

took a turn from luxury to poverty, and then to abject want. Squalor, and all the sordid grime of the factories' foul smoke, the stench of offal, the hubbub of cobbled alleys, the lean-to houses whispering into each other's ears secrets of misery, the long hemmed-in passage ways of damp and gloom.

"We threaded them all, and in the midst of the desolation came upon a convent. Its high brick wall was once a colorful red, but like all the painting round about, it was faded from long wear. Some creepers hung over its top, the only spray of green in the dreary street where so many human lives were huddled together. And the wall sagged under the burden of years and the weight of griefs. For many broken hearts and hearts of anguish stopped at the iron-wrought gate of Our Lady of Good Counsel; young mothers that were abandoned, mothers with a frail pittance of humanity in their arms, girls fearful of the market of the city's inquirer. And the rusted hinges would swing back to give their entrance to the sweet-faced nuns within, whose purity gave lustre to their counsel. And in the dim sanctuary light near Mary's altar, they would find balm and peace to their aching souls.

It was only a step beyond the convent to Lyle's violin shop, with its dirty yellow paint, blistered with summer heat and washed with winter rains, and a massive wooden door to the right, a relic of old decency, that led to the rooms overhead, where Patrick Mullany lived.

My first sight of it was many a long year ago. I had lit upon the street in its drab shame and naked wickedness when two Sisters of St. Joseph came from somewhere onto the flagged stone. It was a purifying influence, felt instantly, as one breathes sometimes, amid the March decay, the sweet perfume of spring. When they drew near Lyle's shop, the great oak door opened, and Danny, flushed with excitement and with hair fair from many kneelings at the communion rail, asked them to come in. "Eileen was waiting for them on the first landing of the stairs. Danny is a missionary now, somewhere in the Philippines, and Eileen became a Sister in that nearby convent, and after a brief service to Our Lady of Good Counsel on earth, went as handmaid to her court in Heaven.

I told Ray to go before me, and he climbed up the steep stairs and opened the door at the top. The room was quite simple; a few pictures on the wall, the table prepared for the priest's coming. An old lady sat near the table saying her beads. The old man lay on his bed propped up with pillows; and as I came in he stretched his feeble hands toward me. "Good mille falito, Criode mo Sianlighteot!"

"A hundred thousands welcomes, Christ, my Son!"

Ray knelt down and said the Confiteor. Jesus Christ passed from my unworthy hands into the rich heart of this lover.

Then the old man's mind seemed to wander. Was it delirium? I have sometimes doubted since. For he suddenly turned to where Ray was kneeling, his thin fingers clasped on the counterpane.

"You are Death," he said, "Death, the inquiring Reporter, sent by God to take the account of my life."

He paused a moment and then went through a catechism of question and answer.

"What of my past sins?"

"They are washed away in many a confession."

"What of my possessions?"

"Very few, and always dedicated to the poor."

"What of my children?"

"In Christ's keeping."

"What of my body?"

"An instrument to my soul's salvation. Your's, Death, but only for a little while, until the humiliation of dust purges its stains away. Then it will be God's. My Holy Communion gives me this assurance. 'O, Death, where is thy victory? O, Death, where is thy sting?'"

"What of my soul?"

"The trophy of my Saviour."

He stopped. The cross-examination was done.

That same month, or the month afterwards, Ray made a retreat under the Jesuit Fathers and resolved to enter a Capuchin monastery. The world said he was going into a thicket of brambles and thorns. The world was wrong. A prickly hedge, if you will, but it surrounded a garden enclosed.—Alexander J. Cody, S. J., in Messenger of Sacred Heart.

MOTION PICTURES AND CENSORSHIP

When the automobile made its first appearance everybody wondered, not that it failed to go far and well, but that it went at all. When the motion picture first flashed on the screen people fairly gasped to see what seemed fixed and immovable move at all. To see a pictured horse galloping at full speed seemed little short of the miraculous, and to see an express train come thundering down the tracks straight at you at fifty miles an hour, threatening you with instant death, sent cold shivers down the spine.

Since then, within the easy memory of half a generation, the motion picture has leaped from the status of a startling and primitive novelty to the dignity of a world-wide medium of dramatic art. So rapid has been its development, so universal its appeal, that it has more than outdistanced the stage, both in popularity and in financial opportunity. A picture made in America today will circulate the globe within the year to the fascinated gaze of all nations and all races. The photograph established itself permanently in the public estimation, and it has brought its problem with it—the game of problems seems to be an essential modern pastime—namely, the question of censorship, which, at the moment, has become acute.

