AMERICAN HOME SERIES
NORMAN E. RICHARDSON, Editor

THE HOME AND MOVING PICTURES

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

It is estimated that twelve million people attend moving pictures every day in the United States. It is a scientifically attested fact that the nature of the impressions made is such, that they are powerful inducements to action. They stimulate strongly the native impulses and easily become the deciding factor, resulting in moral or immoral conduct.

The facts that the admission price is universally low, that moving picture houses are easily accessible, and that other forms of recreation are often not available have increased the percentage of children and youth attending these shows. Parents dare not assume an attitude of indifference toward what is rapidly becoming the most influential single factor among all the educative forces of the land. Our children are rapidly becoming what they see in the movies.

Miss Kennedy's study is based upon a careful investigation of four hundred and four films. Her point of view as interpreter of the information secured through the survey is that of one who knows the spiritual needs and capacities of children. This material will prove to be a revelation to many parents who, unconsciously, have permitted their children to become morally battered and permanently scarred in the uncensored or poorly censored moving picture.

NORMAN E. RICHARDSON.

THE HOME AND MOVING PICTURES

"Let absolutely nothing touch a child's senses that you would not have become a permanent part of his life."—Weigle.

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THE HOME AND MOVING PICTURES

THE word "nest" implies birdlings. It implies also the safeguarding, the nature, and the training of young bird life by father and mother birds. In like fashion the word "home" implies children. It also implies the nurture and training, the safeguarding from evil of child life and youth life by father and mother love and care.

These statements are truisms, yet too often the implications that they contain are only partially apprehended by parents and others in authority. They fail to understand that it requires knowledge, painstakingly and laboriously acquired, and wisdom, such as comes only from right attitudes of thought and feeling, for anyone in the true sense of the word to safeguard and nurture a child.

The parent bird is prompted by instinct to do the simple things that the well being of the little bird requires. It selects proper food, provides warmth and shelter from the rain, and defends from threatening danger. On the other hand, human parents have a much more complex task. Some one has said that the only qualification for meeting the task that inheres in physical paternity or maternity is the awakening of the instinct to provide for the *needs* of the children and to protect them from danger. Knowledge of the *processes* by which these needs are met and by which dangers to body, mind, and spirit are averted does not come by instinct. It must be acquired, and this is done only by persistent and often times painful effort.

Progress in Knowledge of Physical Laws

Much progress has been made in knowledge of the laws governing the physical life of children. Intelligent parents everywhere are understanding the impor-

tance of proper food, of modified milk for babies, and a carefully balanced ration for those that are older. They recognize the fact that where a body is being builded not only must suitable material be provided for the building, but this material must be in sufficient quantity and furnished at proper intervals. They know that the penalty for neglect here is a child frail in health or stunted in growth. They realize the importance of fresh air, of exercise, and of all the other agencies that make for physical health and vigor. They know also that serious injury to a child's body destroys the hope of a robust adulthood, that adenoids may affect the sight or hearing, that a twist in the little spine may result in deformity, while contagious diseases may sow the seeds of lifelong disability. Fortunately for the human race, such knowledge is now much more common than it was in the last generation.

On the other hand, parents are often perplexed and helpless when it comes to dealing with the child himself, with his nature, with his personality, with the possibilities that are summed up within him. They have not learned that while each child differs from every other, yet there are great fundamental laws that are true of every child under heaven. These laws hold good in the realm of personality just as truly as do physical laws in the realm of the body. A knowledge of these makes for success in the nurture of children, while a disregard of them will almost inevitably result in disaster. These fundamentals of child life cannot be understood without some knowledge of the qualities or characteristics of children.

It will not be necessary at this time to consider all of these qualities. Mention will be made of only a few that are directly involved in the subject under consideration.

Impressionableness

Formerly it was the custom to speak of a child's nature as *plastic* in the sense that clay is plastic.

Much was said about *molding* a child's personality or character after some pattern or plan of the molder. An *impression* seems unconsciously to have been considered as a kind of "dent" made in this plastic material which would after a while become set or made permanent by the hardening of the substance that received it. Essays and poetry were written setting forth the importance of proper child-molding. "I took a piece of plastic clay," was much quoted by speakers and writers on child life.

We have now learned that a child is not passive material, but is an active agent. By means of his hungry senses he gathers in eagerly and continually impressions which, if they are strong, tend to become a permanent part of his personality and of his character. In other words, the things that he sees, hears, and feels become a kind of building material out of which he fashions what he now *is* and what he will become.

Let us note certain things with reference to this impression-making process.

