

**MOVING PICTURE SHOWS**

Recently the News had something to say about a sermon in which I was represented as scoring the moving picture and vaudeville shows of Burlington. I do not deny that I had some plain things to say about these shows, but it is hardly exact to say that I "scored" them. I did what is to every thinking mind more effectual than scoring. I stated facts—facts evident and conclusive.

I write because the editorial comment may be misleading. It says either too much or too little, according as one construes the meaning of "scoring" or "going after" the shows. Some reader would say the preacher is a crank for denouncing innocent amusement. Others would think he wishes merely to say something sensational. I ask the reader, as I asked my hearers, to form each his own conclusion in the light of the following facts.

I spoke of moving picture shows in general. Why discuss them at all? Why advertise the business by preaching on it? Such questions many are disposed to ask. The questions imply a general ignorance of the gigantic proportions assumed all at once by the moving picture business. It is a new business. It has grown up almost in a night. So sudden and so marvelous has been its development that few people ever suspect what a large place moving pictures have in world affairs. The Literary Digest of July 30th, contained the statement that "within almost a single round of seasons the picture show has become an immense enterprise, a world-wide amusement, a universal influence," and that, in spite of world-wide criticism and denunciation, "it has forged ahead into international popularity" and that "in this country alone probably two and a quarter millions of people visit these shows daily." Burlington illustrates the world wide interest in this business. No other enterprise has so conspicuous and persistent advertising. Nothing else in our city is exerting a more potent influence on the rising generation. Since the Reno prize fight, and the vigorous protest raised all over the world against moving pictures of that incident, says the Literary Digest, moving pictures have been "easily the most discussed of any form of popular amusement." The press and the pulpit over all the earth today are taking serious notice of this business.

Now what I shall proceed to say will be mainly from recent editorials in reputable journals. These quotations are worthy to carry greater weight than anything I can say. I am frank to concede that there are good things even on the vaudeville stage. Much more cheerfully do I concede that a large per cent of the moving pictures given in almost every show are instructive and wholesome. But I deplore the admixture of the evil kind. More and more the press is inclining to the following conclusions as to these shows.

1. They are injurious physically. Here are statements from editorials that recently appeared in journals of high rank: "Taking them altogether we are beginning to believe that moving picture shows are injurious. Children who habitually attend them are said by their teachers to be dull, sleepy and nervous at school; and oculists say that the moving pictures are a terrific strain upon the eyes." "Physicians, too, warn us that many of the places where such shows are given are distinctly unsanitary, threatening tuberculosis from the presence of dirt, spectrum and bacteria."

I have just read a letter from a relative in a Southern city. He said: "I attended moving picture shows until I learned that physicians regarded them as one of the most frequent causes of trouble with the eyes." He added: "I am told that Germany has forbidden moving pictures as being injurious to the eyes." I do not know that the last statement is true.

2. These shows are injurious mentally. Of course many pictures are instructive, and therefore helpful to the mind in so far as they are instructive. But there is also the other side. See actually what is sensational, exciting, or what is merely "filling away" both the religious and the capacity to enjoy much while. One who goes regularly to see moving pictures will be surprised to find that the vaudeville will be more likely to listen to a sermon or to read a thoughtful article in the Journal of Education than to the effects of the pictures and vaudeville

shows, says: "There is much that is coarse and degrading in the talk of the vaudeville stage. There is cheap wit which the boys are fond of imitating, and which dulls the capacity for real humor. Children lose their interest in simple and healthful forms of amusement. They are constantly craving the sensational. It is just because this social influence of the cheap show is destroying in many boys and girls their capacity for future efficiency as men and women that the problem has become serious." The thoughtful parent will notice that the boy that goes regularly to the moving picture show loses gradually his interest in his books, the Sunday school lesson, or the sermon. It is partly because the show is forming in him the habit of looking for light fun and entertainment. Thinking becomes a burden.

