



"Tell me, doctor . . .

Alice is using a new antiseptic (What does she call it, now—'Dettol'!) I must say it seems very pleasant and has a delightful smell, but then, as I tell her, that isn't the point. Is it an efficient antiseptic? You know, doctor, I've always been so very careful about such things, and this stuff is so very unlike disinfectant — well, I thought while you were here I would ask you."

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'DETTOL'
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THE MODERN ANTISEPTIC

Your Chemist has Dettol in Bottles 2/- and 3/6d.

Are They Halfwits?

(Continued from page 30).

were universal, and that there were plenty of people who thought that the truth was always interesting if it was courageously and faithfully presented.

He didn't agree. He said that there were plenty of unpleasant things in the world that were true, but that didn't make it right for the cinema to ask people to pay to hear about them.

But his main objection to films like "Dead End" and "They Won't Forget," was that they were so utterly depressing and hopeless. They presented problems, but advanced no solution.

"I don't necessarily mean that all film stories should have a happy ending," he argued, "but they should at least send the audience away with some sort of feeling that something may be done to put things right. 'Emile Zola' is a serious picture, but it sends you out all bucked up, because Zola won his cause. In 'Parnell' the hero died, but at least you had the feeling that his cause would continue and eventually win. But 'Dead End' got you nowhere. It wouldn't have been so bad if we'd had a final scene, say, of a politician making a speech and promising that something would be done about the slums."

THAT is where Maros Gray and my theatre friend meet on more or less common ground. The former thinks that "Dead End" did make a compromise with truth; the latter thinks it didn't; but both are apparently agreed that the average picture-goer wants nothing but "dope," that he goes to the cinema to enjoy pleasant fairy-tales in which all serious thinking is done for him.

Well, possibly he does, but if film producers had never thought of anybody but the average picture-goer, the cinema would never have advanced past the slush and mush of the Mary Pickford type of romance. But it has advanced, and it's the occasional thoughtful, dynamic pictures like "Dead End" that have led the way.

Maros Gray takes the obstinate stand that social drama can have no permanent place on the screen, yet admits that it can have a place on the stage. My film friend adopts much the same attitude. But why make this distinction between the functions of stage and screen just because the screen started hundreds of years late and hasn't yet caught up?

Admittedly, the preponderant functions of both stage and screen must always be in the realm of make-believe and pleasurable amusement—and only an intellectual crank would have it otherwise—but I'm hanged if I can see why, if a minority of picture-goers desire it, they shouldn't have something more solid every now and then—with the solidity increasing as the screen grows up.

I fail to see what harm is done to anybody—even the dear old ladies—if one ordinary movie house out of the eight or nine in each centre goes serious for a few weeks or so by showing pictures like "Dead End." Mr. Gray describes this as "false pretences": the public who kept "Dead End" running for an extended season in Wellington apparently don't think so.