

Well-Known Canadian Humorist Discovers a Fascinating America For Columbus By the Modern Method of the Moving Picture

Dopes Out Film the Way It Should Run and Then Decides
To Ask the College President To Come
and See It.

By STEPHEN LEACOCK.
"No greater power for education," said a college president the other day, "has come among us during the last forty years than the moving picture."

I am not certain that it was a college president. And he may not have said it the other day. Nor do I feel absolutely sure that he referred to the last forty years. Indeed, now that I come to think of it, I don't believe it was. In fact, it may have been some one else. Or did I say it myself? Judging by the accuracy and force of the language, I think I must have. I doubt if any college president I know could have put it quite so neatly. There's a touch about it that I recognize.

But let that pass. At any rate it is something that everybody is saying and thinking. All our educators have turned their brains toward the possibility of utilizing moving pictures for the purpose of education. It is being freely said that history and geography, and even arithmetic, instead of being taught by the slow and painful process of books and memory, can be imparted through the eye.

I had no sooner heard of this idea than I became impassioned to put it into practice. I have therefore prepared, or am preparing, a film especially designed for the elementary classes of our schools to narrate the story of the discovery of America.

Unvarnished History.

This I should like the reader to sit and see with me, in the eye of his imagination. But let me first give the plain, unvarnished account of the discovery of America. As I took it from one of our school histories.

"Christopher Columbus, otherwise Cristoforo Colombo, the celebrated discoverer of America, was born of poor but honest parents in the Italian city of Genoa. His mother, Teresa Colombo, seems to have been a woman of great piety and intelligence. Of his father, Bartolomeo Colombo, nothing is recorded. From his earliest youth the boy Christopher developed a passion for mathematics, astronomy, geodesy and the other sciences of the day."

But, no—stop! I am going too fast. The reader will get it better if we turn it into pictures bit by bit as we go on. Let the reader therefore imagine himself seated before the curtain in the lighted theater. All ready? Very good. Let the music begin—"Star-Spangled Banner," please—flip off the lights. Now then,

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There we are. That gives the child the correct historical background right away. Now what goes on next? Let me see. Ah, yes, of course. We throw an announcement on the screen, thus:

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS Mr. Quinn

Here the face of Mr. Quinn (in a bowler hat) is thrown on the screen and fades out again.

SPIRIT OF AMERICA Miss E. Dickenson

Now we are ready to begin in earnest. Let us make the scenario together. First idea to be expressed: "Christopher Columbus was the son of poor but honest parents."

This might seem difficult to a beginner, but to those of us who frequent the movies it is nothing.

Registering Poverty and Honesty. The reel spins, and we see a narrow room—(it is always narrow in the movies)—to indicate straitened circumstances—cardboard furniture—high chairs with carved backs—two cardboard beams across the ceiling (all this means the Middle Ages)—all the little Columbuises seated

**GASSED OVERSEAS
SHELL SHOCKED
AND RHEUMATISM**

Mr. F. M. Blaquiere, McInville, Alta., writes: "After three years service overseas I returned to Canada almost a complete wreck. I had been gassed, and was suffering from shell shock and rheumatism, and was so nervous I could not sleep at night. I tried many medicines and doctors, but none of them did me any good for any length of time. I got so bad, in the fall of 1918, my hands were so shaky I could scarcely hold anything, and it seemed as if I had a steel band pressing on my head. The least excitement would almost drive me into fits, and my whole system seemed to be in disorder. I had cramps in my legs nearly every night, and hot and cold chills running up and down my back nearly all the time. One day I decided to try Milburn's Heart and Nerve Pills, and after I had taken six boxes I began to feel better. I kept on using them and after a while I was completely relieved."

Price 50c a box at all dealers or mailed direct on receipt of price by The T. Milburn Co., Limited, Toronto, Ont.—Adv.

ed at it—Teresa Colombo cutting bread at one end of it—gives a slice to each, one slice (that means poverty in the movies)—Teresa rolls her eyes up—all the little children put their hands together and say grace (this registers honesty). The thing is done. Let us turn back to the history book and see what is to be put in next.

"... The father of Christopher, Bartolomeo Colombo was a man of no special talent, of whom nothing is recorded."

That's easy. First we announce him on the screen:

BARTOLOMEO COLOMBO Mr. Henderson

Then we stick him on the film on a corner of the room, leaning up against the cardboard clock and looking at the children. This attitude in the movies always indicates a secondary character of no importance. His business is to look at the others, and to indicate forgetfulness of self, incompetence, unimportance, vacuity, simplicity.

