

MOTION PICTURE REFORM

SOME FRENCH FEATURES

The Capital Journal believes there is room for improvement in some of the tendencies of motion picture shows. It is not corrected they will degenerate into phases of presentation that will call for radical legislation. The evils should be corrected before what is an innocent source of amusement for the masses of the people—clean five and ten cent theaters—which advertise for the attendance of family trade and especially women and children, becomes generally condemned for its mixture of evil with the good. Some space is going to be given to this matter for the sake of the educational effect these shows have upon the growing generation, and not because there should be any prohibition of the better class of picture shows. They should be encouraged as long as they are clean and wholesome, but where a film is of the suggestive or ribald sort it should be barred from public exhibition the same as any other indecent picture. The moving picture has all the interest and charm of life, and when it is evil in its influence it is the evil of action and not of the imagination only as in a mere picture that is suggestive.

Function of Motion Pictures.
A writer in the October Photo-Era of Boston, Mass., thinks the inventor of the motion picture would have spat his model and burned his patents could he have seen some of the frocks, horrors and outrages perpetrated by the latest development of that invention—the biograph, vitagraph, cinematoscope or whatever else it may be styled.

A great agent for good, a means of education unrivaled, a source of much innocent and inexpensive pleasure, the moving-picture show has come to mean, as a rule, a pandering to the lowest tastes, a misrepresentation of life as it really is, as harmful and more accessible than the dime novel, and the telling of a lie, costlessly and universally, not only in the fake pictures it produces, but in the way in which the true pictures are run.

Hardly a city in the land but has its moving-picture shows in beautifully-furnished theaters, or in stores transformed by means of stucco and paint, glass and a screen, chairs and a lantern, and which have become veritable gold-mines for their owners. The places pay big dividends at five-cent admission, the expenses are small and the profits great, while the opportunities are endless—for good or bad. As a general rule, they are taken up on the bad side.

From October Photo-Era.
To be specific, I recently attended three such shows in an evening, all within two squares of each other. In each show the principal attraction was a tragedy! In one the famous James Brothers murdered, robbed and set fire to their heart's content; in another an Indian took revenge on a white man for a wrong, in a manner highly satisfactory to the audience, and in the third some ruffians kidnaped a child and were killed in the end.

These pictures, of course, are played as much play as anything one sees on the stage, and often very good plays, so far as acting goes, and almost always with beautiful, natural settings. But the constant pictures of crime, in any form, even if the punishment be shown at the end, is a harmful and degrading thing generally when a large percentage of the patrons of such theaters is made up of minor, or adult, or even adult women, and the point of view which all want to see is these things as they are.

Our children have little but admiration for the value and time spent in making such films. In the first place, the patient waiting of the picture, the selection of the proper background, the lighting of the scene, the dress, the road-testing, the shooting, the editing—anything necessary for the picture, but one can wish heartily that the effect and mood be something elevating, or at least harmless, instead of the scolding realism of bloodshed, crime and brutality.

To see an Indian bend his bow and draw him swiftly at the end of a rope, tied to his horse, over rocks and rocks around, is not a pleasant sight, even when one knows that a discussion has been substituted for the real man who was tied, and understood that the horse and man are traveling at twice their normal pace because the operator is "shooting it out" a little with the great bow. To see a wife plunged deep into the breast of a woman by a man whose hands are as cold as ice, and who looks as cold as the picture-maker, the wife's eyes seem to stare the fish and the blood to sear forth after which the victim writhes, rolls her eyes and finally dies in great pain.

Melodrama is Permissible.
There is a wide scope of the melodrama is permissible. But when a murderer reaches right over the table and stab another man in cold blood, the limit has been reached for presentation to women and children. One film shown on the coast was that of an electrocution, the victim sitting in the chair and undergoing the torture of slow death by electric current. The twitching of the muscles, the death spasms, and even the smoke of the burning flesh where the current was applied to the bare

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flesh are shown in the picture. It is the hardening effect upon young people that is to be deplored in the exhibition of such moving pictures. Killings generally are to be discouraged from an educational standpoint. There is plenty of action possible of a dramatic character, without introducing actual slaughter before the eyes of the rising generation as a suggestion in the direction of committing crimes. The newspapers are compelled to print too much of the grisly without reproduction in pictures.

