

Movies

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Vertical File

The Motion-Picture Menace

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The Motion-Picture Menace.

I. Old Dirt Week All Year.

They come and they go in endless procession, each week's offering a little worse than the last: "Sitting Pretty," "Gold-diggers of 1933," "Should Ladies Behave?" "Secret Sinners," "Jungle Bride," "My Woman," "Design for Living," and on the stage "Sixty Gorgeous Models Dressed in White Ostrich-plumes" — the titles are all from one page of a St. Louis daily. The next week brought "Risking His Life for a Kiss," "The Lure of Beautiful Women," "Havana Widows," "Torch Singer," "Blood-money," and Sally Rand in Person, competing with 200 fan-dancers, offered by another theater. And so through the year. One producer stars the same actress in two movies, each containing an excellent close-up of the "platinum buxomous licentious blonde" in a bath-tub.

The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* said March 12, 1933: "This is Old Dirt Week, with at least one house going the limit in an attempt to compete with 'stag' entertainments offered out in Wellston when the county police are not looking." In an adjoining column the reviewer called a certain film "the world's dirtiest picture. Unfortunately so, too; for the stars are prime favorites with the younger cinema customers, and a lot of them will be attracted to the theater by the names. Some of the smut will be over their heads, but a lot of it will register." Editorially the same paper said, commenting on these offerings: "The films have advanced farther and farther over the boundaries of propriety and good

taste. . . . Many a tolerant citizen now is revolted by the cheap filth needlessly dragged into current pictures." This from one of the most liberal papers published in the United States. The Hearst papers in June, 1933, pointed out the demoralizing character of certain sex pictures, not only on account of objectionable phrases, but on account of "a pervading spirit of lewdness and vulgarity."

The *Lowell Sun* of Lowell, Mass., January 5, 1934, announced its adherence to the rule of absolutely refusing all advertisement which included salacious pictures or suggestive descriptive lines. It said editorially: "This policy, we feel, is only fair to the thousands of mothers and fathers who subscribe for the *Sun*. Their young children naturally pick it up, and if obscene moving-picture advertisements would daily clot its pages, the effect would be disastrous to the morals of the generation. If young boys and girls were led astray due to advertisements appearing in a newspaper, the publishers thereof would never be able to rectify the wrong they had done." Not only that, but this paper openly denounces screen offerings with filthy plots. Concerning a recent New Year's film it said that "the plot itself was so filthy that it should never have reached the screen. It was not only dirty, suggestive, and lurid, but was unnatural. No respectable man or woman could view this picture without being insulted. It was contrary not only to the laws of God, but also to the laws of man."

Welford Beaton is editor and publisher of the *Hollywood Spectator* and is one of the best-informed critics of the motion-picture. In the *Spectator* of November 25, 1933, he refers to the purchase by Paramount of *Sailors*,

Beware for \$55,000. This play is based on a wager that a sailor can ruin a virtuous girl within a week. He describes the plot of another film, *Convention City*, thus: "In a welter of puking salesmen, alcoholism, obscenity, and libidinous anticipation the special train speeds on its way to Atlantic City, and a 'cut' to that destination reveals the overworked inmates of a house of ill fame, exhausted from the attentions of the Universal Bandage Co., apprehending the arrival of Mr. Honeywell's lusty bravos, and appalled by the information that the Mammoth Tool Convention is to follow them." Beaton calls the film "outrageous indecency." The industry claims that since the Will Hays organization "has a code of 'good taste' (they call it), and since they censor all productions, the exhibitor is taking no chances, and only good pictures will be shown." This code does make the demand that certain things should not occur in the movies, such as the details of brutal killings; explicit presentation of the methods of crime; any low forms of sex relationship; any attractive presentation of adultery; excessive and lustful kissing; lustful embraces and suggestive postures. Writing in the *Plain Talk* magazine Wallace Werble said, 1933: "Since formulating this code, every one of these prohibitions has been violated, not once, but repeatedly. Regarding brutal killings, one can point to *Terror Abroad*, in which there are about fifteen brutal murders." In other films snake poison, the sucking of a vampire, poker, and firearms are used to slay. A few of the violations of the sex clause are: In *Ex-Lady* the heroine at first refuses to marry the hero, preferring to live with him in adultery, because