Note how this differs from the attitudes of important characters. If a movie character—one of importance—is plotting or scheming, he sits himself at a little round table, drums on it with his fingers, and half closes one eye. If he is being talked to, or having a letter or document or telegram read to him, he stands "facing full" and working his features up and down to indicate emotion sweeping over them. If he is being "exposed" (which is done by pointing fingers at him), he hunches up like a snake in an angle of the room with both eyes half shut and his mouth set as if he had just eaten a lemon. But if he has none of these things to express, and is only in the scene as a background for the others, then he goes over and leans in an easy attitude against the tall cardboard clock.

That, then, is the place for Bartolomeo Colombo.

To the clock with him. Now what comes next?

"... The young Christopher developed at an early age a passion for study, and especially for astronomy, geometry, geodesy, and the exact sciences of the day."

Seven Years in Seven Seconds.

Quite easy. On spins the film. Young Christopher is in a garret room (all movie study is done in garrets). The cardboard ceiling slopes within six inches of his head. This shows that the boy never rises from his books. He can't. On a table in front of him is a little globe and a pair of compasses. Christopher spins the globe around. Then he makes two circles with the compasses, one after the other, very carefully. This is the recognized movie symbol for mathematical research.

So there we have Christopher—poor, honest, studious, full of circles. Now to the book again.

"... The young Columbus received his education at the monastery of the Franciscan monks at Genoa. Here he spent seven years."

Yes, but we can put that on the screen in seven seconds.

Turn on the film. Movie Monastery—exterior, done in gray cardboard—ding, dong, ding, dong (man in the orchestra with triangle and stick)—procession of movie friars—faces more like thugs, but never mind—they are friars because they walk two and two in a procession, singing out of hymn books.

Now for the book again.

"... Fra Giacomo, the prior of the monastery, delighted with the boy's progress, encourages his studies."

Wait a minute.

FRA GIACOMO. Mr. Edward Sims. Mr. Sims' face clean-shaven under a round hat, fades in and out. Then the picture goes on. Movie monastery interior—young Christopher, still at a table with compasses—bustling friar bending over him—Christopher turns the compasses and looks up with a what-do-you-know-about-that look—astonishment and delight of friar (registered by opening his eyes like a bullfrog). All this shows study, progress, application. The friars are delighted with the boy.

Furious Joy of Invention.

"... Christopher, after seven years of study, reaches the firm conviction that the world is round."

Picture. Christopher—with his globe—jumps up from table—passes his fingers around and around the globe—registers the joy of invention—seats himself at table and draws circles with his compasses furiously.

He fades out.

"... Fired with his discovery, Christopher sets out from the monastery."

Stop a minute, this is a little hard. Fired. How can we show Christopher "fired"? We can't. Perhaps he'll be fired if the film is no good, but we must omit it just now.

"He sets out."

One second only for this. Monastery door (double cardboard with iron across it)—Christopher leaving—carries a wallet, to mean distance. Fra Giacomo blessing him—fades out.

"... For eighteen years Columbus vainly traveled through the world on foot, offering his discovery at the courts of Europe, in vain, though asking nothing in return for it except a fleet of ships, two hundred men, and provisions for two years."

King's Court and Cabaret.

To anybody not used to scenarios this looks a large order. Eighteen



THE SPIRIT OF AMERICA.

years seems difficult to put on the screen. In reality this is exactly where the trained movie man sees his chance. Here he can put in anything and everything that he likes, bringing in, in a slightly medieval form, all his favorite movie scenes.

Thus, for example, here we have first the good old midnight cabaret supper scene—thinly disguised as the court of the king of Sardinia. To turn a cabaret into a court the movie men merely exchange their Fifth Avenue evening dress for short coats and knee breeches, heavily padded and quilted, and wear large wigs. Quilted pants and wigs register courtiers, the courtiers of anybody—Charlemagne, Queen Elizabeth, Peter the Great, Louis Quatorze, anybody and everybody who ever had courtiers. Just as men with bare legs mean Romans, men in peajackets mean detectives, and young men drinking, in evening dress, Harvard graduates.

The ladies at the court of Sardinia wear huge paper frills around their necks. Otherwise, it is the cabaret scene with the familiar little tables, and the ukuleles going like mad in one corner and black sarsaparilla being poured, foaming, into the glasses.

Bitter Banker of the Middle Ages. In this scene Columbus moves up and down, twirling his little globe and looking appealingly in their faces. All laugh at him. His part is just the same as that of the poor little girl trying to sell up-state violets in the midnight cabaret.

The court of Sardinia fades, and the film shows Columbus vainly soliciting financial aid from Lorenzo the Magnificent.

Stop one minute, please.

LORENZO THE MAGNIFICENT
Mr. L. Evans

This scene again is old and familiar. It is the well-known interior representing the Grinding Capitalist or the Bitter Banker refusing aid to the boy genius who has invented a patent peg rake.

