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OUR MOVIE MADE CHILDREN

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CHAPTER XII

MOVIE-MADE CRIMINALS

POSSIBLY it is a source of pride to us that as a nation we do nothing by halves. If we have the greatest booms, we also have the most appalling depressions. If we manufacture a product, we standardize it, produce it by the traveling-belt system and put it out in millions. Likewise, when we produce criminals, we standardize the product, produce it on a national scale and in unprecedented numbers. Dr. E. H. Sutherland in his "Criminology" shows that between say, 1914 and 1922 burglaries and attempts against members of the American Bankers' Association have increased out of all proportion to the growth of our population. In 1914 the figures per 100,000 members was 19.1; in 1922 it had risen to 97.5. Similarly, holdups in 1914 were 4.8 per 100,000; in 1922 they were 41.3. The writer knows of no other country showing such increases of crime. According to the evidence, as shown in the foregoing chapter and as will appear in this one, the movies, with their nation-wide public of 77,000,000, with their large output of pictures presenting crime scenes though only one element, play a significant part in showing techniques, methods and means of committing crimes.

When careful investigators find that seventeen per

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cent of a group of 139 delinquent boys of fifteen or younger indicate that movies have influenced them to do something wrong, the evidence is significant. It may be true that some overstate and that they like to blame their crime upon external influence. But after noting the care of the investigators in getting their material, I must conclude that, as part of a large picture, their data are substantially correct. Where there is so much smoke a certain amount of fire is inevitable. The Blumer-Hauser figure, moreover, is certain to be conservative, since while some boys are braggarts, equal numbers, doubtless, are averse to making such admissions. Yet many autobiographies among all classes of boys, even in good neighborhoods, show that they learned from the movies various forms of delinquency and put them into operation with varying degrees of success.

Like charity, delinquency often begins at home, without any great complexity. "I saw a picture, 'Me, Gangster,'" writes a high-school boy of seventeen. "This gave me a yearning to steal. . . . I went to our register and took out a quarter and went to a show. I did this taking in a sly manner just as in the show."

Numerous minor delinquencies are attributed by boys to the movies—stealing small sums, robbing a chicken coop, a small newsboy or a fruit vendor—little is thought of these acts by the boys or even by their elders. Criminologists, however, are well aware how often this type of early minor delinquency leads to more serious acts and graver forms of crime. Experienced criminals, moreover, join the criminologists in this belief and frequently condemn the movie influence and touch upon it with bitterness as a factor in their own unfortunate careers.

A number of reformatory inmates, lads in their twenties, express themselves very clearly and definitely on that head.

"In my opinion, it is a bad thing for young boys to go to the movies and see pictures showing men stealing," volunteers a boy of twenty-three. "I saw a picture and thought that I could do the same thing." "Pictures of gangsters enabled me to become one of them," succinctly declares another. "Movies have shown me the way of stealing automobiles, the charge for which I am now serving sentence." "I saw how a bad guy in the movies got money and cops could not catch him. . . . When I went to the show I saw the men who needed money. So they got together and stole a car. When I saw how easy it was done I thought I would try it."

These are excerpts from statements written by young criminals in sober mood. They were assured that nothing therein would count against them, in fact, the questionnaire was so contrived that the replies were anonymous. They were convinced they had nothing to gain or lose by the statements. Allowance being made for the criminal's tendency to blame some agency other than himself for his disasters, the evidence is still impressive.

One boy of nineteen serving a sentence for safe-cracking attributes his unhappy plight largely to a single picture—"Alias Jimmy Valentine." With two other boys of an experimental turn of mind, he attempted to crack a safe according to the Jimmy Valentine pattern. That technique proved beyond him and he was caught. "I couldn't," he adds, "wholly blame the movies for that as the two boys I was with enticed me as much as

the movies. I think my desire to have a good time and good clothes," he adds, "were the chief factors in my getting in trouble." But this very desire in itself he almost unconsciously derives from the movies:

"Naturally movies were the cause of my failure because I would see clothes and luxury in pictures and would try to have the same or as near the same as those on the screen. . . . So in order to have all these I had to have money, and that is why I tried to break open the safe."

In his struggle with his dilemma this unfortunate lad manages to present a fairly clear statement of cause and effect. He emerges, in fact, as a movie-made criminal. He was apprehended and is serving his time.