Impression Receiving, an Indiscriminate Process.—A child does not *select* the impressions that he receives. It is difficult to give an adequate conception of his indiscriminate sensitiveness to those things that are about him and that touch his life. Bring to the mind a camera, with the film in place and the mechanism adjusted. Any object, beautiful or ugly, desirable or undesirable, that comes within range is registered and enters into the very texture of the film that receives it. In similar fashion, a child registers indiscriminately all of those things, beautiful or ugly, good or bad, that catch his attention or stir his interest. Cameralike, he also tends to retain as a permanent possession the impressions which he thus receives. Older boys and girls in like fashion also receive impressions continually, though in not quite the indiscriminate way that characterizes the earlier periods. In some sense at least they have already received their *bent* of personality and therefore use unconsciously a selective process.

Early Impressions Are Profound in Their Effect.—An impression received by a child is much more profound and far-reaching in its effect than one made upon an adult. To illustrate. If a gash is made on the trunk of a tree it will leave a scar, certainly, but it will not mar the symmetry and beauty of the tree. If, however, a wound is made on a little shoot just coming through the ground, the injury will go through the trunk and the branches that were to be, blasting, distorting, it may be ruining, forever. So an evil impression received by an adult is usually circumscribed in its results, but if it be made upon a child, upon life in the germ, with its fearful, its wonderful capacity for development and expansion, who can tell into what it will grow? So also, impressions for good made upon a person of maturity will probably modify his thinking and conduct in part only, while if they be made upon a child, they may affect the bent or direction of his whole life.

Root Impressions.—The term "root" may well be applied to these early impressions that are made upon children since, as is hinted above, it is a significant and well-known fact that the individual tends in his thinking and in his feeling to gather from life those things that are similar or akin to the impressions that he has already received. An instance of this so-called apperceptive process may be given here. A child was praised heartily because when she had a tooth pulled out she did not cry. In reality the tooth was loose and so the process was not painful. Had it been so, she most surely would have cried. She was told "You were *brave*, you were a *soldier*, you did not *cry*." The whole incident made a deep impression upon her. Without any consciousness of why she did so, she responded to the impression made and began to set herself in her childish way to be brave, to endure pain without crying. As she grew older the things in stories and in history that most appealed were instances of courage and endurance. On one occasion, stirred to emulation by accounts read of American Indians who did not flinch when burned

at the stake, she found some long keen switches and tried to see how hard and how long she could hit her bare legs without crying. She is now a mature woman and still the things in books, in art, and in human lives that appeal most strongly to her are those that deal with courage and endurance. "We count him happy that endures." "Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee a crown of life." "Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." These are texts filled with meaning and power to which she thrills and responds. From an early impression there has grown a life ideal, which worked out in daily life has become a part of her character. It should be noted that they were chance words that made the impression. None of those about the child ever knew the far-reaching results of those words. It is also true that it is not often possible to observe the growth of a first or root impression as was done in the instance given. There are enough of these instances, however, to make it clear that if the various stages were held in memory, it would be found that many of the fine traits of character revealed in adult life are rooted in early childhood impressions.

In a like manner, science is now demonstrating the fact that much that is evil in adult life—morbid or vicious tendencies, and the like—may be traced directly back to so-called "soul hurts" or injurious impressions received in childhood.

How Permanent Impressions Are Made.—Let us now consider briefly the means by which impressions become lasting or permanent in their effects. It may be said that they are usually lasting in proportion to the feeling of pleasure or pain that is aroused. Any sight, sound or happening that produces joy, admiration, reverence, fear, pain, and the like, adds to this permanency. If the circumstances are unusual, or if the surroundings are unfamiliar, the impressions received have added power.

The supreme method or process, however, by means of which an impression becomes permanent is what may be termed *suggested action.* In other words, a

child tends to *do* the things that have impressed him. It is true, as educators say, that "knowing comes by doing." It is also true that *being* comes by doing. This doing is suggested, as was stated above, by the things that he experiences. This is an added reason why he should see and hear those things that are fraught with helpful and fine suggestions and should, as far as possible, be shielded from those things that suggest evil action.

The Law of Suggestion.—Instead of discussing at this time the various phases of imitation, let us give careful consideration to some aspects of the law of suggestion. This law plays so important a part in impression-making and so tends to reproduce itself in imitative action that it calls for special elaboration. Only its familiar aspects will be discussed however, and there will be no attempt to present any of its technical phases. Everyone is more or less familiar with its practical workings. A person coughs in an audience, and immediately a dozen others cough also. Suggestion has resulted in imitative action. One person stops on the sidewalk and looks upward; a throng of people immediately gather, all standing still and looking upward. The day after a circus comes to town all the small boys in the community play "circus." A man rushes heroically into danger to rescue others; a score of men follow his example. A crime is described in minute detail in the newspapers; a wave of similar crime sweeps over the country. A lynching is committed in a town; the next day the children on the playground act out the whole tragedy. All of these are instances where indirect suggestion has resulted in imitative action. Innumerable other instances can be called to mind. The "contagion of conduct," whether that conduct be good or evil, must always be taken into account. Careful thought should be given to the statement, "Ever to have heard or seen a thing makes that thing possible in the life."