3. These shows are hurtful morally. I will grant that much in them teaches a good moral lesson. But more and more they are tending to the opposite result. The Western Christian Advocate, of Cincinnati, some months ago, declared on the testimony of the superintendent of the probation officers connected with the juvenile court of Cincinnati that "juvenile delinquency has increased alarmingly in that city—50 per cent he would estimate—since the multiplication of the cheap moving picture shows." That paper goes on to say: "We lately saw a series of pictures to which the proprietor directed our specific attention as being particularly high class. But they showed abandoned women, apartments in a house of ill repute, gamblers at their games, the suicide of a prostitute, the hold-up of highwaymen, and so on. And all of this the exhibitor claimed was teaching a high moral lesson! Through this means boys and girls become familiarized with every form of vice and violence. Juvenile criminals have repeatedly confessed that they received their first suggestions of robbery, house-breaking, safe-cracking, etc. from what they had seen on the screens."

"Not only are these pictures themselves depraving, but for innocent boys and girls to be drawn into the associations likely to be found in such places, and to be out on the streets during the night hours, is not conducive to their best moral development. There are all sorts of danger and temptations in that direction."

Again, Mr. E. H. Chandler in the Journal of Education says: "With rare exception the ordinary program of moving picture shows includes some representation of burglary or thieving, some suggestion of the flirtations of husband or wife, and something grotesque, with preferences for representations of satanic magic. The public instinct for representations of what is criminal is very strong, and will be catered to by commercial managers." In proof of the last statement we need only to note that since the recent disgraceful prize fight, the municipal authorities in almost every country in the world have found it necessary to prohibit the showing of pictures of the fight. Depraved taste everywhere clamors for such pictures and the moving picture men everywhere cater more or less to the depraved taste. The most competent critics everywhere are agreed that no moving picture show does business long without presenting pictures that are not fit for the eye.

I forbear to mention the indelicate—nay, often profane and vulgar—language, and the coarse and indecent exposure of the person which is an acknowledged feature of the vaudeville stage.

4. These shows are ruinous religiously. I shall touch this but lightly in a secular newspaper. I speak with the full knowledge that some churches in all their branches of work, make valuable use of moving pictures. I know the moving picture business is not necessarily hurtful. It could be made one of the world's greatest blessings. But it is significant that, new as the business is, almost everywhere the religious press and the pulpit are beginning to deplore the manifest result of frequent attendance upon moving picture shows. In addition to all other bad results, it is being noticed that regular attendants at the shows become indifferent attendants at the church services. The young people acquire an unhealthy desire for light and sensational entertainment, and as a result the church services become dull to them. The church ceases to hold them. One may see shows occasionally and not be hurt, but the tendency is dangerous. It should be noted that I have not expressed mildly the position

which the more serious journals of the country, both secular and religious, incline more and more widely to adopt. It is to be regretted that one of the greatest means of entertainment and education ever known to the world—the moving picture show—seems destined to be converted into an agency of evil. Some towns have seen fit, through the W. C. T. U. or the mother's meeting, to establish a censorship of these shows, and to protest against the introduction of any objectionable pictures or other features. A judicious censorship seems desirable.

Again it is clear that I have done no "scoring" of local shows. I have stated general facts, and that largely in the form of quotations from leading editorials. I have done so with the belief that moving pictures have come to stay; that they are destined to exert a yet greater influence nationally and locally, and that it is a matter of immense importance that public sentiment regarding the business shall be wholesome.

S. L. MORGAN.

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Lv. Winston	2:40 p. m.	7:10 a. m.
Lv. Walnut C.	3:15 p. m.	7:51 a. m.
Lv. Madison	3:43 p. m.	8:23 a. m.
Lv. Mayodan	3:46 p. m.	8:27 a. m.
Lv. Mt. Airy	4:44 p. m.	9:26 a. m.
Ar. Roanoke	7:00 p. m.	11:45 a. m.
	No. 21	No. 23
Lv. Roanoke	9:15 a. m.	5:00 p. m.
Lv. Mt. Airy	11:40 a. m.	7:30 p. m.
Lv. Mayodan	12:52 p. m.	8:22 p. m.
Lv. Madison	12:53 p. m.	8:26 p. m.
Lv. Walnut C.	1:27 p. m.	8:52 p. m.
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