Similarly, in the Thrasher and Cressey study the following case is reported: "A very tall fellow of about nineteen years, a high-school boy, an only child, interested in radio broadcasting and building sets, saw 'Raffles' in 'The Gentleman Burglar' in the movies. With a younger friend of sixteen, he decided that he could try to do that. He made cards with a 'Hand' sign from a rubber stamp on them and printed 'Compliments of Kid Gloves.' He then started a series of robberies of small stores nearby." The police, foiled at first, traced the boy by means of that "Kid Gloves" card which made its appearance at a football game, and the amateur "Raffles" was caught and arrested. Many, however, commit crimes and are not apprehended. Confessions bearing upon this point are naturally rare, yet some boys are frank enough to confess. A high-school boy describes how in a spirit of experimental bravado, he and his friend Jack proceeded to copy a screen bandit:

"The bandit hero drilled the door of the house and stole money and valuables. We talked it over; and then armed with a brace and bit went over to a fruit store combined with a meat market and drilled out the lock. It worked fine. I naturally," he adds, "don't consider it proper to rob a fruit store now." If this boy has but succeeded in outgrowing his propensity, he is lucky. In any case, his statement bids for approval, because now he knows what is proper.

A lad of sixteen makes a somewhat similar confession; "From these criminal pictures I got the idea that I wanted to participate in crime, robbing stores preferably. I have robbed money plenty of times but not large amounts, giving some to beggars, to little children and keeping a large amount for myself." Now, possibly this boy is merely giving the pictures as an alibi, or perhaps he was a Robin Hood bandit in his early childhood, and his progress was but in the natural sequence of events. There is nothing like being systematic, and to those who are bright and ambitious there is much that is helpful in the system.

Of delinquents who come to grief by their delinquency, significant numbers trace their plight to the movies. Their own suggestibility was doubtless a factor, too, but as has been said, we are all potential criminals. The movies, in their cases, supplied the necessary stimulus, the spark. A young burglar, twenty-three, inmate of a reformatory, expresses this influence with great simplicity:

"One of the things that caused my downfall was some of the movies I saw which showed me how to jimmy a door or window. The name of one of the pictures I

saw which showed how to break into a place was 'Chinatown,' with Richard Talmadge. It was about a gang of crooks and how they would break into a place and take the money, or what jewels were there; in other words, make easy money. After I saw the picture I got the feeling that I would like to try it." He did try it. His urge had been the instilled desire for easy money, fine clothes and luxuries. He continues,

"Each idea I got about easy money in the movies put it in my head that I would like to try it as I always wanted money to be dressed up in good clothes and to look big. The things they show in the pictures I have seen show how a fellow would break into a place and get enough money to buy a car and some good clothes, and it makes me feel that I wanted to be dressed up and have a car, too."

How simple it all was! He wanted money to be dressed up and he wanted to look big. The same old ideal, so irresistible to many of us, so helpful in making delinquents, defaulters and criminals. The pictures supplied that boy with stimulus and a technique for jimmying windows and doors. He is an inmate of the reformatory.

Many young criminals describe how they acquired their impetus and techniques for robbery from the variety of methods shown on the screen. "I learned from the movies," as one young reformatory bird puts it tersely, "the scientific way of pulling jobs. Leave no fingerprints or telltale marks."

Science is essential to our lives and must be learned and acquired somehow. This boy depended for his instruction upon the movies. A young burglar, only six-

teen, throws a similar light upon the education of himself and his gang in their trade:

"In breaking in a store we learned from the movies to use a glass-cutter and master key and one boy had a jimmy. If the key didn't work we would use the glass-cutter, and if that didn't work we would use the jimmy. We would put the jimmy by the lock and force it open." This all-round training and eclecticism is illustrated by others who tell circumstantially how they learned the use of blackjacks, brass knuckles, machine guns and even bombs. The hold-up, a seemingly simple process, nevertheless has its own techniques and some tell of acquiring them from the movies. Even how to escape from the police in a stolen car has to be learned somehow. And where, after all, is the ideal school?

"The first stick-up I ever saw," is the frank reminiscence of a young robber, "was in a movie show and I seen how it is done and what the crook usually does after the stick-up." Some young delinquents awaiting trial were interviewed by Professor Blumer and Dr. Hauser upon the route they followed to arrive where they found themselves. Here is part of a conversation with a seventeen-year-old offender charged with burglary:

Question. "How about the movies? Do you think they had something to do with your difficulty?"

Answer. Well, I think that I learned plenty from them.

Q. What did you learn, would you say?

A. Jimmying a window and things like that. I tried to open a safe once, but I couldn't do that.

Q. Did you see that in a picture?

A. I saw that in a picture, so I tried it.

Q. What picture did you see that in?

A. Some funny kind with Evelyn Brent."

"I learned something from 'The Doorway to Hell.' It is a gangster picture. It shows how to drown out shots from a gun by backfiring a car." This is one of the numerous techniques learned from the movies, as one ex-convict explains it. There is a large amount of such terse testimony as to the educational source—the movies—for a great many methods and techniques acquired by young criminals. The investigators under Dr. Thrasher found a number, and Drs. Blumer and Hauser found a great many. So many, indeed, that Blumer and Hauser made a sort of little census from their case material and their inventory, while not exhaustive, is illuminating:

How to open a safe by "feel" of dial.