marriage is contrary to her "ideals." In *Call Her Savage* a husband, ill in a hospital (out of his mind, the result of a nasty disease), attempts to assault his wife. In *Cynara* the hero lives with another woman even though he is married. In *Frisco Jenny* the heroine conducts a house of prostitution, living off the earnings of the inmates. Mr. Werble says: "Out of twenty-five regular pictures released by members of the Hays organization in January, 1933, twenty-one were either founded on sex or had sex talk in them, two were 'sexless,' but were too horrible to be shown, and two were sex-free." How liberal the standards are under which this figure was attained is clear from the fact that Mr. Werble lists *42d Street* as "suitable for the family." Regarding this film a religious writer who had seen it, Mr. J. T. Upchurch of Arlington, Tex., said that it "came from the heart of hell." "Go see it and feel for a week that you have been so contaminated that all the waters of earth cannot cleanse you. Go see it and feel so corrupt that all the purgatives ever made could not purge your system. Go see it and know that, unless you do something to help remedy conditions, you will be individually and personally responsible to God for the continued defilement of girlhood." And this film was listed by Mr. Werble as "suitable for the family." What must the rest be!

In the February 24 issue of the *Spectator*, Beaton says: "The screen is a menace to the growing population. . . . It aims its product at those whose low tastes make them impervious to the vulgarity of pornography, passion masquerading as love, discussions of the double standard, and other unlovely aspects of modern

civilization. . . . The producers of motion-pictures purvey filth for the sole purpose of reaping profits. They have delved into the garbage cans of our social structure and extracted from them as story material everything that stinks." He then addresses the industry thus: "You have made of the screen a purveyor of all that is vile and unclean in our social life. You disrobe young girls on the screen, you have lips clinging to the point of nausea, you parade prostitution, passion, vice, and crime until you have driven decent people away from you."

Were it not for the fact that he mentions names, dates, and specific incidents, it would be difficult to believe the writer in *Plain Talk* of October, 1933, when he discusses the relation of the so-called "beauty shows" to the motion-picture colony at Hollywood. He calls the system "a huge diabolical white-slave racket. . . . Beauty or popularity contests are held all over the country; the winners are given either a trip to Hollywood or a movie contract. After they arrive in Hollywood, the movie men see to it that the girls are reduced to poverty; and then, with the luxuries of life via a movie contract as a tantalizing bait, the girls are made to answer the demands of the men. . . . He introduces them to some assistant to the assistant camera man at the studio and exacts his pay for the favor, and so on, until after fifteen or twenty introductions the girl finally meets the director. But by this time she is nothing more than a common prostitute. . . . The crowning fact is that an idol of American moviedom, a certain much-publicized foreign star, is a sex pervert of the worst kind." The effect of this mentality is

seen in recent productions, on which the writer comments pointedly: "When the movies turn pervert and start to show the nude male body for no other apparent purpose than to excite the sexual emotions, something must be done."

Rev. John J. Cantwell is bishop of Los Angeles and San Diego and should know conditions in his territory. Speaking of the eight companies that make nine-tenths of all motion-pictures in the United States, he said in an Ecclesiastical Review Contribution of February, 1934, that 95 per cent. of the producers are Jews, and that of these companies only one "is definitely free from Jewish influence," "practically seventy-five per cent. of the so-called artists of the cinema are pagans, caring nothing for decency, good taste, or refinement. Most of them are living lives of infidelity and worse, wherein there is to be found not a suggestion of respect for religion or for spiritual value."

The public is helpless over against this flood of unwholesome screen entertainment. The big producers control absolutely the type of picture that is to be shown in your local theater, whether your home be New York City or Aberdeen, S. Dak. This control is exercised through the block-booking and blind-selling system.