While the law of suggestion observes no age limit, yet children and young people are especially respon-

sive to it. The impressionableness of children is due in large measure to their extreme suggestibility. The adolescent yields also to this law of suggestion. The instinct of hero worship which is strong within him causes him in a special sense to respond to suggestions made by the character or the conduct of selected persons who appear to him to be heroic.

It should be remembered in this connection that the adolescent's conception of a hero may develop by stages. In the early stage *power*, whether it be manifested in good or in evil, is to him heroic. Unless he is under the right influences his hero worshiping instinct may remain permanently on this low plane. To a young girl, beauty, social success, fine clothes, and surroundings tend to idealize their possessor. One reason for the desire of a youth for a hero grows out of the fact that he is trying to learn the rules of the game of life, and is looking for a clue to conduct. So he seeks for some person whose behavior may suggest these rules and who can serve as a model after which he can fashion his own conduct.

In addition to the part it plays in the instinct of hero worship the law of suggestion as it relates to adolescent boys and girls is to be taken into serious account in yet another direction. Their bodies are newly matured. Strange, unknown life forces are at work within them. They are ignorant of the real import of their feelings and impulses. Their battlefield is in the realm of sex and of the emotions, and a little weight thrown on either side may win or lose the struggle for manhood or womanhood. The kind of suggestions that relate to this field and that are received by them are of especial importance. Since in many additional ways the law of suggestion operates by securing imitative action it is evident that all possible sources from which, suggestion or impressions can be received by children and by growing boys and girls should be scrutinized with the greatest care.

Chief Sources of Impressions.—In addition to the impressions received by children and young people from the conduct of people with whom they have

contact, yet others are made by stories told them, by books read and by personal experiences of various kinds. There is another agency which, because of its nature, is in the highest degree fraught with suggestion and is powerful in making lasting impressions. This agency is the moving picture.

The Moving Picture.—It may be well just here to consider with care the reasons why the moving picture possesses such impression-making power. Many of the pictures shown arouse fear, wonder, joy, admiration and other strong emotions. The unusual and the unexpected often appear. There is the appeal of the beautiful or the repulsion of ugliness. Interest is often profoundly stirred. All of these are elements which, as was noted above, enter into the making of strong and permanent impressions.

What is of even more significance, moving pictures depict *conduct* of many and widely varying kinds. They show this conduct in a kind of glamour, produced by stage effects, which intensifies its attraction. It will be remembered that conduct always teems with suggestion either good or bad, to the child or youth that sees it. We may conclude, then, that children will tend to *do* the things that they see in moving pictures, and that this process of doing will incorporate these suggestions into their lives and characters. Adolescent boys and girls will tend to choose their heroes from the actors in moving pictures and to form their life ideals and standards from the *conduct* of these heroes both on the stage and in private life.

The striking statement has been made by one of the large moving picture concerns that twelve millions of people in the United States visit moving pictures every day. It is therefore evident that both by reason of the many and varied impressions that it makes, and because of the large number of persons that come under its influence, the moving picture is the most powerful educational agency in the world to-day. It must be understood that because of the reasons given above, *every film*, good or bad, every

slap-stick comedy or the masterpiece of dramatization, is *educational.* The narrow use of this term as it is sometimes applied to certain types of films is not here intended.

Too much emphasis cannot be laid upon this educational aspect of all moving pictures, since there is a widespread idea that they are a means of recreation only. Because of this misapprehension their tremendous import to young life has been overlooked.

Recent Tendencies in Young Life

Certain recent tendencies are observed by those who are especially interested in the welfare of children and young people, and in an attempt to find a cause for these tendencies the moving picture has been called in question.

A brief survey of some of these symptoms that disturb students of growing life will prove illuminating. Many young children are sophisticated beyond their years. They are prematurely world-wise. The bloom is being rubbed off. It is also evident that too frequently they are being forced into a premature emotional and sex development. This is especially true of children in later childhood or those of nine, ten, eleven, and twelve years of age.

This change is evident in various ways. It appears in the kinds of stories and books which they prefer. Graded book lists based on the normal interests of children will have to be revised if present conditions continue. The demand is frequently for novels, for love stories, instead of the wholesome stories of boy-and-girl life that were formerly enjoyed. This is especially true of girls. The period of early adolescence, once termed that of sex repulsion, seems now to be a period of active sex attraction. Painted faces and penciled eyebrows are common among girls of this age, and are sometimes found in the earlier group.

