

ARE MOVING PICTURES PUNK ?

By Stephen Leacock

I observe that new controversy has broken out about the moving pictures. Somebody has just calculated that on this continent twenty million people attend the picture houses every day, and the public is aghast. And even this figure, it seems, doesn't include the Mexicans, the Lower Californians and the Canadians and the Eskimau.

It appears also that \$250,000,000 of new capital is being put into moving pictures every year; either that or \$250,000,000,000; I forget which, but it doesn't matter. It is freely stated that the moving pictures are four-fifths punk and the other fifth poison; and that they are made up, altogether, of sex stuff, sob stuff, crime stuff, and hysteria and vanity all mixed up together.

I do not wish to take any personal part in this controversy. Indeed as one who has made not one moving picture scenario but hundreds of them, I should feel a delicacy in doing so. But it may be of interest to know just exactly how we scenario-makers make scenarios. Perhaps I may be able to prove that even a moving picture may move on a high plane.

The first thing that a writer has to do to make a scenario is to get a general topic or story. This is absolutely easy. There is no need to invent a new one; and it is impossible anyway. All the stories were invented long ago. Open any book of folklore or fairy tales or nursery rhymes and you can pick them out like plums. You could select "Little Bo Peep" or "Old Mother Hubbard" or "Jack Spratt" or any of them as the basis.

Suppose we take "Jack Spratt." The original text of the rhyme runs: "Jack Spratt could eat no fat His wife could eat no lean, And so it was between them both They licked the platter clean."

That's the ground work to begin upon. The next thing is to find the general name of the picture. That suggests itself at once from the rhyme.

THE PLATTER OF LIFE OR PARTED AND REUNITED. (Authorized by the board of censors of the . . . . .) After that it is necessary to work

out the descriptive stuff that goes along with the title for advertising purposes. This is where the highest art of moving picture making comes in. It is done more or less like this: Have you ever felt your husband turning cold? Cold as the untasted bacon fat upon the platter? Or you, have you ever watched your wife growing fat? Have you seen her expand hour by hour? If so? You must not miss this very new heart-throbbing, pulse-accelerating picture. In it you will see an aesthetic temperamental lean-eating man, yoked to a full-blooded, double-chested woman, vibrating with the joy of eating fat by the pound. What will happen? Can they do it? It is a beautiful wholesome picture of modern life. The clergy of all denominations have come to it in thousands, and shed tears.

Now let the pictures begin to spin and they show the familiar interior called The Spratt Mansion, well known also as the Anstruther Residence or The De Kuyper Home. It stands for high society as seen in the movies. It has in it, a wooden butler who takes Spratt's coat and stick each time he goes in and out, and a hundred dollar house-maid much prettier than Mrs. Spratt.

Somewhere in here put in the legend: John Spratt, Aesthetic, Temperamental, a poet, and a graduate of Oberlin College is married to Gloria Spratt his wife.

The pictures ripple on. The Spratts at breakfast. Jack Spratt has a manuscript poem spread in front of him. He keeps raising his eyes to the ceiling and nibbling lean bacon. This means that he is making up poetry. Gloria Spratt is eating fat pork with molasses in it. She comes over to kiss Spratt. He repulses her. She wants to pick him up and hug him but he slips out of her arms and darts out of the room.

At this point the legend is put on the screen. This great big yearning full-blooded overbalanced woman is not satisfied. Her love turns cold.

Mrs. Spratt, now cold, writing at a letter table, a telegram to a former lover. You can see the address William de Bulk, New York, and the message is put right on to the screen to read:

My marriage is a mistake. Come to me. This is the point, I think, at which the clergy begin to weep. But before they have time to weep much the scene changes with a sudden flip. A title is written.

Spratt in his study, dictates his poem to his stenographer, Clementina Click. "Ha! ha! do you notice his stenographer, as thin as a meridian of longitude and with her hair in Cleo de Merode forehead flaps and with eyes like a cow. Something will be doing here."

The gentle girl. As thin as she is good, hangs on the poet's words. Then the picture changes again. Arrival of William de Bulk. You see him buzz up in his motor. You see the wooden Butler take his stick. Then you see him enter and greet Gloria. William! how stout you have grown! He has a big blue face like a thug but he must be all right because the writing says.

The big true hearted man has come at once to the woman he had loved. William takes Gloria Spratt away in his motor. It is made to look like an elopement but if you follow it closely it is all in the same day. It has to be, or the clergy would stop crying.

Take me away William I want to forget. I want to plunge into the vortex of gaiety.

He plunges her in. William and Gloria in a restaurant eating beefsteak; Wild scene of gaiety; Hawaiian orchestra; near beer; Greek waiters; gramophones; all the fierce vortex of Metropolitan life. William tells the story of his life. You can see him do it in side pictures. Yes, Gloria? after you left me I married. But I grew stout and my wife abandoned me to seek a more intellectual life than I could give her.