Why the problem of censorship should attach itself especially to the motion picture and ignore the stage, the newspaper and literature, is a mystery that goes unanswered, unless it be that the motion picture, being the newest and latest prodigy in the world of human expression, is not entrenched in tradition nor grounded in custom as are its kindred mirrors of life, or, to surmise again, unless it be that its far-flung popularity and its easy access to the multitude render its possible abuses a wider source of moral peril.

Whatever the reason, the agitation for a rigid censorship has concentrated on the photo-play, and there can be but little doubt that in many respects justified. Producers and exhibitors have used the screen with a Rebaletian license, without the Rebaletian genius to condone the offence. This has been a long-standing scandal which has become irritatingly acute under the impulse of the wave of lawlessness now sweeping over the land, and of the counter resentment of uplift movements which are often just as recklessly set in the contrary direction.

In the conflict and shock of the meeting of two extremes there is always danger to justice. The need of proper censorship is evident. There are vulgarities and indecencies in film presentation that should be ruthlessly cut away, but, there are factors in dramatic presentation which are not so easily disposed of, and which require a nice balance of judgment and an enlightened interpretation. A recent police edict in one of our largest cities was "the prohibition of all films showing a criminal in action," based upon the fact that three young criminals had alleged that their crime (robbery) had been suggested by a "crook" photo-play. This was laying the axe to the trunk of the tree to cut away some dead branches. No doubt much harm can be done by a motion picture which presents a criminal action in the wrong way. A picture which heroizes, or condones crime, is a sinister influence. A picture which mitigates or glosses over or makes light of crime has no possible justification. A rigorous censorship of such pictures is much to be desired. But to repudiate and suppress a picture simply because it does depict criminal action, irrespective of the manner and purpose of this presentation is a barbarism ignorant of human nature, and a Puritanism ignorant of morality.

If the presentation of crime were to be altogether eliminated from the great drama and literature of the world, they would be so emasculated that what would be left would not be worth the while. Under such a radical method, the Bible itself would have to be put under lock and key and all the great literature of the world would have to be kept as archives in a museum along with mummies, not to be read except by specialists under strictest government regulation.

The theme of all art is the presentation of beauty, truth and goodness in contrast with and victorious over the ugly, the false and the wicked. Its purpose is to show the triumph of the virtues over the vices which would destroy them. Without this conflict in life and its reflection in art, man would sink to the level of the fish or the monkey. And so with the sex relation. It, too, is fundamental in human nature. It has its proper and legitimate place in life and in art. But when that relation is debased into lubricity, as has been too often the case in the photo-play, a vicious and same censorship becomes a crying need.

The weakest spot in censorship has been its lamentable and obvious failure in guarding against the lubricious on the screen, and this is mainly because censorship boards usually have no higher nor better standard of purity than the general public from whom their membership is drawn, for the star of purity burns almost as low and dim on the social horizon today as it did during the Præpian lustra of Rome and Caligula. There can be no doubt here of a much needed reform—but how is that to be brought about?

In the zeal for reform prudery is apt to usurp the throne of common sense. A rigid and indiscriminate application of rules and regulations, excellent in themselves, often works a gross injustice. The censor, more than often unintelligent and narrow, applies his regulations, as the carpenter does his rule, just so many inches to the foot, and cuts out of the film anything that does not mechanically measure with his wooden standard. There may be a regulation prohibiting scenes "showing the destruction of property." Forthwith the censor cuts out any scene showing any destruction of any property, no matter what the context or the sequence. In another instance there may be a regulation forbidding "scenes of violence." In Boston a motion picture of the Life of Our Lord was prohibited from being shown because it contained a scene of violence in it, namely, the scourging at the Pillar, and the Crucifixion! Censorship of that character is as obnoxious as the banionic plague and on the level of the intelligence of the clay eaters of Alabama.

The whole crux of censorship rests upon the intelligence and character of the censor. A blue-law censor, who understands neither human nature nor morals, puts the drama in the stocks. A wooden-headed censor, who measures by the foot and the yard, makes the drama a sorry thing of shreds and patches. A loose-minded censor who believes that conventions are prison bars to the human spirit and that art should tolerate no restrictions, debases the drama to the abandon of Venus Epitaphic.

There is but one way to solve the difficulty, and the solution is far from easy, viz., censor boards composed of people of such high character and intelligence as to be able to make balanced decisions. For the sake of uniform rules and regulations and to eliminate the irritating confusions and injustices that now obtain through the conflicting decisions of local and State boards, censorship should be national, under Federal supervision. Censors should enjoy no less dignity than judges on the bench. Responsible guardians of public morals in censorship are as vital to the public welfare as responsible guardians of the law; their enforcement is an equivalent and balanced standing in the eyes of the community. When this need is realized censorship will be esteemed at its proper worth, and the right kind of censors be sought to be duly compensated and esteemed.

