

# The Menace of the Movies

**The Menace of the Movies** is no exaggerated catch-cry. The Movies are threatening individual and national well-being at a most vital point. The eyes and ears are avenues to the heart. It is presumptuous to give eyes and ears to corrupt scenes and sounds, and hope to keep the heart pure. One can differentiate between what is good and bad in what is allowed to come into one's home over the radio. It is not so with the Movies. Attendants at the Picture Theatre must take what is served up to them there. And what is being served up to people in the Movies of to-day? The object of this folder is to bring some disquieting facts before the reader.

America leads the world in film production, with Hollywood prominently in the van. With more or less slight modifications other countries follow.

The United States Motion Picture Research Council, through the benefactions of the Payne Fund, made a comprehensive survey of the nature and influence of the Movies. The inquiry was carried out by scientists, psychologists, sociologists and educators specially selected for the task.

Dr. John R. Rice reviews the facts brought to light by these investigators in a book called **"What is Wrong with the Movies?"** This book is a challenge to all thinking people to awaken to the moral menace of the Movies. The charges of Dr. Rice against the Motion Picture Industry are startling.

## Charge No. 1.

**"The Movies are made by sinful, wicked people, unfit to be examples."**

"Movie people are notoriously immoral. There are doubtless exceptions, but the exception proves the rule."

"In **Photoplay** for December is an article, **'Why Can't the Stars Stay Married?'** The writer reminds us that Constance Bennett has been married three times, that John Barrymore has had four wives, and

that screen stars do not live long with one mate but that they divorce and re-marry . . . Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., was divorced by Joan Crawford. However, since they lived together for five years, it is called in the Movie magazines 'the perfect marriage.'

"According to Jesus, any group in society that is perverse and almost universal in the matter of divorce is guilty as a class and are adulterers and adulteresses. And remember that divorce is the rule and not the exception in Hollywood among the stars."

#### Charge No. 2.

#### "Greed and Notoriety—Sinful Motives of the Movies—Reveal Their Wickedness."

"The love of money is the basic principle back of the moving-picture industry . . . Why the sex stories on the screen? Why the bedroom scenes? Why is it that all the actresses have to show their legs? Why the suggestive and bawdy lines? Why the love triangles and the clandestine meetings? Why are prostitutes idealised in the moving pictures? The reason is this—such pictures will get the crowds."

The same situation prevails here in Australia. Herbert Booth once interviewed a movie show proprietor, and endeavoured to persuade him to remove from display near the footpath an indecent picture poster of a near-nude woman. The show man just laughed, and said, "Why, man, that's just the sort of picture the people like!"

The moving picture industry would sell the virtue of Australian girls, the honour of Australian boys, and the uprightness of Australian homes, for money!

We continue our quotations from Dr. Rice's book, "What is Wrong with the Movies?"

#### Charge No. 3.

#### "Movie Films deal principally in Sex, Crime, and Impure Love Themes."

"Notice some findings of this great investigation as reported in 'Our Movie Made Children' (pages 29, 30). Dr. Edgar Dale undertook this task of sorting out, classifying, and analysing some 1500 movies and their contents . . . What he found was that out of 500 pictures in 1920, 82 per cent. dealt with the three major themes of crime, sex, and love; in 1925, 79 per cent. were occupied with these themes, and in 1930, 72 per cent. . . Somewhere between 75 and 80 per

cent. of all pictures dealt with love, sex, crime, or mystery films."

"The 'love' of the movies is not holy and wholesome love . . . I solemnly charge that love, as portrayed in the movies, is an unholy thing, unnatural, and ungodly, and that the exhibition of it before the eyes and minds of young people is a curse beyond human measurement . . . This necking, this display of bodies, these hot kisses, these secret meetings as shown on the screen, acted out by lustful, immoral people, produced by greedy and godless film companies that have no higher motive than gain, and enjoyed by millions of the public openly, this is disreputable, licentious, and evil!"

#### Charge No. 4.

#### "The Movies Encourage Crime, Endorse Sin, Teach Lust."

What happens to criminals in the Movies? Does crime pay? It certainly does, on the silver screen! Dr. Rice proves this by the following quotation from "Our Movie Made Children":—

"A detailed analysis of 40 pictures, in which no less than 57 criminals committed 62 crimes, gave him (Dr. Dale) the answer: Three of the 57 criminals were arrested and held; four were arrested but released; another four, after being arrested, escaped; seven were arrested and their punishment was implied."

