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Cinema's Power in Education

(Continued from page 7.)

burst of patriotic support was stimulated per medium of specially prepared newsreels and short featurettes.

Our Government has begun to use the radio to supplement the newspaper as a means of contact with the general public. It may well happen that the cinema will find a similar use, which in many ways will prove to be much more effective.

One hesitates to predict what may happen when television comes into more general use. The development of this wonderful discovery, while not likely to supersede the cinema, is bound to affect its influence in ways we cannot at present foresee.

There will be, though produced in a different way, moving pictures in every home. Even the housewife engaged in the preparation of meals may be able to follow out step by step the visual instruction accompanied by the human voice coming through the ether.

In a consideration of the general influence of the cinema to-day, one must notice the growing influence of the cinema on the spiritual life of our people. In America, there is a Religious Motion Picture Foundation which is producing pictures and distributing them among churches for religious and missionary education and for Sunday night screenings.

The Bishop of London is at the head of an organisation in England whose aim is to bring religious instruction to those within and without the church to whom established forms of religious services do not appeal.

And now we may glance at the place of the cinema in our schools and its influence on the adolescent mind. The non-theatrical film is making rapid development and school cinematography finds a place in all discussions to-day in which the education of the child and the adolescent is concerned.

Even in Japan there is a section of the administration of education which deals with school cinematography. In Italy, Germany, Sweden, France, England and Scotland, not to mention other countries, experimentation is proceeding in the use of the motion picture as an aid to education. A little is being done in Australia and officially nothing at all in New Zealand. Yet the importance of this aid to education has been demonstrated beyond all dispute. The Commission on educational films set up in England finds that the effect of the film in education is stimulating, it wakes up the lazy pupil, it induces a sustained concentration because both sight and hearing are directed and irresistibly held by the moving picture, and the instruction thus imparted leaves a more lasting impression than if given without this visual and aural aid.

Young people of to-day are film-minded. It is therefore difficult for us who were not brought up in close association with the cinema to gauge the reactions of adolescents to-day to the theatrical film. The majority of adolescents in our towns and cities attend picture theatres at least once a week. Here they absorb much information about the lives and customs of peoples of other countries as well as a great deal of knowledge about the

countries themselves. For young women, and even for young men, the film has superseded Paris as the originator of fashions.

The pictures we see in New Zealand to-day reach a moral standard as high as, if not higher, than the average modern novel; and if visits to picture houses are not too frequent I believe the effect on adolescents is not evil. If one read too many novels and these of a poor standard, one's mind would soon become sodden and incapable of sustained effort and concentration. In all good picture programmes to-day there is so much excellent material offered in the supports and shorts as



This picture shows the complete outfit instructions for knitting which are on the opposite page.

well as in the main film that seldom indeed does a picture programme fail to be informative even when not very edifying.

There is, then, little danger to-day in New Zealand of the commercial picture theatre exercising a harmful influence on our young people, provided their visits are not too frequent and provided, too, they exercise their critical faculty and make their minds active and not merely passive participants in the performances.

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