

POPULARITY OF MOVING PICTURES EVERYWHERE

Thousands Daily Seek The Picture Shows for Amusements And Are Benefitted Thereby—"Poor Man's Theatre."

Acting in Moving Picture Shows Must be Versatile—The Actors Well Paid for Service And Find Work Pleasant.

The moving picture tidal has swept across the amusement world, engulfing and submerging all other forms of cheap amusements, says Roy L. McCordell in the New York World.

The dime museum is done for, vaudeville is sapped at its foundation and the cheap dramatic company is going, gone!

It is because a man or a maid for a dollar can have the whole world for a peep show.

A dollar means 20 complete bills at as many nickleodeons.

The spectator for his nickel may be edified, instructed, amazed, and amused.

You can see Li Hung Chang carried in his sedan chair by New York policeman, Theodore Roosevelt thundering at predatory wealth—every move a picture, and every picture a move.

McKinley walks among the crowds to his death at the assassin's hands, the Japs charge on 219 Metre hill at Fort Arthur, the Russian prisoners go by downcast and unkempt.

For your nickel you can see the Lusitania going from her pier, the battleship Oregon firing her great guns, the Fernham alship in full flight, the Holland submarine boat going down, Mt. Vesuvius going up!

The Kaiser salutes you for your nickel, the pope blesses you for five cents, Tetraxini throws you a kiss, and then from the hidden phonograph that wondrous voice of hers climbs up on up, blithely beautiful, to the highest note with which she caps the cadenza in "Rigoletto."

Pictures of mirth, pictures of magic, pictures of peril—and all for a nickel. For \$1 you may behold more things than were ever dreamed of in any one's philosophy, Horatio!

In this city alone two big vaudeville houses—Keith & Proctor's, at Union Square, and Keith & Proctor's on West 23rd street—have cut out on the continents, and have put in moving pictures.

They have been named "Bijou Dream," both of them, and the admission is 5 and 10 cents only to the best seats in the house.

These prices will cut the receipts in half, but moving pictures will cut the expenses for "the bill" from about \$3,000 a week to about \$300.00 a week.

Besides these two big shows and in their line leading New York playhouses, the Manhattan for the past two seasons has been exclusively a moving picture showhouse.

Throughout the city proprietors of other features not at this moment profitable are considering the installation of the screen and projecting machine.

This is speaking of the legitimate theatres built for tragedy, comedy, or vaudeville. It does not include over 400 store show, stereo from nickleodeons that survive and seemingly make money all over the city of New York.

Neither does it include some half-dozen palatial moving picture theatres built especially for that purpose, as gaudy and glittering as tiles, plaster, gilding, marble, and wonderful trick electric signs can make them. Two of these are on Fourteenth street, one very recently erected at a cost of \$300,000.

It is not vaudeville alone that suffers or vaudeville actors, rather—for the vaudeville managers saw the moving picture and the nickleodeon was profitable from the start and went into that line on the side. All cheap theatrical productions, the "ten, twenty, and thirty" repertoire companies, the "Uncle Tom" shows, the cheaper grade of melodrama—half of these at least, have been ferreted out of existence by the tidal wave of moving pictures all over the land.

The nickleodeon is bright and aggressive. The "opey house" of the average small American town is stuck away in a side street somewhere over a hardware store or a butcher shop or a saloon—over something, anyway. It is dark, dreary and dirty.

The nickleodeon man gets a lease on an empty store on the main street, tears out the old front, puts in a new one, dazzling white and of ornate design and nearart decorations. A girl in the box office sells tickets for \$5 a week, an operator at \$10 manipulates the lights and runs the picture reel through the biograph.

If it is a good-sized town and the business or competition calls for it, a pianist may be employed and a cheap vaudeville team who change their bit twice a week. These last, in dances and comedy acts and illustrated songs—that is songs sung while the operator changes highly colored stereopticon slides, give variety.

That isn't the last word for the moving picture show. There are traveling moving picture shows now with superlative "effects." The usual "effects" are appropriate sounds and noises with the pictures. The crash box with the comedy tangle, the coconut shells—"Clap a clap! Clap a

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clap!" when the runaway horse comes up the street, the bell on the locomotive, the whistle on the steamer, etc.

But now they have moving picture machines to which phonographs are synchronized. Voices follow or keep pace with gestures, efforts and expressions as the pictures flicker on the screen.

This isn't all. Moving picture teams are added terrors of the time. A man and woman, sometimes several stand behind and emit dialogue to suit the characters that move and have their being on the films. Twenty-five million dollars is invested in the moving picture business in the United States.

There is a moving picture trust and moving picture "independents," the business has half a dozen trade papers, two in this city alone, devoted exclusively to moving pictures, not to count the space, reading and advertising given up to this amusement phase as The Clipper, The Billboard, Varieties, and the like.