Lessons of Cruelty.
One of the favorite stunts at the electric theaters for the past few weeks was a picture film that showed the fate of a poor peasant that was a great pot of a lady. The first picture shows puss lapping milk out of a saucer, a sleek, well-fed creature and the object of affection by its mistress. Then the boy as practical laborer puts in appearance. He hooks the cat in the air, snuffs the cat with a kite, blows it up with bombs and as a final act of entertainment cuts it open before the audience and disembowels every and cuts her up into quarters and throws the flesh into the pot that the old lady has set hot for broth. All this is considered witty in the stunts of Paris where cats are frequently dished up as rabbit stew. But the lessons in cruelty practised as a joke sink deep into the minds of children, and the suggestions of cruelty are readily acted upon by a class of boys who are always ready to torture animals. Such films should be forbidden.

Too Many French Pictures.
Many of the moving picture films are manufactured in France and for the entertainment of the population in the poorer districts. The French standards of art are different from the American, and require a great deal of the ludicrous and suggestive to please the morbid tastes of the European theatergoers. So most of the imported films are on a lower plane of morality than Americans are accustomed to. The drinking scenes, the pleasure-seeking, the relations of the sexes toward each other, we all in an atmosphere which is really not fitted for the eyes of American youth and children. Now it seems to them an innocent thing for a girl to place a cigarette between the lips of her lover and light it for him, but it is not the standard of conduct in our country and we have it will never become general. But the picture shows make these things familiar, and it is not their fault because they take the films that are sent to them, and often the license has no control over the character of the pictures which some professional has engaged. But many of the scenes are too even for American women and children and ought to be prohibited.

Satyrism Too Common.
The writer has recently visited picture shows in Pendleton and in Portland, and the inevitable conclusion from many of the French pictures is that the principal industry of middle-aged men is to make appointments with young women and get them drunk, and that the average man is ready to make love to his neighbor's wife.

Dissevered Partnerships.
The firm of Bill Anderson has dissolved by mutual consent. Bill would not pay all the bills that Anderson was running against him, and besides claims Anderson caused hard feeling in his family. So Bill has decided to sever the business on his own hook. Anderson has been raising a good deal of trouble lately and Bill has decided to quit him and run the place himself. All accounts due the old firm are payable to Bill and he will not be responsible for any little bills that were run by Anderson.

That is the title of a moving picture show that is on the stage at Portland. Four youths saunter through a park. They pass a group of girls at a fountain. The girls ogle

them, and one gives the wink to her three friends and they follow the boys. They overtake them, the usual flirtation ensues, and an appointment is made. The boys go to rooms in a lodging house, and are evidently in the great city from country town. Later all come to one room, and the girls appear. They proceed to make merry with the boys, take all kinds of liberties with them, wine is ordered, and when the boys are not looking, the leader of the courtesans dopes the wine, and all kinds of "scenery" ensues. From the time the girls pursue these youths, the whole proceeding is demoralizing and suggestive in the extreme. This film should not be allowed to be shown in Portland, and should never be brought to Salem. But a city like Portland, where the Salome dance is advertised as having been visited and approved by the police will stand for anything in the picture show line. What this writer is protesting against is that these shows are bringing to our people the European standards of morality but of immorality. The crowds at the picture shows are being unconsciously degraded to the lower continental standards of impurity.

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The Elevated Hand Shake.

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The new method of handshake was the establishment and adoption of certain persons always on the lookout for the latest in society, who thought that the prince had inaugurated a new fashion which one sees daily in operation in the Strand, London, westward. — London Globe.

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