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though the present work, as its title indicates, consists principally of "studies and documents," some of the author's opinions, and the conclusions he draws from his documents, are sufficiently startling. For instance, he declares that the modern cinema has a mass appeal which can be compared only with the classic theatre of Athens and the Roman circus:

"The modern cinema alone has a universal audience. Yet where are the social philosophers to-day who reflect on the norms which guide and underlie the contemporary film? We leave it to the financial holders of this most powerful Art-industry to decide what 'the public wants.' The only link between State and cinema consists of purely technical police regulations" (i.e., censorship, safety in theatres). . . . "The spiritual dictatorship of the modern cinema is more powerful than the dictatorship of Hitler because it is less obvious, hidden in the vast machinery of the modern large-scale industry."

It will be particularly interesting to see whether Mayer in his next volume can reach any definite decision about the comparative influence of film, radio, and press. At present my own opinion (possibly biased) is that the film is the most powerful and therefore the most important medium, not merely because it appeals directly to the eyes as well as the ears of its huge mass audiences but also because it demands so little of their imaginations. Reading any novel or newspaper story, or listening to any radio feature does require at least some exercise of the imagination; there must be some filling in of details by the reader



GREER GARSON

"The world is full of pitiful imitations"

or listener himself; some personal interpretation is called for; and therefore some sort of individual check or safeguard does operate. On the other hand, a film will do everything for you, and unless you are consciously on your guard you are inclined to let it. But until there has been much more detailed research into the influence of the radio and press as well as of the film, no real answer to this question is possible.

FOR that matter, without fuller and more scientific evidence than Mayer furnishes here—in the form mostly of essays written by some 50 schoolgirls and questionnaires filled in by some 68 adult filmgoers—no thoroughly satisfactory answer is possible to most of the other questions which he raises; and so the actual influence of the cinema on our minds and our behaviour must be left more or less where he found it, in the realm of generalisation and surmise. Nevertheless, though I am not convinced that he establishes them beyond scien-

tific doubt, Mayer does reach two major conclusions which are worth pondering. The first is that, no matter where he lives, the personality of the average individual is shaped by the films he sees. Instead of helping him, as he fondly imagines, to "discover" his own personality, filmgoing merely has the effect of levelling down his individuality to a standard pattern: the world, as a result, is full of pitiful imitations of Greer Garson and Laurence Olivier. This process, according to Mayer, must ultimately lead, and has already led, to a pauperisation of the human race which is terrifying.

Mayer's other major conclusion ("a conclusion which has increasingly hardened in me") is that "the majority of the films we see are pernicious to our nervous systems. They are a mere drug which undermines our health, physical and spiritual . . . making us unfit to master our lives as they are."

Confronted with such an indictment, the men who run the film business for profit will naturally, and rightly, demand to hear the evidence. I do not say that it cannot be produced; but I am not sure that Mayer produces enough of it here, or in a form which cannot be challenged, to establish his case completely. The verdict, I think, must still be "Not Proven"—at least as far as New Zealand is concerned, for even if one grants that Mayer is right about cinema-going in Great Britain (the locale of this survey), conditions do vary from country to country and findings which are valid overseas cannot necessarily be assumed to be valid here also.

SUCH a reservation is, I suggest, very necessary when one considers Mayer's conclusions concerning the influence of the cinema on children and adolescents, and particularly his views on Mr. Rank's Saturday Cinema Clubs for Children. This is the longest and in many ways most important section of the book, and because it is directly relevant to what is happening in New Zealand is likely to be read with special interest. The author's whole undertaking, indeed, derives from a survey of the Rank Cinema Clubs which he launched under the auspices and with the financial assistance of Mr. Rank himself, but carried on later on his own account in a room lent him by *The New Statesman and Nation*, because the Rank organisation "had not a single room to spare for me to work in." Mayer stresses that he and Rank did not quarrel; facilities were withdrawn because the investigations were thought to be "of no practical use to the film industry" and because both Mayer and Rank felt that the study should be an independent one.

As a result of what he saw and learned in the children's cinema clubs of England, Mayer comes firmly to the conclusion that, although their constructive potentialities are immense, in their present form these clubs should be abolished; and that they ought instead to be supervised by educational authorities and run under the authority of communal bodies (municipal authorities, he says, should build children's cinemas of their own).

Now there is a temptation, perhaps, to apply those conclusions directly to the New Zealand situation. Speaking for myself, I am not prepared to do this, not because I am convinced that everything is right with the children's clubs now operating in large numbers in this country, but because I feel that it would

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