Out of 57 criminals only seven were punished by law! And this scientific investigation proves that Movie criminals are "so attractive that they tend to make crime alluring and criminality distinguished."

On page 53 of his book Dr. J. R. Rice says: "The scientific investigation financed by the Payne Fund . . . found that Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich, Joan Crawford, Constance Bennett, Jean Harlow, and many others were 'good-bad girls' on the screen; heroines, but immoral and impure . . . 'Time' magazine names a dozen female movie stars and says that these stars had 'all in recent pictures attractively performed functions ranging from noble prostitution to carefree concupiscence.'"

#### Charge No. 5.

#### "The Movies Fail to Teach Thrift, Hard Work, Temperance and Such Essentials of Good Character."

The following facts are drawn from the research by the Payne Fund: "Thirty-three per cent. of the heroes, for instance, and 44 per cent. of the heroines, 54 per cent. of the villains and 63 per cent. of the villainesses in 115 picture—all these prominent protagonists, are either wealthy or ultra-wealthy. Of leading characters who are poor the run is only between 5 and 15 per cent." (Reported in "Our Movie Made Children").

Dr. Rice, commenting on this section of the report, says,—"Seventy-six of these pictured characters are 'theatrical,' many characters are called 'high society,' and none at all are common labourers. A great unrest enters into the hearts of those who see the movies and then find themselves confined to a humdrum world where men and women if they are honest must work for a living and spend only the money that they earn, and wear only such clothes as they can afford."

#### Charge No. 6.

#### "Movies Proved a School for Crime: Actually Produce Criminals."

"Among the scientists who investigated the effects of the movies on character was Dr. Blumer, professor of the University of Chicago . . . In wholesale fashion it became apparent that movies had encouraged crime, taught the methods of crime, and made criminals."

"Here is a partial list of things movies taught young boys how to do, leading them to a life of crime . . . The list was given by convicted criminals themselves, saying they learned them at the movies:

- "How to open a safe by 'feel' of dial.
- "To cut burglar alarm wires in advance during the day.
- "How to break window noiselessly, by pasting fly-paper on.
- "How to open or close a lock with a pair of tweezers.
- "How to force the door of an automobile with a piece of pipe.
- "Idea of renting an apartment for gang 'hangout'.
- "The 'scientific way,' leaving no fingerprints."

#### Spiritual Results of the Movies.

In the concluding section of his book, Dr. Rice writes,—"How can a Christian have fulness of joy

when he regularly attends picture shows? How can he feel the comfort of the Holy Spirit? How can he enjoy the prayer meeting? How can he feast upon the Bible, the Word of God? The answer is that he does not."

"The results of the moving-picture theatres are evil definitely, overwhelmingly, tragically evil . . . The spiritual results of the movies are inconceivably worse than all the other results combined."

#### An Objection Anticipated and Answered.

"First, someone says that the movies are not all bad. And that we admit. Some epic stories are filmed on the movies, and some beautiful scenes are prepared, some strong characters are depicted, some good morals are taught. Notice I said **some**. Also, there is some good bread in the garbage can, some good water goes down the sewer, and there is some good in nearly anything you can mention. We dare not let our children feed on the bread they find in the garbage even if it appears good. There is gold in sea-water but it is not worth getting out, and neither is the good in the movies enough to repay for the danger and evil and certain disastrous results."

#### An Experiment with Educational Programmes.

In one of our Australian cities years ago a series of letters appeared in the public press, from various writers, urging the importance of a change in the nature of the films exhibited at the Movies. It was demanded that pictures of a more instructive and elevating nature be screened. The correspondence came to a close or received its answer in a letter from one of the movie proprietors. This man related that he had himself recognised the desirability of reform, and had endeavoured to carry it out, only wholesome films being exhibited at his theatre. The result, he said, had not been at all such as he expected. Attendances decreased until he was threatened with bankruptcy. He was compelled to revert to the type of picture movie-goers like. Even then people were so annoyed with his "educational" experiment that it was a long time before he could coax them back to his theatre again in sufficient numbers. Picture theatres, said he, generally include one item of a more or less instructive nature in an evening's programme; but one could sense almost a sigh of relief and satisfaction from the

crowd present when this item was over, and there was a return to the more "spicy" type of picture.

