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The Movies and the Stage

WHEN the movies drew from the regular theatre many of its patrons, certain observers of our stage sat back declaring themselves confident that the cinematograph could not supplant the spoken drama. They further contended that the moving picture would send back to the theatre trained audiences demanding better things than they had had before.

When the period of experimentation was over the moving picture was an art without tradition. It might have accomplished much. Today the cinematograph is a wonderful industry. There are theatres everywhere devoted to pictures, and there are countless "releases" every week.

There is no doubt that the moving picture was responsible for the disappearance of the second-class theatre devoted to travelling companies, giving lurid melodramas, and plays of obvious sentiment. Instead of taking a lesson from the history of this form of amusement, which it helped to kill, the moving picture theatre imitated one of its very worst features. The outside of almost any of the cheaper picture houses is an offense to the eye. Posters, bills, placards, and streamers, all in glaring colors depict or call attention to supposed scenes in the films. What becomes the still picture or photograph takes but an instant on the screen, and rarely when considered separately resembles the scene from which it was taken. This sort of advertising was bad enough for spoken melodramas, but what conceivable reason can there be for luring into a theatre by lithographs persons who are to see pictures in black and white?

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