All the big film companies, with the possible exception of United Artists, refuse to sell their pictures to an exhibitor singly, doubly, or even in tens. They decree that to get one picture from the company, you must purchase their entire output, which for the large companies has been averaging about fifty or more per year. This is called Block Booking. Blind Selling is the trade practise by which a distributor sells his pictures to an exhibitor before

they are produced and either without any or an inadequate description of such pictures. Block Booking and Blind Selling operate to maintain a monopoly that defeats all efforts by local communities to obtain the films they desire for their theaters. Both exhibitors and "better film committees" are powerless. The exhibitors are compelled to show in their theaters pictures that are offensive to themselves and destructive to the character of their children and youth. By the system of Blind and Block Booking these films are forced indiscriminately upon the movie-going audience of the nation, including a weekly attendance of approximately 28,000,000 minors, over 11,000,000 of whom are under fourteen years of age.

When the Motion Picture Theater Owners' Association of America met at Hollywood, April 12, 1934, Mr. Walter W. Vincent asked: "Do we exhibitors dictate the type of pictures we want, as many of the producers claim? How many times on our bended knees have we asked the producers to stop gangster and racketeering pictures? And yet I learned the other day that this year the studios will produce 150 of them, three a week for us to exhibit. Their pictures are driving us crazy and lowering the box-office receipts, and yet they come—flaming youth, musicals, trans-continental bus pictures, tourist camp and costume cycles." The complaint was given a standing, shouting vote of approval by the delegates.

The situation is well summed up by O. W. S. McCall, who in a recent issue of the *Christian Century Pulpit* has this to say about the present-day movies: "Our American movies

have become in alarming measure a steady, destroying assault upon decency. If young people of our time are emotionally overwrought; if they are saddled all too early with perilous sex problems that their fathers and mothers had not to meet until their characters and judgment were better formed; if, in addition, alarming numbers of the younger generation are less respectful of moral restraint, one may well ask what else we should expect. Day after day and week after week the year round the nastiest pictures conceived in the salacious brains of apparent degenerates conspire to stimulate animal passions, to deaden delicacy, to popularize flagrance, and to make virtue a fool. Canada raises her hand against the American movie. Australia spews it out of her coasts. Mohammedan Turkey refuses to have her youth contaminated any longer by this slime from 'Christian' America. South Africa takes steps to defend the Negro from the abominations of Hollywood. But we, we put up no barriers! We raise no cry! We scarcely do so much as inquire the name or character of the picture our young folks are off to see!"

II. What the Silver Screen Does to Our Children.

The movies are among the causes for a sharp increase in crime among young people in their teens, said Dr. Lawrence A. Averill of State College, Worcester, Mass., in an address delivered at Boston, January 27, 1934. "The blatant exaggeration of sex in an age which is peculiarly sex-ridden incites large numbers of young persons to delinquency and immorality," Dr. Averill said. "The sex *motif* plays

a far more prominent rôle in the drama of human life than it can safely be permitted to do. Our moving pictures fairly reek with sex, holding up to ridicule many of those notions regarding it which centuries of racial and social experience have taught to be essential."

The *Knickerbocker Press* of Albany, N. Y., reported January 9, 1934, that the Associated Motion-picture Advertisers issued a statement which said in part: "It is absurd to think that any government would allow the continuance of any industry which daily and hourly is holding up to a vast majority of our citizens ideals of conduct, ideals of moral behavior, customs of undress or habits of common morality which, if adopted by a majority of our people, would change this country of ours from a country of homes and home-loving people into a country of libidinous immoralists." The same paper contained a letter from a reader which bitterly complains of the advertising matter carried by the film theaters and concludes: "When will the self-respecting and public-spirited people rise up to put down this evil that is eating like a cancer into the lives of individuals and homes? Destroy decency and morality, and you ruin the home and the nation."

Hendrik Van Loon, in a syndicated letter which appeared August 5, 1933, characterized the moving-picture producers as "a group of money-chasers" which is "turning an entire race of youngsters into hysterical little psychopaths, whose ears and eyes must forever be glued to something that can only be described by a single word, 'ignoble.'" No one will suspect Van Loon of any ecclesiastical bias.

The *Supreme Council Bulletin* (Masonic) 1933 referred with bitter sarcasm to marriages among the screen crowd. "A ripple of speculation goes over the country, and the question of the hour is, 'How long will it last?'" A few years later, when box-office receipts begin to drop off, the stage is set for a brilliant divorce, "and the nation is generously served with intimate details concerning the ones who part 'the best of friends.' Result, awakened interest and a new box-office appeal." Again we note that it is not some narrow churchman, but this time a Masonic publication which utters this condemnation.