#### **"Not Suitable for General Exhibition."**

The Australian Government has made it compulsory for advertisements of moving pictures to differentiate between films "suitable" and those "not suitable for general exhibition."

Waiting for the 'bus recently at a village corner shop on the outskirts of Sydney, the present writer had opportunity to examine the picture poster advertisements displayed there, and found that of the nine posters seven were stated to be "not suitable for general exhibition." This proves to a demonstration that films so designated are far more likely to draw the crowds than those designated "suitable."

What, then, are serious-minded people, with some sense of responsibility for themselves and for their children, to do? The Scriptures give a mandatory answer,—**"Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil."** Ex. 23:2.

#### **From Bad to Worse.**

Things are going from bad to worse. Prof. Theodore Graebner, D.D., in a series of articles in the **"Lutheran Witness"** (U.S.A.) piles up the evidence. We quote from his articles.

"Wilfred Beaton is editor and publisher of the **'Hollywood Spectator'**, and is one of the best-informed critics of the motion-picture. 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.'

"Were it not for the fact that he mentions names, dates, and specific instances," writes Prof. Graebner, "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 tantalising bait, the girls are made to answer the demands of the men . . . He introduces them to some assistant of the assistant camera man at the studio and exacts his pay for the favour, 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."

Quoting now from the Bible: **"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one."** Job. 14:4.

#### **The Only Safe Course.**

The wickedness is of course not in the movie machine, in the cinema itself, but in the use made of it by men bent on greedy conscienceless gain of filthy lucre. There is no wickedness in the printing press as a machine; but there are presses that pour forth contaminating literature such as any right-thinking person will rigidly exclude from his home. One cannot thus discriminate in attending the public picture show. There is only one safe course, and that is to **cut out attendance at the movies entirely.**

#### **Responsibility of Parents.**

"Can a man take fire in his bosom and not be burned?" Prov. 6:27. Can a child drink at an unclean fountain and not be defiled?

What will parents who value the temporal and eternal welfare of their children do in this matter? Parents will certainly be called to account for the discharge of their responsibilities. **"Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?"** Jer. 13:20.

#### **"Permanently Liquidate" the Movies.**

To adopt or maintain total abstinence from attendance at the Movies is not an extreme notion. This is one of those things in which there should be no compromise, as the facts reviewed in this folder clearly show.

The Sydney Sun (April 9, 1944) quotes the following statement by the Bishop of Willochra (Dr. Thomas) in his monthly diocesan letter:

"Cinemas have ushered in an era marked by decay of good manners, the waning influence of home, and crowds of flabby-looking people. **The world would be better off if this questionable form of public entertainment could be permanently liquidated.**" (Emphasis ours).

The reader has the power to "permanently liquidate" the movie influence in his own life, and a responsibility to safeguard those under his control from this evil.

#### **A Clarion Call from Dr. J. R. Rice:**

**"Christian! Put Christ First To-day, and Quit the Movies Forever!"**

#### **The Devil's Assault upon Mansoul:**

In his book **"The Holy War"** John Bunyan pictures Diabolus as setting up his engines of attack on the city of Mansoul before **"Eye-Gate"** and **"Ear-Gate."**

#### **A Warning of Judgment:**

"Walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." Eccles. 11:9.

#### **A Searching Analysis of Sin:**

"The lust of the eyes . . . is not of the Father, but is of the world." "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." See 1 John 2:15, 16.

#### **A Commandment of The Lord Jesus Christ:**

"The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Matt. 6:22, 23.

"If thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell." Matt. 5:29 R.V.

W.W.F.

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This Tract, **"The Menace of the Movies,"** price One Penny, 12 for 1/- (posted 1/1½); 25 for 1/6 (posted 1/7½); 50 for 2/9 (posted 3/-); 100 for 5/- (posted 5/6).

Another good tract, **"Parents, Awake! The Children are in Danger!"** by L. R. Thomas, the same price.

Dr. John R. Rice's book, **"What Is Wrong With The Movies?"** 116 pages, price 3/6 (posted 3/9).

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NEW SOUTH WALES.