Some Concrete Instances.—A girl of eleven was drawing on a sheet of paper. When asked what she was drawing she said, "I am drawing vamps." The

sketches showed an intimate acquaintance with the undulations and the seductive glances of women vampires. In a Southern city a girl of eleven wished to go to town with her mother. She was required to stay at home and practice her music lesson. Before the mother returned the child committed suicide by shooting herself. In a few weeks a child of about nine in a New England city failed to secure promotion in school, and committed suicide. A child in a Western city became angered and took poison. Other instances of child suicide recently have been recorded. It will be noted that these instances occurred within a few weeks' time and in different parts of the country.

A group of children took one of their number, placed a rope about his neck and over the limb of a tree, compelled him to mount a barrel, pushed him off and were watching his death struggles when he was rescued just in time to save his life.

Are the ideals and conduct of young people also undergoing modifications? Waves of crime sweep over the country. The crimes committed are of many types—ruthless and often unprovoked murder, theft and grand larceny, burglary, and the rest. Members of probation boards and judges of juvenile courts are authority for the statement that the great majority of the criminals are under twenty years of age and that many of them are mere boys.

In a town of about twenty thousand people high-school students give social functions that begin at midnight and close at dawn. After each dance is an intermission of forty minutes for joy rides. In a city of about a hundred thousand during a single year twenty-two high-school girls of good families sank into the pit of blackness from which there is no returning. A young girl of one of the best families of the land was arrested at an Eastern bathing beach because of her lack of clothing. Another contracted a "progressive marriage" with the understanding that after a year's time if either so desired the marriage would be annulled. One girl said to another,

"I am tired of work. I believe that I will get married." To the suggestion of her friend that she might not better her lot by the process she answered, "Oh, well, if I don't like it, I can always get out of it."

Low ideals are found not only in girls. The statement is made again and again that a mother can no longer say with full assurance to her daughter that a young man will amuse himself with the girl who is loud and fast but will choose for his wife one that is modest and fine. Too often he wants a girl who is a "fine looker and dresser" and who "knows the ropes."

As a magazine article puts it, "The day is coming rapidly when a woman will know life in all its phases as does a man of the world, and when the only type of woman who can continue to hold the interest of a man will continue to taste all of life's experiences as he tastes them." A young woman in answer to a statement made by a student of social conditions, said in effect: "Yes, we are shameless. The only difference between us who are young and you who are older is that we are *honest.* We say openly and do openly what you say and do in secret."

A woman's magazine has printed copies of a number of portraits of women whose persons were exposed, with the comment, "What did their elders say of them?" The further statement was made in substance that youth would always use its body as a lure, and that Dame Nature was about her own business in the process. Certainly, if nature in the sense intended is to be the law by which manners and morals are fashioned, nothing further can be said on the subject.

The incidents given above were secured as the result of continued investigation and are massed here in order that they may present in bird's-eye view the reasons why it has seemed wise to scrutinize with care any agency that touches large numbers of children and of young people. Other instances of a similar nature are available but it is not necessary to present them here.

A Moving Picture Survey

In an effort to trace effects back to the cause, a survey covering a large section of the country was made of moving pictures. A questionnaire of ten points was put into the hands of intelligent surveyors. They were instructed not to select the pictures but to visit them in the order presented by the theaters. They were to go to all of the various types of theaters found in the community. In some cities a plan was worked out by means of which all of the moving picture theaters were visited in rotation through a given period of time. The surveyors were usually asked to observe the children and older boys and girls who were in the audience and to note any reaction by them to any part of the picture. When duplicates were eliminated it was found that there were reports on four hundred and four films. The questionnaire with the tabulated results is here given:

Points included in Questionnaire	Number of Films Containing Indicated Points
1. Married Intrigue or Unfaithfulness	117
2. Divorce	38
3. Immodest Dress	172
4. Social or Individual Drinking	140
5. Indecent Cabaret Dancing	97
6. Interior of houses of ill fame, gambling hells, etc.	124
7. Undue Freedom of Contact Between Sexes	192
8. Smoking by girls and women	82
9. Realistic struggle of girl or woman to defend honor	113
10. Tense nerve-racking situations	223

Number of films free from objection, 35.

Experience proved that at least two other points should have been included in the questionnaire, namely, "Is the Church or Ministry Ridiculed?" "Is Crime Portrayed in Minute Detail?"

So far as could be ascertained children were in attendance upon practically each picture surveyed. Sometimes there were but few. At other times there were large numbers. This difference did not seem usually to be due to the kind of picture shown. The hour or the day of the week seemed rather the de-

termining factor. Sometimes they came with older people, many times alone. A very significant fact was discovered: children of about nine to fourteen years of age, go in large numbers to so-called "tough" picture theaters, because the price of admission is less than at the better theaters. They receive permission and money "to go to a movie" and they go to the cheapest place. Adolescent boys and girls were much in evidence. It was discovered that many of these go three and four times a week and that some go *every day*.