Education by Radio said April 27, 1933: "How often the community is to blame for conditions it permits outside the home and school! This morning I read of a schoolboy who killed a policeman, and to my amazement the blame is put on the movies he saw just before committing the crime. The accusation was considered seriously enough, for theater owners were actually called in. That boy did not see crime in his home, but he was shown all kinds of crime in the movies, sponsored by the community. We are one of the most backward countries in the world regarding the safeguarding of our youth. Not even Turkey and Russia allow their children to witness films of crime." The investigations of the Motion-picture Research Council has brought to light a record of unquestionable data from jails and reformatories which fasten the origin of crime directly upon the motion-picture theater. The following is quoted from the authentic records of this organization: An eighteen-year-old boy in a reformatory told about seeing *The Big Shot*: "When I would

see pictures like this, I would get wild and say that some day I would be a big shot that every one would be afraid of and have big dough, live like a king, without doing any work." Another boy said: "I never pulled a job until I saw Lon Chaney in *The Unholy Three*. I saw how he broke into a safe and picked people's pockets." A lad convicted of robbery said: "The luxuries of life showed in the movies made me want them. I could not on the salary I was earning." Another working off a burglary sentence said: "The ideas I got from the movies about easy money were from watching pictures where the hero never worked, but always seemed to have lots of money to spend."

Boys in reformatories and young men in jails listed the following items of criminal technique they had learned from the movies: How to open a safe by "feel" of dial; how to enter a store by forcing lock with crowbar and screw-driver; how to break window noiselessly for forcing way into store or house to be burglarized by pasting fly-paper on window before breaking it; how to force the door of an automobile with a piece of pipe; how to use weapons — pistols, shotguns, machine guns, black-jacks, brass-knuckles, bombs; how to drown out shots of guns by back-firing; carrying a machine gun in a violin case. (Many more; the list is almost endless.)

Female delinquency is intimately bound up with the theater. The Research Council has the letter of a girl of sixteen who wrote: "The movies have given me some ideas about the freedom we should have. For instance in the picture the wildest girl always tames down and gets the man she loves. Why not in real

life? My notion of the freedom I should have (and I have it) is to go out and have a good time, but watch your step. On the screen, when it shows a party with the heroine included, she is generally the life of the party, and I believe that, when you are in Rome, do as the Romans do. I used to think just the opposite, but after seeing *Our Dancing Daughters*, I began to think this over, and I find out it is the best way to act." Another sixteen-year-old girl wrote: "Bad and pretty girls are usually more attractive to men than intelligent and studious girls. No wonder girls in the olden days before the movies were so modest and bashful. They never saw Clara Bow and William Haines. If we did not see such examples in the movies, where would we get the idea of being 'hot'? We wouldn't."

A delinquent girl of seventeen wrote: "The most responsible thing for getting me in trouble is these love pictures. When I saw a love picture, at night, and if I had to go home alone, I would try to flirt with some man on the corner. If it was the right kind of a bad man, he would take me to a dance or a wild party; at these parties I would meet other men that would be crazy for fast life. This is the kind of men that got me in trouble."

The merit of these quotations is not that they tell an unexpected story; no one can see the average gangster and sex film without being convinced that they breed criminals and prostitutes. The merit of these quotations is rather their authenticity. They prove to the hilt what we have suspected on general lines of reasoning for a long time.

The Research Council figures disclose that

in 1930 the big themes in pictures were: love, 29.6%, crime, 27.4%, sex, 15%, making a total of 72%. In 115 pictures, selected at random in 1932 in Columbus, O., 59 showed killing techniques; 406 crimes were committed and 43 more attempted, a total of 449 crimes, or about four crimes per picture. The revolver was used in twenty-two pictures, knifing in nine, general shooting in five. In fewer than five pictures were shown: hanging, stabbing, beating to death, drowning, lynching, machine-gunning, strangling, and eight other methods of killing, making a total of 18 varieties of exits. Forty-three per cent. of the total settings were bedrooms.