The best trick or magical pictures come from France. The best comedy pictures and dramatic pictures are made in America. They are all taken from life. Of the moving picture business it can not be said, "Tricks in all business but this," for moving picture taking is full of tricks, and weird and wonderful things are done through faking, substituting and "double printing," as it is called when one moving picture is inconspicuously incorporated into another moving picture and all the eye may detect is the wonderment of it.

The ordinary moving picture is sold at the rate of from 15 to 12 cents per foot when new. Second hand, it varies in price according to the popularity of the subject and the condition of the film. Coloring must be done by hand, save where a plain red tint for a fire scene or a light bluish-green tint for moonlight is employed. The coloring process by hand is tedious and must be painstakingly done, as color not placed just exactly right in every picture will bob around and jump when shown.

Taking moving pictures and showing moving pictures simply means that so many separate and distinct pictures a second, say 15, were taken, and when film is run through a projecting machine and 15 separate pictures a second were flashed, one after another, in the same spot on a screen, the eye sees no movement in the scene, only the moving objects are made to move by this distinct flashing up of 15 consecutive photographs, one after another, per second.

Before the Cooper-Hewitt and other forms of no-actinic electric lights were taken by good, bright daylight, save at prohibitive expense.

The first moving picture of any importance taken by artificial light was the "The Great Train Robbery" picture cost by the American Biograph Company \$10,000 to take. Five miles of film were used and 200 arc lights were employed. The heat of these sickened and exhausted the gladiators.

Even more interesting than seeing moving pictures coming out of the projecting machine is to see them going into the biograph camera. The film is tossed down handful after handful of white confetti. Electric fans out of the picture made the confetti swirl and scatter.

When you see that picture you will take an oath it was snapped during a merry blizzard. Snow is on the ground, snow is in the air, snowballs of cotton or wool are being tossed to and fro. You will swear it is snow.

The interior of the biograph studio is as a stage without the footlights. A photographic "field" is marked off by a cord tacked down to the floor. Step over that cord down front, and you will show in the picture distorted, footless, legless. Step over the cords at the side and you are gone, so far as the picture is concerned.

The day we were there we saw Manager McCutcheon, of the company, and his troupe of biograph actors taking the merry domestic comedy of "The Yellow Peril."

A housewife with servant troubles hires a Chinaman, and then she has more servant troubles. The cook throws him out of the window, the courtship policeman clubs him. He eats the goldfish and pleads for rat triasse, and all is turmoil and assault and battery.

The actors in the moving pictures are real actors, Joseph Jefferson has played "Rip" for the moving pictures, Oliver Ross and Fenton have done "Oliver Twist" in the moving pictures. Anna Held has enacted the wingless scene from "Stage Wife" for the moving pictures, and such well known actors as Eugene Confield, Charles Bradford Neil, McNeil, Catherine Jefferson, Taylor Holmes, Rose Stuart and Mar-

garet Wycherly—just to name a few—have played pantomimic parts in moving picture comedies.

Today, now that moving pictures have hurt the other sorts of show business so, Mr. McCutcheon has a list of 2,000 professional people, great and small, big and little, young and old, at his command.

The pay is good, the surroundings pleasant, the rehearsals not tiresome, and a picture of many scenes may be a week or more in the taking. Disen-saged or resting actors and actresses are not at all averse to making money in the moving pictures.

Wallace McCutcheon, Jr., a real actor himself, lately with Willie Collier, and now with Nat Goodwin, is perhaps the most versatile, in one picture, "The Elopement," young Mr. McCutcheon, as the gallant lover, had to ride a galloping horse, drive a racing automobile, run a motor boat, jump overboard in Deal Lake when it was made to explode in fragments, and rescue a girl who couldn't swim.

You see him towing her a hundred yards to shore and then carrying her in his arms to a farmhouse.

Innumerable "rescues" have been shown that were more than real. A girl, all for the sake of moving pictures, jumped overboard in winter from a New Jersey ferryboat in mid-stream and was picked up by a life-saver in a rowboat—and she had a somewhat narrow squeak of it.

Very few accidents, and those but slight, have occurred in taking moving pictures in this country. But in England a man tied to a rail for a melodramatic picture was cut in pieces because the engine driver miscalculated and the man was really tied—which wasn't really necessary.

In the picture taken by Mr. McCutcheon and Mr. Porter of the Edison Company called the "Train Wreckers," you see a girl tied to the rails.

On comes the train; the engineer sees the girl. But it is down grade—he can't stop. He rushes from the cab, down the footboard to the pilot, and reaching down, smatches up the girl just as the train is upon her! This is a picture that makes you sit up and scream the first time you see it, and it thrills you wildly, see it ever so often.

Yet this picture at this point is done by trickery—with a real locomotive, however—by trickery so simple and childish that you'd never forgive me if I explained, and the fair heroine was never in one bit of danger at all.

In the United States costly moving picture theatres of the most complete and ornate description are being erected.

The store show obtains all over Europe from Madrid to Moscow, almost as plentiful as here.

Shrewd showmen say the business is just begun. So good-bye, Uncle Tom.

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