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Do the films educate children? They do indeed. The adult's response to a picture that he likes is one of interest; the child's is one of excitement so strong that he can scarcely keep quiet or sit still. It is not only his mind that is enthralled, it is his whole nervous system that, so to speak, "goes into high gear."

The adult has a comparatively well stored mind. His response is unconsciously critical; even when "held" by a film, he rarely loses his awareness of the fact that what he is viewing is not reality but a counterfeit of reality.

The child's response is naively unrestrained. He swallows what he sees, hook, line and sinker. He takes sides with the "goodies" and against the "bad-dies." The picture lives for him. It takes its place in his memory among the most vivid of his actual experiences and it stays just as long. There is little occurring in the classroom that does not seem dull and tame to the child as compared with a picture that has thrilled him. Beyond doubt the pictures educate. The dynamic drive behind the feeling and imagining they arouse is unexcelled. Their "psychological punch" is immense.

Untruth that Seems Truth

As regards an adult audience the film-makers are entitled to considerable latitude—"Caveat emptor." The grown-up purchaser of a seat in front of the screen can fairly be expected to be on his guard. If the picture misconstrues human nature and falsifies reality he is in a position to provide his own remedy, even to the extent of staying away.

But the child is, so to speak, exposed; helpless to protect himself against falsification and what is equally bad, the lowering of his values. The means of representation which the film uses are so effective that they make the incredible look real to him; their distortions of truth take a stronger grip of his mind than the happenings of his daily life.

The films educate—or do they mis-educate? In the latter case their potency is formidable and defies the best efforts of home and school to counteract. Per-versions of emotion and imagination root themselves not only in the mind but, as said before, in the nervous system. They give a twist to the folk-ways of our civilisation. With hundreds of millions gazing weekly at the screen it is surprising how little account is taken of the tremendous effect of the films on the world-mind. It is as great as that of the press.

What is the school to do? It could, since no vested interest dictates to it, use the cinema to educate just as potently as, all too often, the cinema's commercial exploiters use it to mis-educate.

"An Unrivalled Medium"

It should so use the film: alike for cultural and instructional purposes the cinema should be one of the school's trump cards. The modern mind is called upon to learn an immense amount. There is no more effective, speedy way of impressing lessons permanently upon the brain than the film. Handling can do as much, but the film by showing things in motion can teach processes even better than handling can.

As for culture—that is, everything which pertains to artistry and beauty and the portrayal of life as lived—the film is to-day a medium unrivalled by any other art form, even the printed page.



The Cinema and Education

WHY is education so backward in using modern inventions that would tremendously increase its effectiveness while commercial and industrial enterprises are up to the minute in so doing? This is the question that is discussed in this article written for "The Listener" by F. L. COMBS.

The schools are beginning to adopt "visual aids" but it is far from being realised that the school cinema has a role to play to-day quite equal to that of the text-book. The time-lag which hampers education in all matters, perhaps hampers it most seriously in this most inventive of ages, when it comes to enlisting for the services of education the modern inventions one might speak of as *demanding* to be used.

Commercial concerns, factories, even farms, are up-to-the-minute in equipping themselves with modern inventions, some of which save 50 minutes in the hour. An invention that would do as much for the schools is still in its tentative stages therein; adopted on probation, it has not yet been made one of the grown-up family of education. If this were not so, every sizeable school would to-day have its assembly-cum-cinema halls equal to the best as regards both visibility and acoustics.

The School Has to Compete

The school is in urgent need of the best in the way of cinema facilities and equipment, for, to perform its educational mission, it has not only to carry on in a traditional way but to come out of its shell and to *compete* on equal terms. Its answer to so much that *mis-educates* in the commercial film must be films equally effective which educate.

The term education is here taken to embrace two things:

- (1) the explanation and demonstration that are part of the process of imparting information about animals, peoples, places and things;
- (2) the using of education's greatest ally, Art, to dramatise all forms of human experience and by so doing to ally it to that improvised dramatisation which is the child's own natural means of "getting inside" a situation and understanding the motives and purposes of the people with whom he mixes.

At present, as regards the cinema, the commonsense observer will agree that the odds against the school are at least five to one. What the commercial cinema offers is overwhelmingly more interesting than anything the school is given the means of doing.

If the commercial cinema were concerned in the sphere of information or culture to cater for children as *children*, the role of the school would still be of paramount importance, an importance recognised in practice in the U.S.S.R. But the Film Trade, being a trade, is dominated by the demands of its customers, four-fifths of whom are adults. It makes pictures for the million and as part of those millions children are almost a negligible fraction. The result is that only incidentally are pictures generally suitable to the young produced. Pictures specifically suitable to them are not regarded as a commercial proposition and are almost never made.

In a world rightly ordered, the schools would be a first priority where the cinema is concerned. Its possibilities, fully realised and taken advantage of, would vastly improve both the quantity and the quality of the education which the inmates of the classrooms received. All instructors of the young know that the picture is far more telling with them than the word, and that the moving-picture with its appeal to their instinctive love of action is far more telling than the still pictures.

This being so, they cannot but regret that in the main their pupils are at the mercy of the commercial pictures and have to take what they can get at adult showings and at matinees where, foregoing sunlight and fresh air, they see programmes which are perhaps the best available, but which are too often poorly adapted, as imaginative and emotional fare, to their juvenile needs.

Investigation Needed

What should be done to turn one of the (potentially) greatest educational agencies to its true purpose and to give it its full scope?

The problem is a most difficult one. The mere prevention of the showing of unsuitable films to children is a purely negative measure which barely touches the fringe of it. The important objective is a positive one, viz.: to make the most of the cinema in our education system just as to-day transport makes the most of planes, farms of tractors, and factories of their thousands of marvellous machines.

The first step towards this end, one as important as any other single end

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