Reactions of Children and Young People.—A number of reactions of children and young people to special features of pictures were noted by the surveyors. Some typical instances are given.

A graphic murder scene was being enacted. A child of about four or five began to scream "Oh, mamma, let's go! Oh, mamma, let's go!" The mother with difficulty silenced the child and remained until the end of the picture.

Thirty or forty boys of about nine to thirteen years of age sat together near the front of a theater. When the villain, who was also the hero of the picture, struggled with a policeman and finally struck him senseless to the ground the boys broke into vehement and prolonged applause. On a similar occasion, in addition to the clapping of hands, the boys shouted, "Down the cop! Down the cop!"

A picture showed a father who was not an especially high type of manhood, it is true, yet the observer was conscious of shock when a shrill chorus of children's voices applauded the young son who struck his father down.

A lad of nine watched with interest a picture that showed many instances of drinking. He produced a bottle of coca-cola and drank "between acts."

During the showing of a long and passionate embrace and kiss another lad of about the same age was observed watching the scene intently, finally uttering a sound of relish that was significant. His father and mother laughed at his precocity.

During a vampire play two good-looking, well dressed lads in their early teens made such comments as would serve to index the impressions being received.

A middle-aged woman and a young girl were seated side by side. As the picture proceeded it became so filled with physical suggestiveness of the lowest type that the woman said, "I do not believe that I can bear to look at it any longer." The girl, in a perfectly matter-of-fact way, without any evidence of trying to be *shocking*, replied, "Oh, when you get used to it you won't mind it!"

A study of the elements in the situation as revealed by the survey will be illuminating. This study may aid in determining whether the relation of cause and effect exists between habitual attendance upon moving pictures and the disturbing tendencies evident in young life.

Elements in Moving Pictures That Are Helpful.—Thirty-five of the four hundred and four films observed were free from objectionable features. Some of these were clean, wholesome comedies, full of fun and free from vulgarity or slap-stick crudities. Some had interesting plots that entertained without undue tension or nerve strain, while a few contained a challenge to lofty thought and conduct. An instance of the last named type may well be given here. Christopher Columbus had never appealed especially to the surveyor. The fact that he had discovered America had not been so presented as to kindle her imagination or challenge her hero-worshiping instinct. A film was observed that showed the lad Columbus as he first felt the dawning of a great idea. On the background of an artistic stage setting were shown his struggles with poverty, with ignorance and with superstition, his interview with the queen, the equipment of the tiny fleet, and the venture into the great unknown. The vision and insight of the man, his indomitable purpose and will, the ringing challenge of his cry "Sail on! and on! and on!" were so set forth as to make an impression upon even the adult

observer. It was perfectly evident that if there were adolescent boys and girls in the audience, they would inevitably thrill to his greatness and would themselves be stirred to lofty purpose and action.

It is clear that all of the three types of pictures mentioned above were distinctly helpful either from the standpoint of innocent amusement provided or because of inspiration given.

Part of the thirty-five, however, while they did not contain any of the points mentioned in the questionnaire, were nevertheless namby-pamby or insipid and hence are doubtful as to the influence exerted.

Elements in Moving Pictures That Are Hurtful

The remaining three hundred and sixty-nine films each contained one or more objectionable points. Sometimes all of the ten that were included in the questionnaire were found in the same film. A careful consideration and classification of these hurtful elements is here given.

Elements Dealing With Sex Life and Relationships.—This whole field was laid bare in the films surveyed. There are no longer any reserves left in human life. As will be noted from the table of results a large number depicted married intrigue or unfaithfulness—the "conventional triangle," as it is now called—divorce as a normal solution for all problems of married life, immodest dress and freedom of personal contact between the sexes. A large number of films appeal to the morbidly sensuous by showing realistic struggles of women to defend their honor, while the number that present indecent cabaret dancing may well challenge the attention. A striking instance of the fact that no reserves or privacies are left is found in the number of scenes that dealt with maternity. It may well be questioned whether the sanctity of motherhood is conserved by showing to the curious the details of the process. The tender, most intimate scenes of married life, as well as of girl life are presented in minute, bold detail until

human privacies are changed to a beaten highway and the walls surrounding the Holy of holies of life are broken down.

In this connection attention is called to the large proportion of pictures showing the interior of houses of ill fame, gambling dens, and the like. The surveyors saw the interior of every kind of den of iniquity known to man, from the opium joint and hovel where traffic was held in human flesh to the gilded casino and sumptuous houses of sin. In these the conduct of the inmates was presented in detail, leaving but little to the imagination.