The motion picture has become not only the most popular medium of the drama, but a far-reaching publicity agency, a potent educational factor, and, what is little realized, a living pictorial record of great and small events. It vitrifies the world to all the ends of the world. Scenes remote, alien and local are enacted before our eyes daily just as they have occurred. Great personages and great events are brought home to us as vividly as the originals themselves, and become historical records for future generations, living documents of incalculable value. The World War in many of its phases was pictured to us even as it was going on; we were taken to the very front and witnessed the tragedy of the conflict amid the roar of the guns and the deployment of the embattled hosts. Last April, in Rome, was enacted one of the most magnificent and impressive ceremonies of the Church, the raising to her altar of one of her saintly and heroic children, St. Joan of Arc. With the express sanction of the Holy Father, this great religious and historical spectacle was filmed so that the Catholics of the world might see with their own eyes and participate in the august things the world to do in the august present.

The Catholic Art Association is now showing this, the most unique motion picture in the world, in which the Holy Father himself is the central figure to the Catholics of this country. Do we ever stop to think how wonderful all this is through the magic of the motion picture?

It is difficult to believe that this marvelous development of the motion picture has taken place within a decade and a half. The motion picture has now penetrated every nook and cranny of the globe. Its influence is universal and greater than even the printed word. Its future possibilities no one can prophesy. It is potent for both good and evil. Why should not the children of light be as wise in their generation as the children of darkness and utilize it in the service of truth and virtue and wisely guard it from the debasements of the false and unclean?—Conde B. Pallen in America.

GOD'S GUIDING HAND

Humbly and reverently attempt to trace His guiding hand in the years which we have recently lived. Let us thankfully commemorate the many mercies He has vouchsafed to us in time past, the many sins He has not remembered, the many dangers He has averted, the many mistakes He has corrected, the much light, the abounding comfort which He has from time to time given.—Cardinal Newman.

FRENCH CATHOLIC ART PROMOTED

(By N. C. W. C. News Service)

Paris, March 6.—All the visitors at the last exhibitions of religious art in Paris were struck by the fact that the works presented were not merely new, individual productions, but, in many instances, were ensembles composed by groups of artists. Numerous are the organizations of artists which have thus revealed their existence in the public eye; they are called: the "Ark," the "Rosace," the "Saint Luke's Society," the "Craftsmen of the Altar," the "Sacred Art Studios," etc. . . . This tendency, which is observed among Christian artists, to associate in order to carry out their art in common, is already, in itself, a new phenomenon which does away with the individualistic customs of the artist world of our times. It deserves, for this reason, to be studied with great interest. But such study will appear still more fruitful when one is made to realize that the multiplicity of groups, far from either constituting a scattering of efforts, or resulting in personal rivalries, concur perfectly with the various purposes of Christian craftsmen, namely, to work in hearty spirit of emulation—divided, as they are, only by their diversity of esthetic preferences in giving their faith a lofty expression.

All these artists, architects, sculptors, painters, goldsmiths, colorists, etc., belong withal, to one and the same great society; a kind of federation which is called: the "Saint John's Society." Only three conditions are required from the artists to be admitted into the Society: to be genuine professionals—the Catholics—willing to work for the progress and the spreading of Christian Art.

Was it then necessary to create outside of this great association, or, rather in the very temple, this series of smaller chapels whose existence we have just reported?

Most certainly it was. Nothing will vouch for it better than the raising of the very history of one of these chapels—that which is called the "Ark."

THE STORY OF "THE ARK"

Many a time, during the closing years of the War, the "Saint John Society" requested the Catholic Artists' participation in various exhibitions and competitions. The dedication of hundreds of churches, in the North and the East of France, provided too strong an opportunity for appealing to all the different sources of inspiration and work in our country. Until the definite rebuilding of the ruined altars, it was necessary, at least, to foresee the need of provisional chapels, of the most necessary furniture, and of whatever vestments and ornaments could be found, to assure the resumption of religious worship.

The various exhibitions brought together a respectable number of competitors. Architects were awarded prizes; so were sculptors, painters, cabinet makers. Now, all of them were fellow members of the Saint John Society and all were exhibiting, separately, purely personal works. So it happened that one church plan, which carried the prize, would belong to a certain style, whereas the altar plan awarded jared in that church; the candlesticks retained as the best specimens, were discarded if placed on an altar for which they were not designed.

And, thus, some prize winners were prompted to believe that there might be great advantages for them in associating their efforts towards the preparation for given competitions. The architect, Mr. Storez, undertook to draw churches and altars; Mademoiselle Valentine Reyre, whose canvasses had been awarded numerous medals, offered to paint for the churches of Mr. Storez and his altars, since they both identified, or at the very least, kindred esthetic inspiration. Mlle. Sabine Desvallieres, whose chasubles and hangings had been awarded first prizes, would match her work with that of the architect and the painter.

