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Concerning the Moving Picture.

Observations by Raycu, the veteran writer and esteemed authority. "A great ado" is made over the prospective exhibition of moving pictures representing the fight between Jack Johnson and James Jeffries for the boxing championship of the world at Reno, Nev., on the fourth of July.

According to reports the pictures of this fight are to be made the main pretext to injure an industry that promises far greater benefits than the fanatical agitators and jealous opponents, who are instigating this clamor and persecution are capable of bringing about.

After nearly forty years' connection with the press, during which time I have had an abundance of proof that the great leaders in the newspaper field are sincere in their assertion that they offer "a fair field and no favor." I do not hesitate to ask for space enough to make a statement that will help fair-minded men to a rational conclusion as to the right of rabid reformers to cause trouble and immense loss without further warrant than bare assertion based on distorted and grossly exaggerated reports of evil being, and further to be wrought by the exhibition of a series of pictures that show what a man can do with the weapons nature gave him, instead of using the coward's knife or pistol.

During the past ten years the moving picture industry has developed from its crude experimental stage as a cheap amusement for the populace into a form of entertainment that appeals to the most intelligent classes of the people in all civilized countries.

In its vast diversity of attractive features the taste of a vast majority is fully satisfied and the bearer of the slender purse is able to enjoy himself on equal terms with the richest.

Like any other great innovation that threatens to diminish the power and revenue of established institutions the moving picture was bound to meet with violent opposition by jealous, greedy and fanatical opponents; but, notwithstanding all the obstacles put in its way, the moving picture is firmly established as the dominant entertainment of the masses.

The cause for the rapid and tremendous expansion of the moving picture industry is obvious. A man can take his entire family to such an entertainment for the price of one seat in the gallery of a "regular" theatre. Thousands upon thousands of men who have spent their leisure hours and money in saloons and gambling houses, who the reformers could not bring to a realization of their wrong-doing, now find it more profitable and agreeable to spend their spare time and money in the "picture houses" with their wives and children.

The usual program of pictures presented at all the moving picture theatres of the better class consist of three reels of 1000 feet of film each. One reel a drama, the second a scenic or purely educational series of pictures and the third a comedy.

Whoever will take the trouble to investigate the moving picture theatre without prejudice and talk with many of its most intelligent regular patrons, as I have done, for the purpose of ascertaining the truth as to its influence, will be greatly surprised at the indisputable good done by this viciously lampooned industry.

The dramatic part frequently is a religious subject that is far more impressive and inspiring than the preponderance of sermons heard. Or it may be an historical production that gives a much better conception of a race of men, or of events and the customs of a period, than is fixed in the mind by the forced cramming of any text. Or it may be scenes that arouse patriotism; a more chivalric spirit in men who have found no such emulation in their earlier environment. Other of these dramas depict social conditions true to life that impress one strongly that evil doing is an error

that sooner or later leads to misery and a disastrous end, while good impulses and noble deeds bring happiness and other rewards.

The so-called "regular stage" at various times has claimed to exercise a salubrious moral influence, but in view of the long vogue of its devotion to adulterous filth even its most partial supporters have not had temerity enough to continue that pretension.

More good, wholesome plays that teach the advantage of praiseworthy moral conduct have been shown on the traduced screen during the past two years than have been seen on the "regular" stage in half a century.

Taking the scenic, industrial and educational films as a group, there is no gainsaying the fact that they impart a general knowledge, for a few nickels, that would cost many dollars and many days of study to acquire, let alone such expenditures as would be entailed for personal observation. In this group we find marvels of nature otherwise accessible only to the adventurer of unlimited means. We see achievements of men so stupendous that no description or ordinary picturing would avail to give even a faint conception thereof. The famous show places of the world, that the very small minority alone have hitherto been privileged to admire, are brought before our eyes for a nickel or a dime, expanding our knowledge of the world and its strange inhabitants, both human and animal, as nothing else would enable us to grasp the reality of its vast and incomparably interesting diversities.

One incontestable advantage of the moving picture is that it is comprehensible to all races. No matter what the language of the spectator may be, if he possesses any intelligence whatever, he is able to get a mental grasp of the subject portrayed.

What the moving picture means to millions of foreign born citizens who see scenes of their homeland on the screen can only be understood by those who speak many tongues; who hear parents tell their American born children of the countries and the people from which they came; who see the deep emotion of the expatriated at sight of a familiar scene, of groups of men and women, among whom may be loved ones they will never see again.

Whoever will take the trouble, as I have, to listen to comments and to enter into conversation with enough patrons of the moving picture theatre to obtain a correct opinion, will retain no doubt as to the worth of these productions as a factor, a powerful factor, in improving the minds of men and women, of boys and girls, who have neither time nor money to inform themselves otherwise; who find in the moving picture the only available models to become good citizens. Every such earnest student of social problems will agree that the benefit derived from the moving picture has been manifested beyond questioning.