It is evident, for reasons already given, that the points just enumerated are particularly hurtful to adolescent boys and girls. It seems hardly possible that some of the popular dances which, in one instance at least, embody sex rhythms of the West African coast, could find place in reputable circles unless young and old alike were being *educated* into tolerance by seeing such dances portrayed. The present extreme style of dress followed by young girls has evidently been made possible by the immodest dress of moving picture stars. Their loss of personal reserve or modesty as shown by the unusual freedom of personal contact of the sexes would seem to be due to the inevitableness with which passionate love scenes are portrayed upon the screen. The loose ideas held by many young people with reference to personal immorality, to marriage and to divorce are a natural product of the same process.

Children of nine to twelve years of age are also injured by the elements of evil under discussion. Indeed, as was previously intimated, this group seems to be affected in a very real and definite way by the suggestions that they receive. Many instances of abnormal feeling and conduct are found among children of this age. Younger children also receive many hurtful impressions from seeing films shot through with these particular types of evil. They doubtless often fail to grasp the import of much that they see, but various incidents show that

they oftentimes receive scars upon heart and spirit by continual attendance upon such pictures. A little girl of about eight years said to her mother, "Mamma, when I grow up I am going to be a woman of sin." In answer to her mother's horrified question she said, "Oh, I saw one in a moving picture, and she wore such pretty clothes and had such a good time." Children are seeing the "seamy side" of life with all its pleasurable details played up and its loathesomeness obscured. The result of this untimely knowledge is to force them into a premature development which dwarfs their natures and tends toward degeneracy.

Moving Pictures and Prohibition. There are two other points that are closely related to those that deal with sex and with the emotions. These are social or individual drinking, and smoking by women or girls. It should be remembered that the present achievements in prohibition are the result of educating children in the day school and in the Sunday school as to the effects of alcohol upon the body. In this way a generation of men and women was produced that is intelligent and vigorous in its attitude toward intemperance. It seems evident that a propaganda is being conducted along directly opposite lines through the agency of the moving picture. Very often the hero drinks either alone in his room or with others in a low gambling den, or at some elaborate social function. Often the heroine drinks also. In the comedies and in the jokes that are thrown upon the screen between pictures, prohibition is held up to ridicule and evasions of the law are applauded. If the multitudes of children and young people that attend the moving picture theaters continue to receive the impressions made by this propaganda the next generation will reverse the verdict of this with reference to drinking and prohibition.

Whatever may be said about the prevalence of the smoking of cigarettes by men, there cannot be two opinions about the danger involved in smoking by large numbers of girls and women. That such a condition is increasingly true is evident to anyone

who touches girl life. Three beautiful, well-dressed girls and three men were dining in a large hotel. All six were smoking. A physician, commenting on the fact, said that when both boys and girls smoke there is not much hope that the next generation will have either sound bodies or normal minds. *Ninety-eight of the films surveyed showed women or girls smoking.* The law of suggestion operating tends to express itself in imitative action on the part of growing girls.

Dangers Often Overlooked.—Usually the test as to the objectionable features in a film is applied in the realm just considered, and pictures are judged objectionable or nonobjectionable according to their treatment of sex relationships and of kindred matter. There are, however, other dangerous elements that are frequently overlooked.

Persons who witness terrible or horrible scenes with frequency tend to become callous or brutalized. The law recognizes this tendency when it decrees that executions must be in private. Yet the great majority of films surveyed showed ghastly murders, and tragedies of every kind. The surveyors saw persons put to death in every possible way. They were stabbed, torn limb from limb, shot, poisoned, drowned, burned, thrown from precipices, or crushed under bowlders. They were killed suddenly or by lingering torture. Sometimes the face or figure was enlarged and brought to the front in order that no sign of agony might be overlooked. They were killed one at a time or in wholesale slaughter. Suicides were much in evidence. The delicate immature nature of a child who is subjected to such scenes is seared as if by living flame. Yet numbers of children were in attendance. A reason may be found here for the wave of child suicide. Again suggestion expresses itself in imitative action.

Mention was made of two additional points that should have been included in the questionnaire. The first of these relates to the church or ministry. In practically every instance where a minister appeared in a film he was a *sissy*, a weakling who was dressed

in exaggerated clerical garb and who acted in what seems to be considered the conventional way for a preacher to act. He was timid and deprecatory, serving as a foil or background for the red-blooded hero, or villain who demonstrated his manhood in various so-called virile ways. Every boy or girl in the hero-worshiping period would inevitably note the contrast and would in consequence tend to consider the minister and the church which he represents as subjects for tolerance only or even for contempt.