Let there be no doubt about it— young children *remember* what they see on the screen. It was found that the next day after seeing a film eight-year-old children had caught and remembered three out of five of the items the adults remembered. At the end of six weeks they recalled 90% of what they remembered next day. At the end of three months the percentage was still 90% or more. The average of retention by children is over 70%. The result of the gangster film is exactly what we should expect it to be. Forty-nine per cent. of 110 inmates of a penal institution said that movies gave them a desire to carry a gun; 21%, that movies taught them how to fool the police; 12%, that when they saw a gangster or bandit picture, they planned to hold up some one or "pull a job." Fifty per cent. of reform-school boys examined said that pictures dealing with gangsters and gun-play stirred in them a desire for wanting to make a lot of money easily. Boys in reformatories or young men in jails listed 32 separate and

important items of crime technique they had first learned from the movies.

At Calgary, Alberta, playmates put a noose around the neck of ten-year-old Fraser Edmonds and, throwing the end of the rope over a beam in the barn at the rear of his home, pulled him off the floor and left him suspended in the air. His light weight saved him from having his neck broken. "I was supposed to be the cowboy robber, and they were going to 'string me up.' We have played that game lots of times before, but they never went as far as they did this time." Fraser said his heroes of the movies were Tom Mix and Buck Jones. He liked to play games which resembled scenes from pictures in which those actors played. (*Calgary Herald*, January 9, 1934.)

The *Literary Digest* of May 13, 1933, gave publicity to the study made by one of the Research Council's experts, Prof. Edgar Dale, psychologist, of Ohio State University. A study of 1,500 films in three selected years, 500 each year, showed that crime, sex, and love were the subjects of 82 per cent. of all feature films in 1920, 88 per cent. in 1925, 72 per cent. in 1930. "But the falling off in 1930," we read, "was more apparent than real; for there was a new 9 per cent. on mystery and war, in which violence always and crime often appeared. So the child at his weekly average show saw fifty-two feature films, of which thirty-nine were on these three subjects." The answer is often given that, though this may be true, the pictures in themselves have no effect, no influence, on the children. Yet consider that a child who attends a movie but once a week, a total of 52 in a year, has im-

pressed on its mind scenes of violence, crime, sex, and love in at least 39 of the 52 feature films seen! Surely those scenes cannot but leave some mark on the highly impressionable mind of the child in its formative years. There is quite an array of evidence to show the bad emotional effect of such highly exciting pictures. For, to quote just the statement of Dr. Frederick Paterson, a distinguished New York neurologist, as given in the *Literary Digest*: "If sufficiently strong, they have an effect very similar to shell shock such as soldiers received in war. A healthy child, seeing a picture once in a while, will suffer no harm. But repeating the stimulation often amounts to emotional debauch. Stimulation, when oft repeated, is cumulative. Scenes causing horror and fright are sowing the seeds in the system for future neuroses and psychoses — nervous disorders." Then add to this the training youthful minds obtain in committing crime, and no more need be said about the evil influence of the movies.

Rev. S. G. Mazak addresses the members of his church, the Slovak Lutheran Synod, with this appeal (*Svedok*, 1933): —

"You parents, who are directly responsible to God for the welfare of your children, for their souls, do you not think it is time to count the fruits of your laxity, your indifferentism to the warnings of your pastors? You who deliberately send your children to the movies, so that they will be out of your way, so that you may have a 'fling' yourself, do you realize the risk you are taking with your child's soul? You bemoan the fact that your children no longer want to obey you, that they do not care for church, etc., etc. Do you not realize that you are but reaping the harvest of your own sowing? Have you so often forgotten the command of your God to bring up your chil-

children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? Have you forgotten that during the youthful years of your child you are to train him in the way he is to go? And instead you send him to the movies; you shirk your responsibilities; you permit the movies to teach him—the wrong way! You decide to take the easiest way out; it was too hard to train your own children, you want some one else to do it! You were told that in the movies your child will receive visual training; it will learn to avoid evil; it will have its character bettered; yes, it will be a better citizen due to the movies. You listen to that tommy-rot; you believe it; you permit yourself to be lulled into false security by the siren song of Satan—the movies were to do everything. How quickly you forgot that the only way to train children is the divine way, to instil into their hearts the love and fear of, and the trust in, God! How quickly you forgot that your children will be better men and women only in proportion to the faith in Christ that will be found in their hearts! Spiritual training was neglected.”

