye suggests—they may cease "making faces AT us" when they start home with "buttoned up pockets."

By Wilton Lackaye.

IN the matter of income tax I'm no neutral—I'm pro-American. I believe that most of the members of my profession who are American citizens feel the same way about it. They ought to, anyway, for they are fairly smothered by competition from abroad which gets off scot-free. English and other European actors have to pay income tax at home. When we go over there we have to help them support their governments out of our incomes. When they come over here—as they do, in multitudes—and swell their incomes out of all previous proportions, while ours are correspondingly reduced, they're at liberty to pack it all back home with them.

In other words, the hands across the sea get into our pockets over there and also over here. That's the true, up-to-date meaning of "Hands Across the Sea."

They get us coming and going. It seems to me a little alarming that it should be possible for a man who doesn't happen to be an American to spend a year here, collect, say \$100,000, button up his pockets and sail away without even being invited to contribute toward the expenses of government which made the feat possible. This seems to me just a trifle unjust.

They've done it and are still doing it, whole armies of them. Uncle Sam collected no income tax from the celebrated Kondalia, who, at the close of one American season, were estimated to be \$400,000 richer when they sailed home than when they came over. Cyril Maude, as "Grumpy," is believed to have cleared \$100,000 without making any pecuniary contribution to the United States Government.

Consider Kitty Gordon, with her \$1,500 per week for three or four years, all in American money, with no tax on it. The Lloyds, three or four in the family, most of them with big American salaries; the Grossmiths; the income prince of them all, Harry Lauder. These are familiar instances and barely a drop in the foreign actors' bucket, which American audiences fill to overflowing.

Besides dollars, this country furnishes these thrifty foreign stage people with much ill-concealed amusement, mingled with contempt. We're so "easy" that the sentiment of gratitude would be wholly misplaced.

But we "take it out" amply of the long-suffering American artist. Suppose he wishes to present a new play. He is obliged, even under the present tariff, to pay what averages 60 per cent on everything which enters into the production; whereas the foreign artist has his pro-

duction made abroad, brings it over here in his own carries it all over the United States until it is worn out, and then takes it over to Hackensack and makes a bonfire of it.

Now, what do you say to that? The spectacle is not at all uncommon. There are a few Americans playing in England—not many actors, but a number of gentlemen endowed with considerable physical beauty, and others engaged for their proficiency in ragtime, which usually interests the typical English audience. The English Government is not discriminating; these pay income tax over there just the same as though they were actors.

When we benevolently exempt the foreign artist from a tax on his income we simply add to his superior advantages over our own citizens. This is putting a premium on expatriation. The American-born artist, say of the Metropolitan Opera Company, has usually established herself as a citizen of a foreign country. That enables Miss Ex-Patria to bring sixty trunks into New York without duty. But Miss Lillian Russell, returning from a visit abroad, is obliged to pay by the ounce. That is a fact.

Season after season foreign artists come over here under contract, bringing all their costumes free of duty. They are here to gain bigger incomes than they ever get at home. They are free from the financial responsibilities to this Government which are a tax on their American co-workers. And yet the very next American who returns from abroad with the tools of her trade has to pay by the ounce.

Our own Captains of Industry make these contracts and see the fortunate foreigner in and out of the country free of duty and untaxed, in numbers which literally smother with foreign competition our home industry of the stage. They come over with a free pass, in and out, to make faces for us; and they go back un-molested, filled with amusement and contempt, to make faces AT us.

In view of the fact that so many of the foreign countries are now embroiled with one another to an extent which makes it hard for the would-be cosmopolitan American to pick a winner, it seems to me that this is an excellent time for us to invoke the spirit of pro-Americanism. We don't want to, and we don't need to, put up any Chinese wall in front of foreign artists. Let them come on over and make faces FOR us, but let us hospitably invite them to join us in paying the income tax. Their contribution would amount to considerable—more than you

would believe. And when they have made it a few times they will stop making faces AT us.

I have no objection to foreign artists from the standpoint of art. They have a message for us. Let them deliver it, by all means. The question before us is an economic one. From the standpoint of an economic principle I have the same regard for a foreign artist that I have for a Chinese laundryman. Both pack all they get away with them. Let them pay, like the rest of us. That's what we want.

If incomes gained in the theatrical profession are taxed most of that revenue will come out of the pockets of foreign artists. There are hardly any American actors now. I think there is hardly a theatre in New York where there are not more foreign than American players. Any manager will rather engage a foreign actor than an American. It is not their fault—the public likes it. The public likes to see the foreign name on the programme. It likes to hear the language spoken, don't you see, with a broad "a" and no "th" at all.

Since the European war began there are more foreign actors here than ever before. They have come over here in enormous numbers, especially from England—perhaps to make room for the Irish in the trenches. Most of them gain taxable incomes. Another thing they do is to reduce American actors' incomes, if not to the vanishing point, certainly to a point where they won't bear taxation.

Whether it is because we are Anglo-maniacs, the fact remains that the American playgoer public seems quite agreeable to the situation. There is a class of Americans who like to be considered cosmopolitan, and who appear to define a cosmopolitan as one who sneers at his own country. James T. Fields once said: "I think that a real cosmopolitan should know something even of his own country."

Our American managers began by engaging English actors for types in English plays. That seems reasonable. The public applauded, not so much because these imported actors were familiar with the real life types which they impersonated as because they were luxuries, at most imported articles are. After that the American public grew eager to see English actors as any sort of types, real life or fictional. The English actor was planted in this country, and the American actor never dreamed how abundant the harvest would be.

The American managers have continued to be wise—for their box office. They engage English actors to play pure American types, home-bred characters, who refuse to broaden their "a's" and who put their "th's" where they belong.

Consider the case of Mr. Ames, first presiding genius of the New Theatre, built and endowed to foster and protect American art. Mr. Ames transfers his talents, which certainly are respectable, to the Playhouse, and offers a generous prize for the best native American play. Miss Alice Brown, of New England, wins the prize with a drama which is not only American but New England Yankee throughout. Mr. Ames pays the prize money and proceeds to produce the prize play.

Now you would think, wouldn't you, that Mr. Ames would have engaged some genuine Yankee actors for that play? Just as so many managers began by engaging English actors to play English types? He didn't. For the two best native, real live Yankee parts he engaged two born and bred Englishmen—Mr. Herbert Kelsey and Mr. A. E. Anson. The latter had been in this country only a year. And Mr. Ames himself is a Yankee.