

# MR. SUMNER and BEAU

**T**HURSDAY morning, January 27th of this year, I received word from the organization which nurses the sales of TWO WORLDS MONTHLY and BEAU nationally that the February issues of these periodicals, which had already been shipped out to all points domestic and foreign, would not be distributed for sale upon the news stands of New York City.

Upon inquiry, I learned that Mr. John Sumner, secretary of that charming body of people known as the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, had communicated with the local distributing agency, and had informed it that if certain advance information concerning the impending numbers of TWO WORLDS MONTHLY and BEAU was accurate he would take immediate action against any company that would dare to distribute them in New York City. The local agency had the alternative to refuse to distribute, which it did.

I promptly rang the office of Mr. Sumner to arrange for an appointment and, accompanied by Mr. Nathan M. Padgug, my attorney, went to see him. I had learned over the telephone that Mr. Sumner had not yet seen a copy of either of the condemned-before-read numbers of TWO WORLDS MONTHLY and BEAU, and so I brought them with me. I found Mr. Sumner amiable and apparently amenable to reason, but, since he had not read the books, our conversation was, as it had to be, along first principles. Mr. Sumner was anxious to enforce the law for law's sake, and I for art's sake, at any rate for the sake of what pleases me to believe is art. I told him that TWO WORLDS MONTHLY and BEAU are written and published for the sophisticated only, that neither by lewd pictures or lewd contents do we make appeal to the baser passions of mankind. I cited to him the case of the news dealers of a certain city in Connecticut who recently petitioned their local police authorities in behalf of my magazines with the plea that only physicians, lawyers, and other professional people buy them. Mr. Sumner kindly promised to take these things into consideration over night, and to let us have his decision the following morning.

The only certainty I remarked to Mr. Padgug on our

way out, was that Mr. Sumner would have a good night's reading. But really the issues of the TWO WORLDS MONTHLY and BEAU were quite the best I had yet produced, and the new BEAU especially was a thing of beauty—a balm for the sore eye and the jaded wit. Yet I had to wait, and I promised myself that everything would be as it should be. It was on the whole, a restful night.

Came the dawn—and, confident and carefree, I went to see Mr. Sumner who very speedily dissipated my peace of mind. TWO WORLDS MONTHLY was quite alright, he said, and we could go ahead distributing it immediately, but BEAU, ah, that was a different story. It was absolutely unthinkable to let BEAU go out on the harmless news stands dripping with nudes which any little boy may purchase for fifteen cents. No, said Mr. Sumner, he did not approve BEAU and if I dared to issue it of my own accord he would unfailingly prosecute me.

Here, cried my friends, is your opportunity for plenty of publicity—publicity that will create a vast demand for your magazines. But strange as it may seem, I did not follow their advice. I did not take the matter into court with Mr. Sumner. Such publicity, I felt, would bring many readers to TWO WORLDS MONTHLY and BEAU, *but not to sort of readers I want*. Such publicity would bring me readers who look to magazines for filth whereas all we have to offer is wit, beauty and gaiety. It would be taking an unfair advantage of the poor dubs.

But I want readers of BEAU to judge between myself and Mr. Sumner. Mr. Sumner characterizes as filth the famous suppressed Franklin letter *To the Academy of Brussels* and the Paul Morand story *Finding Your Woman in Paris*, whereas I regard them as exquisite satirical compositions calculated to enrich the life of every man or woman capable of reading them.

What is more, I think the suppressed number of BEAU probably the more beautiful copy of any magazine ever printed in America.

SAMUEL ROTH.

*Naturally when the news leaked out that the February number of BEAU was suppressed, there was a rush for it, and the supply withheld from New York was quickly exhausted. We managed to save about a hundred copies, and for \$2 we will send you a copy autographed by the editor to the first hundred readers who write for them.*