

The School

Visual Education

SOME two years ago Mrs. Harriet Hawley Locher, who for the past six years had been in charge of the Motion Picture Committee of the Women's Federated Clubs of Washington, approached Mr. Harry M. Crandall, the movie magnate of Washington, D. C., with a visual educational program to be developed in connection with his theatres. It was based on a cooperative plan whereby the theatres on certain dates were to be thrown open to the school children for a visual study hour.

The movies are not intended to supplant the work of the school but to exemplify, correlate and vivify what the school has already taught. For instance, according to the school schedule a certain subject, say logging, should come up for consideration at such and such a date. Before this time the teacher receives a letter specifying the contents of an available film devoted to logging and suggesting what background the teacher should prepare so that the film may be viewed by the students with the maximum benefit. This plan will be further enlarged if the Agricultural Department adopts the more thorough procedure which Mrs. Locher has suggested. Then the teacher will receive an advance slip stating not only the main subject and subsidiary topics but also all the sub-titles of the film. The teacher is expected to use this advance information to correlate the picture with the class work and to prepare the children to view the picture with the best possible results. When the matter of the text-book has been covered the children march off to a neighborhood moving picture house for their laboratory period.

Before the house is darkened a teacher questions the children about their class work, thus correlating book and film, arousing attention and calling into play all the reserve knowledge the children possess. During the first running of the film no instruction of any sort is given. After the film has been shown a teacher gives the children the opportunity of exercising their

initiative by asking for remarks about the picture. It is surprising how many children are anxious to get up and state, perhaps in only a sentence or two, what they have observed. This side of the work is encouraged as much as possible in order to arouse enthusiasm in the children and makes each one watch more attentively in the second running for that which escaped him in the first running.

After the impromptu speakers have given way, other pupils who have received little slips carrying one of the sub-titles of the film are called upon to tell what interested them in that particular section of the picture. Then the film is gone through a second time and during this period a teacher draws the attention of all the children to points which only some or none of them noticed before.

The adoption of this system does not involve the trouble and outlay that one might at first think. Visual education can be carried out either in a moving picture house or in the school itself. Mrs. Locher suggests, and so it has been worked out satisfactorily in Washington, Philadelphia, New Orleans, Pittsburgh, Danville and other places, that the work always be done in conjunction with the moving picture man of the city. Such arrangements usually can be made with little or no expense and they offer the best possible conditions. The professional house having been scientifically constructed generally avoids the uncertain focusing and flickering which cause eye trouble.

Not so, unfortunately, where the projection is done by an amateur with a light weight machine and a screen none too taut. But in localities where cooperation cannot be secured from the picture houses, the projection of the picture may be made in the school itself. Portable moving picture machines, adaptable to the local electric current, are now offered by the manufacturers at a cost ranging from one hundred and twenty-five dollars to three hundred dollars. Screens have also been designed which permit pictures to be shown in the school in the day time without any darkening of the room.

Films can be secured from so many sources that we could never finish naming them. Almost any department of the government at Washington, the foreign embassies, and the large manufacturers of the country, supply educational films. The only expense connected with securing such films is the item of transportation.