Eminent educators and clergymen in constantly increasing numbers declare the moving picture to be a most valuable aid in their respective fields, and some of these are so convinced of its value that they strongly advocate the installing of projecting apparatus in the schools and churches, realizing that studies that can be entertainingly illustrated are more fruitful in good results than instruction that is taken solely as a duty and is considered irksome and laborious.

To be cheerfully entertained is one of the absolute needs of the people. The comedy film provides that enjoyment and relaxation in proper measure at far less cost and risk than it is elsewhere obtainable.

In view of the indubitable aim of the leading producers of moving pictures to raise the standard of this industry with most commendable persistence--no less in the aspect of its art than in its utilitarian possibilities--and, moreover in view of the undeniable fact that no class of business men has been so ready to conform to regulation by civic authority, however unreasonable in some instances, it appears to many to be high time that the rightful claims of those engaged in this popular business be given as fair a hearing as the vilifications of its fanatical enemies.

THE PRIZE CUCUMBER
By M. QUAD
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On the 15th day of June of a certain year, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, when he was hoeing in his garden, Deacon Amos Gray straightened up to rest his back and then there decided that he would marry the Widow Spooner. He had been a widower and she a widow for three years. She lived near him in the village, and they had known each other before marriage.

Her garden needed hoeing. He set about it. It gave him a sort of sense of proprietorship. It was her garden now, but after awhile it would be his. He had been at work for a quarter of an hour when the widow came to the open kitchen door and discovered him and called out:

"Why, deacon, this is truly good of you. I was just wondering who I could get to hoe my garden."

When he had been at work an hour the deacon uttered a few grunts and sighs and came to anchor on the step. The widow was looking fine for a woman of forty. She was robust and in good health. The services of a doctor wouldn't be needed for many a long day unless she fell down the cellar stairs. And she looked like a woman who would esteem it a privilege to build the kitchen fire every morning for four weeks after the groundhog had come out and seen his shadow. Yes, she was all right, and the deacon opened his mouth and said:

"Widder Spooner, me an' you have known each other a long time."

"Yes, deacon."

"Long before either one of us was married."

"Yes."

"And I guess we allus sorter liked each other."

"Yes."

"And now Abe is dead and Martha is dead and we are lonesome, widder. Why shouldn't we?"

She waited, but he stopped right there. There was Sister Nancy. Hadn't he better sound her and see how she was going to take it? Yes, that would be the wisest way. He therefore began to talk about the drought and other things, and after working for another hour he went home. He didn't speak to Nancy--not on that subject. She was trying to get supper with green wood, and she was hopping mad. He split up a dry board for her and blew up the fire, but he had lived long enough to know that when a woman gets real mad she must have at least a day to get over it. Next morning Nancy was so chipper that he decided to take his chances without speaking to her on the subject.

In the afternoon the deacon did some more hoeing, and there was another talk on the steps. Yes, the Widow Spooner well remembered his taking her to spelling school in the old days. She remembered their sliding hills together; she could recall the red apples he used to give her.

"Happy days them was, widder--happy days," he sighed.

"Yes, they were."

"But now you are a widder and I am a widower."

"Yes."

"And both of us goldurned lonesome."

"I am sometimes very, very lonesome."

"But we needn't be, widder--we needn't be. S'posin'?"

"Well?"

He couldn't go ahead. The thought had just struck him that she might have a wooden leg or a stiff knee and would make that an excuse for not doing the washing and ironing. He could dimly remember hearing that she had fallen from an apple tree and broken a bone somewhere. He would wait and make inquiries. It thus came about that he went home again with nothing decided. Now, the deacon was a great county fair man. He always had an exhibit of chickens, eggs or vegetables. He believed that if anything could save this world from the fate of Sodom it was the Methodist religion and a county fair held every October. At that very moment he was raising a prize cucumber to exhibit. It was only a foot long now, but it would be a rod in length before time for pulling.

Deacon Gray let a week go past without seeing the Widow Spooner. He got up one morning and stepped outdoors to inhale the fragrance of the air before sitting down to breakfast. About the first thing his eyes lighted on was a woman standing over his prize cucumber. It was the Widow Spooner. She had an ax on her shoulder, and her jaw was set.

"Why, widder, what does this mean?" asked the deacon as he sauntered out to her.

"You have the same as asked me to marry you," she replied as she spat on her hands and flourished the ax.

"But not right out."

"But near enough. Deacon, when is it to be?"

"I can't say. What are you doing with the ax?"

"In two weeks, deacon, or I chop your prize cucumber in two!"

"Lordy, woman!"

"Do I chop?"

"You wouldn't go to chop that cu--"

"Two weeks, deacon, or three or four? Speak quick!"

"Waal, say about three!"

And three it was, and, though Nancy raised a fuss and had to be carried out and dumped over the fence, the couple have lived happily together for years.

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