THE ARK WINS SUPPORT

This idea of the three artists was submitted by them to such high authorities on religious matters as Dom Besse, O. S. B., and the Reverend Father Louis, prior of Dominicans, and to the well known painters Maurice Denis and George Desvallieres. It carried their full approval together with their promise of a most devoted cooperation. Dom Besse placed at the artists' disposal his knowledge of liturgical and art, Maurice Denis and Desvallieres their high professional experience and authority.

The architect, the painter, the embroiderer enlisted the services of two sculptors, another architect, another painter, a goldsmith, a cabinet-maker. And that is how the "Ark" was founded.

Why did they call it the "Ark?" "Because," answered the founders, "the Ark was the great craft built to withstand the Deluge; now, in our days, Deluge means Disbelief and we are passionate lovers of Order. The 'Ark' contained representatives from all living species, and our desire is that ours should contain representatives from all the various branches of Art."

without any frivolous originality, but with the full resources of the art of our present time.

"For a work in which each and every one must give his co-operation, in view of the ensemble, and in the true spirit of Christian humility, the 'Ark' assembles artists or craftsmen from the various branches of Art, who are engaged either in the construction, the fitting up, and the decoration of churches, or the making of liturgical clothes, and the furnishing of the sanctuary."

The "Ark" insures the aesthetic accord in the work of all its collaborators. It obliges them to draw their plans together. For every work of ensemble, a director is elected by the artists, his business is to give the work of all its unity in tendency. Besides, whenever necessary, the artists shall seek the advice of their technical counsellors, those masters who take an interest in the progress of the group or they shall seek the advice of their liturgical counsellors, those religious authorities who supply the group with the necessary dogmatic and liturgical teaching.

GRAFTSMEN RALLY TO PLAN

It insures the formation of a solid nucleus of Catholic Artists and Catholic Craftsmen. Accordingly, it welcomes as corresponding members all artists willing to contribute their occasional work, such, for instance, as cooperating in the details of execution in great ensembles. After several partial contributions, once their professional value has been tested, they can be admitted as permanent members.

The "Ark" makes easier for its members all proceedings and efforts likely to increase their professional standing. It affords them, also, the necessary means to improve their religious life. Ever since its foundation, its assemblies for a Communion Mass celebrated at the beginning of each month, all its members, counsellors, promoters, and occasional contributors. During the Mass, a short sermon, either of a moral or doctrinal character, is delivered for the benefit of the audience.

Handsome artists do everything out of doors," wrote the Catholic poet, Paul Claudel, "as for us, we do everything indoors, like the bees,"—Massiani.

The "Ark," finally, is of assistance to both the Clergy and the faithful. It gives all necessary advice to the parishes that want to have certain works executed. It provides them with drawings and blueprints specially designed for their country, for their church, in a spirit of faith and art, instead of letting them apply to manufacturers and merchants who carry on their trade on the "series" plan. The priest is thus freed from the necessity of applying to business houses for the purchase of either dresses or paintings, as he has to do when he is not acquainted with the Christian artists who might have executed those various items with love and faith.

Founded two years ago, the "Ark" has already executed a number of works in different parts of France. It has built a great Chapel in Normandy and decorated three private Chapels in Paris. It is going to decorate, fit up and furnish a church in Vendee and it is having a church built in the outskirts of Paris. It is, even now, rebuilding the Saint-Walfrid Abbey, in the Ardennes, which was destroyed in the War. One of its members has carved the colossal statue of Saint Menchould, recently erected above the town of the same name, in the Argonne, through the care of a grateful municipality as an acknowledgment to the Saint for sparing the city the horrors of invasion. More numerous have been the applications for Monuments for the Dead of the War, Calvaries, Tombs, etc. The work is going on steadily and strenuously in the "Ark" studios where the adepts of a very modern form of art are the most numerous on the job. The same eagerness in the work is also witnessed in the other studios where representatives of a more moderate and more classical form of art are toiling. No rivalry divides these neighboring hives. Their emulation is quite fraternal, since it is prompted by an altogether Christian idea.

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Handsome artists do everything out of doors," wrote the Catholic poet, Paul Claudel, "as for us, we do everything indoors, like the bees,"—Massiani.

It is not necessary for all men to be great in action. The greatest and sublimest power is often simple patience.—Horace Bushnell.

It is a beautiful thing to be patient if wrongly accused; to be so strongly girded around with right, that you can meet slander by silence, and calmness with a smile.

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