William is seen to bow his head in grief. Then the picture changes back to the Spratt mansion.

Freed from the pressure of his wife's society, Spratt abandons himself to his poetic dreams: The pictures spin. Spratt (at 10.30) writing a sonnet. Spratt in the garden of the Spratt mansion (11.30) reading the sonnet to his stenographer, reading the sonnet again. Ease and a tranquil mind are changing him already. At 11.30 he is distinctly stouter than he was. At 1 p.m. he is quite fat.

The scene changes. Gloria and William at afternoon tea (4 p.m.). But even in the whirl of gaiety this great big, true hearted, able bodied woman cannot forget. She pines. Pictures of Mrs. Spratt pining. She is losing flesh. At 4 p.m. she is far less stout than she was at 3.30. At 4.30 it is still more noticeable.

The picture changes. Spratt with Clementina Click in the garden. He is reading her his sonnet for the tenth time. He is quite stout. Clementina Click shows signs of restlessness. She rises and paces to and fro.

Mr. Spratt, don't read it any more. I have made a fatal mistake I do not care for poetry as I thought I did. I left the best husband in the world to seek the intellectual life. I want it no longer. The picture changes. William and Gloria beside the Duck Pond in Central Park (5.30 p.m.) She is now quite tall and thin. William I have done wrong. Even in this mad world of gaiety, among these ducks I cannot forget. Take me home.

Concluding scenes. Arrival of the motor at the Spratt mansion (6 p.m. daylight saving time). Entry of William and Gloria. The Spratts meet. They each weigh 150 pounds now. They fall into one another's arms. William and Clementina meet. They fall into one another's arms. She is his wife.

William I have been wrong. Take me back. Mrs. Spratt leads them all to the supper table. Come, we will eat the platter clean. And the picture concludes with the legend.

And from the dead ashes of their past lives these renewed souls lift themselves into a higher being. Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. All this week.

STEPHEN LEACOCK. (Copyright, 1921, by The Dominion News Bureau, Ltd., Montreal.)

Women Pay. (Ottawa Journal) The immense sum of \$790,702,600 was paid by 266,000 single women of the United States last year in the form of income tax. This not only indicates a colossal principal, but the important place which women now occupy in the state. The term "single" includes the widows, divorcees and women who have been separated from their husbands—which slightly alters its superficial significance. This statistical fact was perhaps not necessary to give point to the change which a century of active money-making has brought into the life of the American republic. Women are everywhere identified with commerce and finance. They stand side by side with men in the counting house and factory.

What Women Are Thinking. (Advocate of Peace, Washington) One of the two Canadian delegates to the International Council of Women recently held in Norway, defining the policy with which women generally are proposing to meet present and future world conditions, has put it thus: "Men say that the road to internationalism lies along the path of reconstructed nationalism, but we women go to the foundation by saying it lies in the individual mentally and should manifest itself first in the Golden Rule of the home, the church, the school, and the community. When this rule is practised in these places, then national and international friendships are assured." She might have added, "and not before."

The CITIZEN'S LIBERTY LEAGUE Stands for TEMPERANCE by GOVERNMENT CONTROL

The Citizen's Liberty League is an organization comprising men of highest standing in the professional and business life of the Province,—men who are not interested either directly or indirectly in the manufacture or sale of liquor, and whose demonstrated integrity and sincerity afford sufficient guarantee as to unselfishness of motive. The members of the League are devoting their whole effort towards obtaining what they conscientiously feel will prove the soundest solution of Ontario's liquor problem—viz., Government control. By placing the responsibility entirely in the hands of the Government, the people of Ontario may rest assured that the sale of alcoholic beverages will be safeguarded and regulated in every direction consistent with life in a democratic country. The League's views on temperance and its attainment are embodied in the Memorial here reproduced, which every serious-minded man and woman is asked to study with deliberation before making any decision.

Signatures are being obtained throughout the Province for the following Memorial, which is to be presented to the Ontario Government. Copies can be obtained from the Secretary, 104 Mail and Empire Bldg., Toronto.