A typical instance of the kind of slur occasionally cast on religion is here given. In a very artistic picture the first view flashed on the screen showed an ancient heathen temple with a slim white-clad girl bowing in supplication before an idol. Under this was the inscription "In olden times when a girl needed help she prayed to her god." The next picture showed a beautiful American girl in the act of writing upon a sheet of paper. The inscription stated that "In this day and time, in America, a girl needing help depends upon her *wits*." The picture then proceeded to show in an attractive fashion how the heroine used her wits in trickery to gain her own ends.

The second additional point had to do with the elaborate portrayal of crime. The suggestions received by some types of youth from seeing the details of crime, inevitably result in similar crimes. So, in part at least, a cause is indicated for the present wave of crime among the young.

Many are unfamiliar with the following important truth. If the emotions, the feelings are stirred continually and violently, after a time they are exhausted and *the person loses in large measure the power to feel.* Hence, tense, nerve-racking situations shown in moving pictures, since they exhaust nervous energy and unduly excite the emotional nature of those who witness such scenes, are disastrous in their consequences. Children, because of the instability of their nervous systems, their vivid imagination, and their sensitiveness of feeling, are peculiarly in danger

at this point. Two hundred and twenty-three films surveyed contained situations of the most tense and exciting type.

One instance will serve to illustrate. A band of ruffians capture a man. They carry him to a deserted house in a lonely field, tie him hand and foot, fasten him in a chair, and suspend a heavy weight above him by a stout cord. A candle is lighted and so placed that at a certain time the flame will reach and burn the cord, thus releasing the weight. Then the scenes are shifted rapidly, showing first the man struggling as the candle burns lower, then the rescuers who are speeding to save him. The flame nears the cord, the rescuers increase their speed, they puncture a tire, etc., until, just as the cord is burning, they rush in and the man is saved.

The serial films are hardly more than a succession of similar incidents. An adult who is a habitual attendant upon moving pictures, said, "I have seen so many thrilling scenes that nothing in the universe can ever make me thrill again." The effect upon children is even more profound and far-reaching. After the nervous system has been keyed to the highest pitch week after week and month after month, the simple, normal things of life have no appeal. Some one has said: "What effect will the story of David killing Goliath have upon a boy who has been continually steeped in melodrama of the most lurid type? How can the Bible or history or the wonders of nature find place in his interests?" A girl of nine had seen a picture in which a wife was doubted by her husband and driven from his door. This wife became a drug fiend, shot and killed her lover, and finally died as she was being tried for murder. When the child was asked how she liked the picture, she said, "Oh, it was very good, only *it didn't have enough pep in it.*"

When all of the findings of this investigation and survey are pondered with care it is very clear that a condition exists that is serious and that challenges intelligent and earnest consideration in order that

sane and wise action may be taken and that an adequate remedy may be provided.

Remedying Conditions

The problem is primarily for parents. Theirs is the burden of responsibility. They make up the community, in their hands lies the balance of power. They alone can determine and apply the remedy. There must be an accurate knowledge of conditions, however, before steps can be taken to remedy them. There are two possible courses with reference to this matter, either of which will be fatal to a safe solution of the problem. One of these is a blind, undiscriminating attack upon all moving pictures, and the other is a blind disregard of the vital interests that are endangered.

Parents and persons in authority should seek from every possible source for information on the subject of moving pictures. They should inspect the billboards displayed by moving picture theaters. They should find out what steps are being taken in various communities to safeguard the situation.

Standards for Censorship.—Censorship, as it now exists, has but small value. There are no standards save the personal opinions of individual censors or of boards of censors. These opinions are often formed in a casual way, without taking into account all of the elements involved in the situation. A large city employs a woman of culture and intelligence to censor the films that appear in its moving picture theaters. A surveyor observed a picture that had passed the censor. It contained a number of the points appearing in the questionnaire. One scene showed a banquet in New York. Drunken men and half-nude women were reclining about the table after the fashion of a Roman orgy. A floral swing deposited in the center of the table a man and a woman, both nude save for loin cloths. They danced in a most revolting and obscene fashion. At the end of the picture a moral was "tacked on" in an obvious way. This moral

would seem to have been the censor's only excuse for passing the film.

The public in general is not trained to analyze pictures and to note with a discriminating eye the helpful or hurtful elements contained therein. A mother said of a film to which she had just carried her young son: "Oh, it was a sweet, interesting, harmless kind of a picture." One of the surveyors called her attention to the fact that in the progress of the picture, to the great satisfaction of all concerned, a sum of money large enough to clear a home of a mortgage was won at a horse race; that a boy of ten bet on the race and won; that the same boy covered his hands with molasses and so caught the greased pig, thus winning the prize by a trick. She cried out in surprise: "I didn't notice that! Do you think my boy did?" Like many others, she had never learned to look for suggestions of good or evil in the pictures that she visits. Neither did she realize the impressionability of her child and the possibility of his response to these suggestions.

