

### THREE NEW EDUCATIONAL COMMON FACTORS.

By R. A. PENNETHORNE.

ALL modern educational projects have to consider three new factors which have a growing influence and an uncharted future. The first and greatest is of course the Cinema. The time is past for mere bewailing, ignorant condemnation of evils, so great that they cannot but be acknowledged by all—the “fans” and the critics—alike. But whereas every gift of God and every act of man can be abused, the Cinema in some form or other must be accepted as a feature of modern life.

Every other art served a long apprenticeship, and was the outcome of the efforts of generations who followed it for its own sake, for its ideals, or for practical uses, and it had to confront as many talented amateurs as there were professional artists.

The cinema alone came fully armed like Athene from the head of Zeus.

The great need of the present-day is for a public with such knowledge and taste that the cruder films simply cannot be presented because they would empty the cinemas.

No other art has been available to the masses for 2d., at the same time as it could cater for the cultured and fastidious. The result has been rather a levelling down of taste and of popular demand, than an elevation. But the “public” (that vague term which includes you and me) is quite as much to blame as the producers for the stuff which has undoubtedly contaminated the taste of a generation of young people. “Demand and supply” connote a general law, and people who have enjoyed sob-stuff and gunmen and vamps and “Bill Busters” have been given more and more and more of them.

But there is hope now of a generation arising who can be trained as discerning amateurs, who will know so much about production that they will not tolerate the lesser stuff delivered under the “quota” conditions.

Many forms of little cinema cameras are on the market, already one finds them in the “comfortable” home, and soon

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one may prophesy they will become common like the portable wireless or the Brownie.

Then the tyranny of the “producer” will be broken, and the trained amateur will have to be reckoned with and new standards of taste will gradually be formed.

Those who deplore some of the worst features of the cinemas have forgotten the “penny gaffs” of our grandfathers, and we who are old are a little ashamed to remember how we gaped at the monstrosities of “Barnum’s Show,”—so perhaps public taste *has* raised its standard of entertainment, in spite of much that can still be improved.

Moreover the active preparation of their own exhibitions is going to remove one great educational drawback from the cinema—at its best now it is a passive state of reception. When for our children it becomes conception and execution there may be fresh dangers, but there will also certainly be wider opportunities for devising “liberal things.”

The second great factor is of course “the wireless”—whereby children can participate in every national event, hear the voice of the world’s greatest statesmen or singers, listen to the greatest music and be kept in touch with the main flow of modern thought.

The “Children’s Hour” is a concession to weakness rather than a source of strength,—it

is in the care of those who do undoubtedly labour to make it do good rather than harm, and it has to remember that masses of children turn to it for amusement after a long day in the nation's schools, but it is *not* that hour which one thinks of when associating young people with its gifts, but Sir Walford Davies' talks on music or Monsieur Stéphan's clear delightful French, or all the other aids to the wider interests of life—so we can leave the “wicked uncle” to his own type of popularity.

Here, moreover, the organisers of the educational work do their best to prevent its having a merely “passive” reception. The pupil is given books to read and things to do, and as a treat and an extension of experience much of the work can be welcomed and shared in.

The third factor is less known and less obvious, but it may be found in the wonderful geographical work made possible by the photographs and maps obtained by air survey.

I saw recently such an air photo of New York, and at once the whole history and portent of the City were made clear.

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The necessity for skyscrapers and the numbered “avenues,” the reason for the choice of the City site and for that of the Statue of Liberty—the frequent sea fog, the two rivers, Long Island and the shores—all were shown as they really *are*, and as an angel might behold them, and any child seeing such a picture added to wise reading could honestly say, “Ah! now I *know*.”

Thus History gives up her secrets, such as “wood henge,” and geography her reasons, such bases for maps help a child to read them with a new intelligence and reduce a photo to a map with reasoned interest.

Here, too, is the link between the illustration and the map, which we who believe in letting the child first form a mental picture from a first-hand description should especially welcome. First let our pupils paint their own word picture of their impressions, and then let them see this broad vision, and then the map, which is already familiar, can be co-related with it and *then* the pictures of details or of artistic appreciation can follow.

“Educational films” specially prepared for children are by no means always popular with them, though the relationship with real event and actual scene are of great value, but many of us feel that some falsify actual values too much by magnification and alteration of pace when applied to botanical or physical marvels, but the real “education” through films will come when the children are educated in their true use, for current event and perpetuation of their own best activities. Educational schemes on the wireless are after all largely a matter of selective taste on the part of the listener, “Cut it out” is both mercifully and fatally easy—we can improve the “listener” just as we can improve the “audience”—for with the coming of the “Talkie” the scope of the producer has been widened enormously and dramatic art in its older and wider sense has again to be reconsidered.

By the time the present children are grown, flying will be a commonplace and the earth will be known and viewed from this fresh aspect.

Let us then as a Society, waste no time in lamenting that here and there God's good gifts are debased or commercialised or mis-handled—here are three great new factors in civilised life—let us train a generation to *use* them for the world and for themselves, so that they may leave a high tradition of appreciation and accomplishment for the generations to come.