

CINEMA PICTURES IN RELATION TO EDUCATION.

The cinema film must have attained its majority about this present year 1918. The lines of its development have been thought out and improved. Theatres are comfortable, and costly in building. They are attended by all ranks, and with many it is their sole form of amusement. Still something is lacking, something not yet taken advantage of in this gift of the present era. It has not fulfilled its most important function; it has not yielded the inward and spiritual grace of helpfulness.

All are attracted by pictures, old and young. Notice how in a public library the illustrated papers are first sought out. Why? Because a picture conveys where the clumsiness of words fails. Nor does the knowledge derived through a picture tax the brain that receives it to the extent it does in reading or listening to verbal instruction. It is a painful effort for some children to try to take in a lesson. They battle against dull perception or blunted intellect, occasioned through no fault of their own. Nor is it given to every teacher, no matter the diploma, to implant in the mind of the child the seeds of knowledge that enrich his own. What abiding pleasure it would be to these little folk if subjects hitherto indicated by hard facts to be studied from books were set forth in a school picture theatre.

It is so natural for children to gather knowledge through the medium of the eye, that they would not feel they were learning as they looked, listening at intervals to a few lucid explanations of the teacher. Nor would it be so hard on him. In these days of few teachers and many children it is highly necessary to prune off avoidable labour, and abbreviate brain-fag in those who instruct.

It is not the purpose of the writer to enter into detail. Others, whose profession this touches, are better fitted for that. So, simply as a suggestion to those whose minds have not already strayed on these lines, it may be indicated how many subjects lend themselves to picture-teaching. Much technical school work could be elaborated by this method. Geography, in that it refers to lands, peoples and customs, would be turned into a joy. Likewise botany, when it takes the form of nature-study for the tinies.

What keen interest is displayed in our present picture theatres when the film shows the sprouting of a seed, its development as a seedling, and final bursting into bloom! A lesson in general knowledge would be hailed gleefully. If cane sugar were the subject: First would be shown the beautiful plains of Queensland or the rich tropical Isle of Jamaica, either exhibiting extensive fields of the tall canes, its growth, and manner of ingathering, also magnified sections to give an idea of the juicy yield; the different processes of manufacture, and for older children, its by-products would form a lesson replete with interest. Moreover, an essay required on the same subject would be accomplished with ease, being fresh and clear in the mind.

Picture methods would also strengthen the power of observation. Possibly none but deaf mutes use this power to the full among civilised races. Scouts profit by it to some extent, Baden Powell having laid it down carefully in scout-lore.

Casting an eye down the vista of time, many potentialities appear attached to the cinema. If Tommy in Birmingham sees the advantages in newer, wider lands set forth actually and attractively, will not his ambition stir him to emigrate to such countries that need go-a-head men to develop them? If Johnny at school in Auckland learns of art and beauty still undespoiled in the old world, what an element it will prove in spurring him to industry with a view to independence and travel. And better still, to return with a wealth of knowledge that will lead him possibly to become a creator of beauty in his own land. Ideals are potent factors in national progress. The "ringing grooves of change" promote activity, deny stagnation.

Why is it that educational ministers, boards and committees have not seen fit to use this mighty force of picture tuition? Is it a question of expense? The wealth of a nation lies in its people. Their efficiency, which is really their mental, moral and physical health. At present we have a large proportion of incompetents both in refuges and out of them, who, far from being an asset to the Dominion, are a drag on it, and that because of individual neglect some time, even if it were two or three generations back. Multitudes more have little equipoise.

Wider knowledge, higher development on careful, painstaking lines will do much to correct this. Many talk somewhat vaguely of what we are going to do after the war. Nothing will eventuate unless it is set about in practical fashion. Never has the value of efficiency been realised thoroughly as since the insatiable demands of this terrible war has tried so many and found them wanting. National duty is incumbent on each one. If this realisation becomes part of our fibre, then these years of sorrow and agony will have borne fruit for coming ages. Nations, too, shall learn that they are their brother's keeper, and then

"The common sense of most shall hold a fretful realm in awe
And the kindly earth shall slumber,
lapt in universal law."

—B.K.

Palmerston North.

Since writing the foregoing, I have learnt that America has adapted the cinema to her school curriculum.—B.K.

OUR ORGANISING SECRETARY.

Left Invercargill for Gore, where I collected £45 13s; secured two new members, and one "White Ribbon" subscriber.

Thanks are due to the "Mataura Ensign" for good introduction to the public, also to Mrs Landels for help. I came to Balclutha on August 20th. Mr Malcolm, and Mr and Mrs McSkimming have given me valuable help. Have travelled through Lovell's Flat, Benhar, Invercargill, and Stirling. Addressed three evening meetings, securing 33 new members, and two "White Ribbon" subscribers, and £42 18s, other amounts to follow. I go on next to Milton District.

Will the many friends, and especially the Y's, excuse my seeming neglect in not answering letters. I am travelling more or less all the time and cannot cope with correspondence, but hope to acknowledge them in the near future.

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