It is plain that but little can be accomplished by censorship unless standards are created by means of which pictures can be tested. It is probable that two standards will be needed, one for children and for early adolescents and the other for young people and adults. Every thoughtful person will agree that none of the twelve points that have been discussed should appear in a picture to be seen by children. These points could therefore serve as a basis for a standard for children's films.

It will also be agreed that while older persons can see without injury pictures that would be hurtful to children and to boys and girls, yet there are some things that should not be presented to any audience. The elements that should be debarred are evidently obscene conduct, immorality attractively presented, violation of law instigated or condoned, and evil triumphing over good. It is one of the strange inconsistencies of life that the law forbids the circulation through the mails of books that contain these

elements of evil and yet does not note their presentation to millions of people through moving pictures. A correct standard of censorship for films to be shown to adults will safeguard these points.

The fact is immediately made evident that such a standard would debar children from attending the great majority of films that are presented. The question presents itself as to what provision can be made for children. Moving picture people say with emphasis that there is no money for them in pictures for children, so unless such pictures receive the official support of public schools they are not usually presented. Public schools are recognizing the fact that for them to give approval to occasional films at a theater is construed into a blanket approval of that theater, and results in the promiscuous attendance of children at all pictures there presented. It seems that the remedy for these conditions is a joining of hands on the part of the church and of the community resulting in the securing of a theater where there will be presented good films that stand the test of the children's standard.

Parents should therefore get in touch with those agencies that are doing constructive work in the direction of providing lists of carefully selected films and thus familiarize themselves with those pictures that are available which children can with safety attend.

The National Motion Picture League of New York city is doing excellent work in this direction. International Church Film Corporation, 920 Broadway, New York city, furnishes approved children's films. The Church School prints each month lists of clean wholesome films for all ages.

Need for Recreational Program.—It should, however, be remembered that a child should see only an occasional film, even when pictures without objectionable features are available. A visit to a moving picture should come as a treat at long intervals, since even the best are too stimulating to be otherwise than hurtful if seen too frequently. Hence it follows that there is urgent need for carefully planned programs

of recreation. The home has the primary responsibility here. Parents must learn to understand the part played by recreation and play in the making of character, and must provide in the family circle for this need of young life. Games, music, books, outings, the story hour, the providing of constructive material, nature study, are all valuable agencies in the recreational home life. Fathers and mothers must revive the play spirit in themselves, that they may enter into sympathy with their children. The effort involved is not too high a price to pay, when the interests at stake are considered. It may prove difficult to win back to a wholesome simplicity of life the young people whose tastes have been overstimulated and vitiated, but much can be accomplished by earnest effort. In the meanwhile the younger children can be safeguarded, and can be led to develop along natural lines of child-interest.

The church and the community must also make provision for the recreational life of children and young people by providing the necessary equipment and wise supervision and leadership. Mere negation will never solve this problem. Persistent, intelligent, constructive effort must be made by all who have the responsibility of caring for the young.

In conclusion it may be said that alarming as are the symptoms that appear in young life of to-day, a mere beginning has been made in this direction, compared with what will result if for the next five or ten years children are continually subjected to the suggestions and the impressions which they are now receiving from moving pictures. Let it be said again that the remedy is in the hands of parents. The home must determine what the outcome will be.

Bibliography

The names of some books are here suggested. These will be of value in arranging programs of recreation.

Play in Education, by Joseph Lee.
Play Life in the First Eight Years, by Palmer.
Education Through Plays and Games, by Johnson.
The Dramatization of Bible Stories, by Miller.
Good Times with Juniors, by Heath.
Children at Play in Many Lands, by Katherine Hall.
Dame Curtsey's Book of Games for Children.
Education Through Story-Telling, by Cather Glover.
American Home Series (Pamphlets):
How One Real Mother Lives with Her Children.
Sunday in the Home.
Dramatics in the Home.
Music in the Home.
Pamphlets (*Playground and recreation Association of America*):
Play and Playgrounds, by Joseph Lee.
The Doctrine of "Hands Off" in Play, by Gulick.
How to Start and Organize Playgrounds, by Lee.
Playground Equipment, by Edward B. DeGroot.
Play as an Antidote to Civilization, by Joseph Lee.
Saturday Afternoon Walks, by Dora Allen.
Play for Home, bv Joseph Lee.
Street Play, by Caleb Howard.
Rural Recreation through the Church, by Persons.
Making a Recreation Survey, by Haynes.
The Exploitation of the Children, by Sherman Kingsley.
Parents Share in the Play of Their Children.
Omaha's Experience.
Twelve Good Games, by Weller.
Games and Play for School Morale, by Sheppard & Vaughn.

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