III. What should Be Our Attitude towards the Movies?

1. AS CHRISTIANS.

From the earlier articles in this series it has become clear that, if there is a human invention which the devil has very largely captured for himself, it is the motion-picture. Due to the system of block booking and blind selling it is impossible for an exhibitor or theater owner to select his pictures or to buy in the open market such good pictures as are being still produced in the various studios. He is compelled to show a very large amount of photoplays featuring crime and sex. It should be clear that the owning or conducting of a motion-picture theater under these conditions is impossible for a Christian. A congre-

gation which tolerates its members to own or operate such a theater is an offense to the community and neglects its plain duty over against the soul of a member who is spreading every week the seeds of crime and sexual vice. No one who is thus for financial returns doing the devil's own work can have a living faith abiding in him. He must be admonished and, if necessary, put out of the congregation, Matt. 18, 17; Luke 17, 1. 2; 2 Cor. 6, 14 ff.

Our duty as parents towards our children demands that we put a stop to the indiscriminate visiting of the motion-picture theater by our children and adolescent youth. The common experience is that Carl or Mildred rush into the kitchen and ask for a quarter to "see a movie." The mother supplies the money and probably thinks herself a model parent for cautioning the children to "come right back home" and "look out for the cars when crossing the street." Does she realize that it might be better for her children to be crushed by an automobile while crossing the street than to have them enter the theater and have their minds, hearts, and bodies poisoned with violent and lustful actions produced with all the necessary close-ups before their very eyes? Does the mother realize that, in permitting her boy or girl of schoolgoing age to visit the moving-picture theater *regularly*, — no matter how good the show, — she is ruining the child's nervous system and his taste for all that is fine in literature? robbing him of the greatest gifts of civilization and of nervous force as well? Parents who permit their children to have the free run of the motion-picture theaters do not deserve to have children.

Parents who permit their grown sons and daughters to visit the theaters indiscriminately are almost in as great a damnation. No parent has the right simply to say "okeh!" when son or daughter announces, "We're going to a show." It is the business of parents to know *what show*. It is their business to say *no* when the pictures are questionable.

Our young people should, on their own account, stay away from photoplays of an immoral or suggestive character. Why deliberately fill the mind with images derived from the intimate lives of Hollywood prostitutes and their paramours? Why bring the atmosphere of the gangster's den into a mind which through Baptism has been made a temple of the Holy Ghost? We are not going the length of saying that, by viewing such objectionable films, Christian faith and morality are at once destroyed. But it cannot be denied that, after viewing many such films, nature becomes acclimated to these fumes from the pit and soon tolerates, yes, even begins to relish, their foul odor.

There is no more saddening sight than a young man or woman passing through the door of a theater which announces in letters a foot high some such legend as: "Big Love Scene"; "A Beautiful Blond Woman in His Life—Could He Resist?"; "All of Me"; "Girls for Sale"; "Nndity in Gold"; "Back into Nature with Venus." If they were to visit a hospital for contagious diseases, they would have to put on sterilized gowns and masks. But better a thousand times to fall a prey to smallpox or typhoid fever than to be inoculated with the germ of the Hollywood type of love-life, which is nothing but a bestial service

of lust camouflaged by fine dresses and glamorous music. The thought of the millions that have their minds and hearts poisoned every week by these shows is enough to make one realize the existence of a personal devil even if the Bible said nothing about it.

Nothing is so destructive of the finer sensibilities than the attendance of the average Hollywood production by girls in the company of boys. The very act of passing through a theater vestibule decorated with life-size pictures of girls nine-tenths nude or of the hero and the female star locked in the familiar fade-out embrace should be enough to cause a decent girl and also a decent young man to experience an embarrassment that will be an incentive to greater care in the choice of screen entertainment. But what shall we say of couples sitting through some of the plays described in former articles, possibly for a space of two hours, watching the success of the seducer and adulterer or the wiles of a fallen woman leading men upon the paths of carnal pleasure? What must be the reaction of even a Christian young man or woman mentally identifying themselves with actors and actresses who are portraying the effect upon each other of sexual passion? With what kind of mind, do you suppose, will these two leave the theater? How degrading for a girl to be compelled to express sincere appreciation for the "treat" offered by her escort. Likely as not the show includes a program of vaudeville features with dances in the seminude, topical songs that make virtue look ridiculous, and other features that used to be limited to burlesque shows of the type that is revealed on the bill-boards of South State Street and the