A Memorial To the Honorable the Premier of the Province of Ontario. We, the undersigned residents of the Province of Ontario, believers in temperance and moderation in all things, hereby desire to express our very grave concern at the prospect of any legislative enactment being placed upon the Statute Book of this Province which will not be binding upon the conscience of a great mass of the people and must be enforced by excessive penalties with armed inspectors and an army of spies and informers. Many serious-minded and well-informed citizens, including ministers of the gospel and men holding the highest positions in the community, while fully appreciating the material benefits which might be gained from the total prohibition of the sale of liquor, agree with the view that there is a proper limit to interference by the State with individual conduct. They believe that a temperance country can be more surely obtained by evolution, than by legislation and that total prohibition is inconsistent with true temperance and opposed to Christian morality, which is based not upon the manufacture of new crimes for punishment but on the stronger force of love. Democracy springs from a desire for individual liberty. Stabilized democracy depends upon the security of individual liberties properly used. There can be no security for the observance of a law dictating what men should eat or drink unless it has the support of a substantial majority not merely of those voting on a Referendum, but of all the people in the Province whose support is necessary. Especially is this true when the prohibitory forces are highly organized at the polls. If one law is not entered, all law is brought into contempt and democracy itself may be imperilled. It is a fundamental of democratic government that things innocent in themselves should be regulated against abuse, not prohibited. It is well recognized in law that a municipality cannot extend a mere power that is no reason why we should shirk the difficult duty of making wise regulations to govern the liquor traffic, and blindly throw to the winds an elementary principle which has hitherto been considered a necessary safeguard to democratic civilization. We believe that the cause of Christian temperance and of stabilized democracy can best be served,— (1) By Government control of the sale of spirituous liquors, and, if necessary, a wisely devised licensing of individuals to purchase spirituous liquors. (2) By the treatment of those who have not the strength to take care of themselves under such conditions, as patients, not as criminals. (3) By permission to purchase beer and wines under a system to be devised by the Government, thus minimizing the evil of illicit stills and the illegal sale of spirituous liquors and drugs. We are not advocating a return to the "open bar." (4) By the formation of a voluntary organization similar to the Blue Ribbon Army in Great Britain, whereby all available energies and funds may be devoted to the promotion of true temperance by education and example. We further ask that the Ontario Temperance Act be amended as above, so that the conscientious minority, and accused persons shall not be deprived, as they are now, of the sacred right of every British subject to be considered innocent until he is found to be guilty.

Total prohibition is as unnecessary in Ontario as it is unethical and impracticable and you are urged, to stand by the League in their fight for GOVERNMENT CONTROL Vote "NO" in the coming Referendum and sign the Memorial.

Tipped Her the Wink. A good story against himself is being told by a nonconformist divine of the severe old school, who, however, is not without a sense of humor. He was travelling north. Just before he got to York he opened the carriage window, with the result that he got a piece of grit in his eye. He rubbed it and did all the usual things, but it still troubled him, and every now and again he had involuntarily to wink. When he got to York he went into the buffet and asked for a glass of milk. This being served, he gulped it down, and then, realizing that something was wrong, he said to the barmaid, "That wasn't milk, was it?" "No, sir, rum and milk." "But I asked you for milk." "Yes, sir, but you tipped me the wink."

AUSTRALIAN FARMHOUSES HAVE METAL ROOFS TO CATCH RAIN. The dazzling metallic roof coverings of the farm buildings in many portions of Australia brings the ever present danger of drought prominently before the visitor. The structures are spread out to cover the greatest possible space and all eavtroughs lead into one great central collecting tank. Dividing rods and water finding devices are very popular, but when the well goes dry, the ever present rain tank must be called upon for active service. Sometimes water is drawn from these tins after four years' storage, and Australian history recalls occasions when drinking water, in remote parts, has been sold for sixty cents a pint. Wear well? Look at this Floor. Perfect after Six Months Hard Use. "We find the best floor varnish, the most economical, because it wears so much longer. Liquid Granite gave our floors this beautiful lasting lustre you admire so much." Liquid Granite. This wonder-working floor varnish preserves the wood, linoleum or oilcloth, and gives a surface that withstands the hardest wear. Easily kept clean and shining with a mop or damp cloth. Specify Liquid Granite. Made by BERRY BROTHERS, Walkerville, Ontario.

Spring Medicine Now Needed by Nearly Every One to Purify the Blood and Build Up Strength. Hood's Sarsaparilla IS THE IDEAL SPRING MEDICINE.

I KNOW A WOMAN'S SUFFERINGS. Read My FREE Offer! To Mothers of Daughters, I will explain a simple home treatment which speedily and effectively dispels all ailments (chlorosis, irregularities, headaches and lassitude) in young women, and restores them to plumpness, vigor and health. Tell me if you are worried about your daughter. Remember it costs you nothing to give my method of home treatment a complete ten days trial, and if you wish to continue, it costs only a few cents a week to do so, and it does not interfere with one's daily work. It is health worth asking for. Write for the free treatment offer, mark the pieces that tell your feelings, and return to me. Write and ask for the free treatment to-day, as you may not see this offer again. Address: MRS. M. SUMMERS, Box 971, Windsor, Ontario.

MATHEU'S SYRUP OF TAR & COD-LIVER OIL CURES Coughs, Colds, Grippe, Bronchitis, Whooping Cough, Asthma, Etc. MATHEU'S SYRUP is a sovereign tonic combining the curative properties of TAR and the strengthening virtues of COD LIVER OIL. Colds, when neglected or badly treated give rise to consequences of such a grave character that you should not risk using inferior preparations. MATHEU'S SYRUP is the only genuine remedy whose reputation has caused to crop up many imitations of doubtful value. ON SALE EVERYWHERE.