The only change is that Lorenzo wears a huge wig, has no telephone, and handles a large quill pen (to register Middle Ages), which he wiggles furiously up and down on a piece of parchment.

So the eighteen years, with scenes of this sort, turn out the easiest part of the whole show.

But let us to the book again.

"... After eighteen years Columbus, now past the prime of life, is presented at the court of Queen Isabella of Spain."

Just half a moment.

QUEEN ISABELLIA
Miss Janet Briggs

There will be very probably at this point a slight applause from the back of the hall. Miss Briggs was here last week, or her astral body was—as Maggie of the Cattle Range. The impression that she made is passed on to Isabella.

"The queen and her consort, King Ferdinand of Aragon..."

Stop, stick him on the film.

FERDINAND OF ARAGON
Mr. Edward Giles

(Large wig, flat velvet cap and square whiskers—same make-up as for Ferdinand of Bulgaria, Ferdinand of Bohemia, or any of the Ferdinands.)

"... were immediately seized with enthusiasm for the marvelous discovery of the Genoese adventurer."

Picture. Columbus hands his globe to Isabella and his compasses to Ferdinand. They register delight and astonishment. The queen turns the globe around and holds it up to Ferdinand. Both indicate—with their faces, well-what-do-you-know-about-things? Ferdinand makes a circle with the compasses on a table—the courtiers, fickle creatures, crowd around. They are still dressed as in Sardinia, eighteen years ago. In fact, one recognizes quite a lot of them. When Ferdinand draws the circle they fall back in wild astonishment, gesticulating frantically. What they mean is "It's a circle, it's a circle."

"The king and queen at once place three ships at the disposal of Columbus."

Queen Isabella and the Oyster Boats.

On with the picture. The harbor

of the port of Palos—ships bobbing

up and down (it is really the oyster

boats in Baltimore Bay, but it looks

just like Palos, or near enough). No-

tice Queen Isabella on the right, at

the top of a flight of steps, extending

her hand and looking at Columbus.

Her gesture means, "Pick a ship, any

ship you like, any color." Just as if

she were saying, "Pick a card, any

card you like."

New World that he had discovered."

Gladstone Movie Savages.

All this is so easy that it's too easy. It runs into pictures of itself. Anybody accustomed to the movies can see the Columbus with his banner, and the movie savages hopping up and down around him. Movie savages are gay, gladstone creatures, anyway, and hopping up and down is their chief mode of expressing themselves. Add to them a sandy beach, with palm trees waving visibly in the wind (it is always windy in the movies) and the thing is done.

Just one further picture is needed to complete the film.

"Columbus who returned to Europe to lay at the feet of the Spanish sovereigns the world he had discovered, fell presently under the disfavor of the court, and died in poverty and obscurity, a victim of the ingratitude of princes."

Low Ceiling and Long Spoon.

Last picture. Columbus dying under the poignant circumstances known only in the movies—a garret room—ceiling lower than ever—a trundle bed, narrow enough to kill him if all else failed—Teresa Colombo, his aged mother, alone at his bed-



REGISTERS SIMPLICITY.
Bartolomeo Colombo, father of Christopher, leaning against the clock, indicates incompetence, unimportance, vacuity, simplicity.

side—she offers him medicine in a long spoon—(this shows, if nothing else would, that the man is ill)—he shakes his head—puts out his hand and rests it on the little globe—can't manage it—rolls up his eyes and fades.

The music plays softly, and the in-

exorable film, like the reel of Ed's self, spins on, announcing:

At this theatre
All next week
MAGGIE MAX

WALTER CURRAN
in
IS IT WORTH IT?

And after that I can imagine the audience dispersing, and the row educated children going off to their homes, and one saying as he "stars—'Gee, I seen a great picture show at school today.'"

"Yes?" says his mother. "And what was it?"

"Oh, it was all about a gink that went around the cabarets trying to sell an invention what he's got, but nobody wouldn't look at it, till at last one dame gave him three cyster boats, see? and so he and a lot of other guys loaded them up and hiked off across the ocean."

"And where did he go to?"

"Africa. And he and the other guys had a great stand in with the niggers, and he'd have sold his invention all right, but the old dame got him alone in a hut and poisoned him and took it off him."

"That, I think, is about the way the film would run. When it is finished I must get that college president, or whoever it was, to come and see it."

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If It Were Not for Women and Children—

The "guardian angel" of life insurance is today standing watch over thousands of Canadian homes. It is the great protector and friend of the women and children. It stands ready with three billion dollars to care for the dependents of the vast army of those insured,—to provide rent, food, clothing, education, and the other things that become even more necessary when the breadwinner is removed.

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