Bowery. Where is the young man that apologizes to a girl for having offered her these insults as the price of her company? We have lately heard that among the university youth, theater parties have ceased to be a social feature because "you can't take a girl to a motion-picture without running the risk of embarrassment." Have our young people fallen below the standards of decent worldly people in this respect? Is there any question that a young man should consider it a duty to know in advance what kind of show he is about to visit when he invites a girl to be his companion? Is there any question that a Christian girl, and the young man, too, should rise from their seats and leave the theater when an immoral plot develops or when the behavior and language of the actors become suggestive? In fact, should not attendance at moving-picture shows be a rare thing in the lives of our young people, limited to those exceptional occasions when wholesome, or at least harmless, films are shown?

The evil results of worldly companionships are startlingly apparent as we study the records of the Motion Picture Research Council. What young Christians may expect from associating with ungodly companions is nothing but degradation and seduction. How does attending a salacious film affect the young man who has no Christian principles? A college sophomore, age 19, made this statement: "I have often noticed that when I come out of a love picture I have a tendency to want to kiss and fondle any young lady that happens to be with me. I have often been successful in attentions that at other times would have been tabu." The investigators quote a young

man, under sentence of burglary, who tells in clear terms of asking girls to sex pictures with the express purpose of leading up to improper sex conduct.

Here is an interesting statement from a young man of 21, a college junior. Notice how coolly he analyzes the effects of the movies. "A highly charged sex movie puts many girls in an emotional state that weakens, let us say, resistance. I took a girl friend of mine to a racy sex picture. It had the usual lingerie scenes, complication, etc. That night when I took her home, she was, in the vernacular, quite warm. . . . Nine times out of ten with intelligent interpretation the girl's emotional state can be regulated and used to what may be either advantage or disadvantage." How would you like to have some man plan in such a cold-blooded manner how to break down the will of your daughter by selecting the moving pictures he takes her to see? Nearly one half of delinquent girls examined admitted that they were moved to invite men to make love to them after seeing passionate sex pictures. From this it is clear that our young people must make it a rule, never to be departed from under any circumstances, that they refuse any invitation to attend moving-picture shows *in the company of an ungodly young man or an irreligious young woman.*

One is tempted to say that so evil an institution as the motion-picture show must be shunned entirely by Christians. This would indeed have to be our position if wholesome or unobjectionable films were entirely wanting. Under the circumstances the rule must be a conscientious avoidance of that which is evil, while retaining the privilege of enjoying some

exceptional film which from the standpoint of morals is unobjectionable. A policy of this kind, generally followed by the better element of our population, would either wreck the industry or bring it to its knees ready to eliminate what offends against common decency.

2. AS CITIZENS.

Fortunate that small number of congregations which have not within fifteen minutes' walk from their house of worship an open sewer contaminating the moral atmosphere of the community — a motion-picture theater. The 75 per cent. that have this agency to contend with as an influence — what are they going to do about it?

If some one started a rendering works or tannery next to the church and kept it going full blast on Sunday mornings, we presume the congregation would complain to the health authorities and would get some action against the nuisance. The location of a dance-hall opposite the church would also be contested in the courts by a self-respecting congregation. What is to be done about the movies? Shall a body of Christian citizens permit without remonstrance the existence in its community of an institution which is so conducted as to contaminate with the standards of the sexual perverss of Hollywood the morals of those who frequent it?

