

understanding, scarcely justifies Mr. Goldwyn's optimism. To support me in that contention I should like to enlist the aid of Dr. Viktor Fischl, of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Information in London, who gave a very important address to the British Film Institute in 1943.

Dr. Fischl began by recalling that 20 years ago an official of the League of Nations had said that "only the Bible and the Koran have an indisputably larger circulation than that of the latest film from Hollywood." Since then, of course, the circulation of films had increased enormously.

"What possibilities there are here to show that man remains man whatever the nation he belongs to! But how profound has so far been the effect of this unifying medium? Have we proved much more than that girls in the Argentine, Norway, Lisbon, and Cape Town do their hair like Ginger Rogers and dream of men like Clark Gable. And if we have not, then what are the reasons?"

The main reason given by Dr. Fischl—and I see no reason at all to disagree—is that the movies have been industrialised and commercialised. This, he says, is perhaps the greatest misfortune they have suffered: that they are mass-produced articles of commerce. In addition, they offer to their producers one great advantage over other forms of merchandise: it is much more easy to sell a silly film than, say, a silly hat, because you can, after all, look into a mirror before you buy a hat, or try on several coats before you decide to purchase one. But when you go to the pictures you pay in advance, and if you don't like what you are given you cannot get your money back.

"The industrialisation and commercialisation of film work is the principal evil with which we shall have to deal after the war in connection with the film," continued Dr. Fischl. "I am certainly not one of those who would like to deprive the film of its entertainment value. But the film is much more, or at any rate it could and should be much more than entertainment. The film is a very important weapon—a weapon for democracy. . . . The manufacture of films, like the manufacture of other weapons, demands a supreme degree of responsibility. It must be guided by a different spirit from the commercial spirit and by a different interest from that of material profit. It is impossible for us after this war to continue in silence the existing system of film production whose only worry is to find a satisfactory paying basis. . . . The Ancient Romans must have known more about the film, its possibilities and dangers, than we normally imagine, for they had a proverb which said that the sword was good if it did not fall into the hands of a bad man. . . . It is not possible to look on in silence when film production is kept in the hands of people who are not even very interested in the effect made by the films which they have manufactured on the hosts of millions of onlookers throughout the world, provided only that they get back the capital invested, together with a profit. . . . I have never considered it undemocratic to demand the exercise of censorship, control, and restriction against those who irresponsibly abuse freedom."

CONTINUING, Dr. Fischl declared that in spite of a few exceptions in the form of truly worthwhile pictures, the great majority of films made during the past quarter of a century have been almost completely senseless and valueless, in no way enriching those who saw them; films without a mission (except to make profits for their producers) and without a new vision of life. So it has come about, he said, that by far the greatest international achievement of the film so far consists in the doubtful merit of bringing the emptiness of the human mind to a lowest common denominator.

The film, which could have become a universal medium of ideas, has become an ever-present bearer of spiritual emptiness.

"I am somewhat doubtful whether a Lisbon sardine salesman or a hairdresser's apprentice in Rio de Janeiro has ever heard the names of George Washington or Thomas Masaryk. I am certain however that they know who Bing Crosby, Fred Astaire, and Akim Tamiroff are. . . . I have met a lot of people who wondered whether the capital of Yugoslavia was Budapest or Bucharest. But the same people would never mix up Hedy Lamarr and Dorothy Lamour."

AFTER the last war the League of Nations called into existence an International Film Institute and a special commission on the cinema which dealt with certain questions. But it made no effort to influence actual film production and the choice of subjects; it did practically nothing to make the film a means towards the rapprochement and collaboration of nations.

"In my opinion" (said Dr. Fischl), "it will be necessary after this war to set up a new International Film Institute which will have to be equipped with much more far-reaching jurisdiction. . . . People are speaking a good deal about an international army which is to protect world peace in the future. I have tried to prove that the film is an important weapon of democracy. Why not therefore include the arsenal of the films in this system of the international defence of world peace? And just as an international army demands an international staff, why not create within the framework of the new International Film Institute an international film staff in whose hands would be the conduct of policy in connection with the themes and standards of the film, the international exchange of films, and so on?"

AND then Dr. Fischl made what was perhaps the most important statement of his whole very important speech. He said:

"I am no prophet, but I feel that the film, after this war, will belong to those spheres in which the degree of State control will necessarily have to be increased. In some cases this increased control will extend only as far as production, in other cases it will have to cover distribution as well, in other cases still the State may have to take over the cinemas on the Norwegian model. . . . It should not be impossible, indeed it should not be too difficult, to agree on an international convention which would give the film general staff that I have mentioned the task of deciding what sort of films should be produced and distributed. . . ."

THESE are the views of an idealist. They are also, in their way, as optimistic as the views expressed by Sam Goldwyn. Not that they are any the worse for that, but optimism and idealism should blind nobody to the difficulties that would confront any attempt to put Dr. Fischl's suggestions into practice. There would immediately be fierce resistance, not only from the film magnates, whose "way of life" would of course be wholly endangered, but also from a great body of ordinary picturegoers. Dr. Fischl himself foresees the likelihood, indeed the certainty, that many people would object to his proposals on the ground that they "would hate to have somebody else decide what sort of films they should see." But, replies Dr. Fischl—and there can be no valid comeback to this—such objectors forget that, in reality, other people do already determine what films they are going to see. But whereas according to his scheme it would be artists, educators, and statesmen who would decide in the higher interests of international concord, to-day it is the film producers, the directors of distribution firms, and theatre magnates who decide—in the interests mainly of their own pockets.

**"More VI-MAX please"**

Coarse and Fine at Pre-War Prices

VI-MAX  
Breakfast and Cooking Cereal  
Maximum in Vitamins  
Superstarch All Breakfast Foods

VI-MAX factory.

D. H. Brown and Son, Ltd., Moorhouse Av., Ch.Ch.

**HANDKERCHIEF MAGIC** No. 3

**YOU'LL NEED A**

**Grafton HANDKERCHIEF**

because only a Grafton can take all this tugging and strain.

**FIG. 1.**

**FIG. 2.**

**FIG. 3.**

**DISSOLVING DOUBLE KNOT.**

Roll two Grafton Handkerchiefs rope-wise and make a Reef Knot (Figure 1). Then a second Knot (Figure 2). In this second knot the right end overlaps the left end. Pretend to pull the knot tighter (Figure 3). Actually you transform the reef knot into a slip knot. This is done by taking the top and bottom ends nearest the left hand, or the top and bottom ends nearest the right hand. The slip knot is then worked by the thumb off the end of the handkerchief under cover of a fold over the knot, asking someone to "blow the knot away".

Sole Manufacturers in N.Z.  
KLIPPEL BROS. (N.Z.) LTD.  
BOX 426, AUCKLAND.