Here is a city in the State of Michigan in which our people are represented by five congregations. They practically control the town. The local picture house contracts for "Hollywood after Dark." Under the block-booking system the operator cannot help himself; take

it or keep your house dark. But what does the rascal do in order to grab a few extra dollars? His handiwork is before us as we write. First of all he has a local artist draw up a man and woman reclining in sexual embrace. Next he advertises two days "For Women Only" and one day "For Men Only." He labels his dirty picture "Startling, Sexual, Amazing." Then a woman is hired for a special lecture on sex. Finally: "No one under fourteen [!] admitted." Our Lutherans make up the bulk of the citizens of the town insulted by this advertisement. Did they think it their business to protest? Did individuals address the theater manager and the editor with demands to withdraw this type of entertainment and advertising? Did our young people's societies draw up resolutions of protest against the insult offered to their standards of entertainment?

We know the bill-boards of the local theaters. We see their advertisements every day in the newspapers. We may have been shocked, offended, and scandalized ourselves when shown a typical Hollywood review—ten girls in glass bathtubs lately in a St. Louis house—when attending to view a historical play or a film featuring travel and adventure. In other words, we know what is going on. Since our common sense has not told us in the past, we have now had to learn from a committee of university men—the Motion Picture Research Council—that our children *remember* the language and action of the so-called stars of the movie world when they portray crime and obscenity. We, who boast of our care for our children, our excellent system of Sunday-schools, our wonderful Christian day-schools

— we had to be told by psychologists that the heart of our boys and girls was rotting away under the influence of the strumpets, gigolos, and clowns of the Hollywood studios. And now that we know, we shall — permit the buzzards who live upon the innocence of boys and girls to continue showing the same line of murder and sex films? We shall continue to let the local editor, whose advertising in many places depends absolutely on the good will of the Lutheran community, to show in salacious detail, by means of text and drawings, the “offerings” of the next week?

Let it be distinctly said: The question of Church and State is not involved in the present discussion; and as for mixing our religious convictions with our attitude toward public morals — how impotent a Christianity that is not able at least to raise its voice in protest against the scandals of the present age!

We here republish, as an example of well-worded protest, the resolutions adopted by the Walther League at Chicago, 1933: —

WHEREAS, The motion-picture industry as at present conducted fosters in many of the presentations a perverted sense of moral values, glamorously portraying crime and viciousness and moral looseness not only as justifiable, but as an actual presentation of ordinary life; and

WHEREAS, Indiscriminate patronage of the moving-picture theater has made a very heavy contribution to the prevalent disregard of law, order, and decency; and

WHEREAS, Our own young folks naturally cannot remain untouched by the morally debilitating influences of an indiscriminate viewing of the output of the moving-picture world; therefore be it

Resolved, 1. That we protest against the blatant immorality, irreverence, and indecency often portrayed on the screen;

2. That we voice this protest by carefully scrutinizing the moral tone of the screen presentations we desire to see, avoiding every presentation known as suggestive;

3. That we seek to influence our friends and particularly our fellow-Leaguers to exercise the utmost discrimination in the choice also of this form of amusement.

This is good as far as it goes. But our local church societies have a right to go a step farther and directly address exhibitors and editors and, if necessary, demand space in the local paper for protests against the prevailing quality of film entertainment. Done on a national scale, our Church in itself could cause a quaking of the knees in certain branches of the industry. An extended boycott of the picture house, when some outrageous film has been shown, will cause frenzied complaint to be registered in the production managers' offices.

What does the Word of God demand of us? It demands that we seek the peace (welfare) of the city in which we live, Jer. 29, 7. The prophet adds: "For therein ye shall have peace." The moral life, the economic welfare of our Church, is bound up with the welfare of the community. It seems ridiculous that our people will lend their support to an "anti-smoke- nuisance" campaign and permit the stench of the modern film to poison the air of the town.

And we are, as good citizens, interested in government (whether local, State, or national) measures for the curbing of this evil. Government is divinely ordained to check the evil-doers and to protect the good citizen—the one is its duty as much as the other, Rom. 13.

When, as under our Constitution, we as citizens have functions of government, it is our business to see to it that the principles of ordinary morality (we are not now speaking of Christian principles of conduct at all) prevail in our home town. We have spoken pointedly enough about the folly of parents who make great sacrifices for the Christian training of their children and then let the movie vultures fatten on the lambs of the Church. But with them in the same condemnation is the Christian citizen who permits the youth of the town, be it Lutheran or Catholic, Jew or agnostic, to be inoculated with the germs of violence and lust by the misbegotten art of the modern movie.