How to enter a store by forcing lock with crowbar and screwdriver.

To cut burglar alarm wires in advance during the day.

How to take door off hinges to force way into apartment.

How to break window noiselessly for forcing way into store or house to be burglarized, by pasting flypaper on window before breaking it.

How to act and what to do in robbery with a gun.

Use of brace and bit to drill lock out for forcing entrance into store.

Use of glass-cutter to cut glass of window away so window-lock can be opened.

Technique of sudden approach and quick getaway in robbery.

How to jimmy a door or window.

Use of a master key for gaining entrance to a house.
Idea of looking for secret panels hiding wall safes in burglarizing houses.

How to open or close a lock with a pair of tweezers.

How to force the door of an automobile with a piece of pipe.

Idea of stealing silverware in burglaries.

Idea of renting an apartment for gang "hangout."

"The scientific way"—leaving no finger-prints.

How to use weapons—pistols, shotguns, machine guns, blackjacks, brass knuckles, bombs.

Eluding police by turning up alley, turning off lights, then speeding in opposite direction.

Gambling with (and cheating) drunken persons.

To pose as a gas inspector for purposes of burglary.

How to drown out shots of guns by backfiring.

How to maim or kill motorcycle policemen by swinging and stopping car suddenly.

How to pick pockets.

How to accomplish jail breaks by using a truck to pull bars from windows or doors.

The use of ether on sleeping occupants of a house being burglarized.

The use of gloves in burglary.

To beware of alarms or plates in front of safes.

The use of an arc-burner, to burn out combinations of safes without noise.

How to sell liquor in "booze racket" by coercion.

Importance of establishing an alibi.

Carrying a machine-gun in a violin case, as found by Professor Thrasher's investigators.

Thirty-two separate and important items of crime

technique! Fagin's school was child's play to this curriculum of crime. Now, while no one would pretend that every one of us seeing these diverse techniques illustrated on the screen would thereby become a criminal, it is nevertheless true that many retain for a long period what they see. The criminally inclined, those with unsteady inhibitions, the delinquent, or what Blumer and Hauser call "marginal individuals" and what criminals often call "punks"—from whom future criminals are recruited—these are the ones who are apt to store away those techniques and ideas, so carefully wrought out before them on the screen with all the finesse of laboratory procedure. There was no technique for testing their credibility, but twenty per cent of the convicts studied affirm that the movies taught them ways and means in theft and robbery.

Mordaunt Hall, motion picture critic of the *New York Times*, reviewing the situation at the year-end of 1932-33, declares that the public is sick of racketeer and gangster pictures. Hollywood, however, believes that there is money in them.

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The best way, perhaps, of illustrating the rôle of motion pictures in stimulating young drifters toward crime and providing crime techniques is by quoting more or less fully a single case, that of a young negro of twenty-two in a penal institution. The boy recounts that while still at school, a gang of young hoodlums accustomed to robbing small boys of their pocket-money on the fringes of the playground, interested him in their procedure by robbing him. But upon learning that he had older

brothers who might seek reprisals, they not only returned his money but cordially invited him to join them. He began by absenting himself from school in order to join this gang and soon the movies began to appear as an influence in his path.

"I had never pulled a job till I saw Lon Chaney in 'The Unholy Three.' I saw how he broke into a store and robbed the safe and how he picked people's pockets. When we came out of the show, a couple of the boys suggested that we try to rob a store the way we had seen in the picture." The decision was unanimous and after getting the necessary tools, they succeeded in robbing a clothing store. This venture offered little difficulty and they proceeded to look about for more worlds to conquer:

"Whenever we saw that a gangster picture was playing at a theatre, we would all go to find out some other way of robbing places. . . . George Bancroft was playing in 'The Underworld' in a show at — and — Streets. We saw how he went into a store and cut the burglar alarm wire. Then he came back that night and broke into the store and got away with a bunch of fur coats. We thought we would try that trick, so that afternoon we went out to F—— Street and the Elevated to a haberdasher's store. We went into the store and pretended that we wanted to buy something. While two of the boys were looking at some articles I cut the wire that ran down the side of the door. Then after I had completed my job, the boys told the salesman that they would be back. That night we went back to the store to rob it."

Lack of success in that enterprise was due to the fact

that the proprietor must have discovered the damage, and when they returned and attempted entry with a crow-bar the alarm worked. Later, however, another member of the gang showed them how to take off a door by knocking the bolts out of the hinges, a trick he had learned from some other movie. Our hero was steadily progressing in his education. His narrative goes on:

"I saw another picture at — and — Streets in which I got an idea how to rob a store. The title of the picture, I think, was 'No Way Out.' I can't recollect the name of the leading character. It was a picture about some thugs robbing a bank. They tried to get in the door but it was adequately locked. They tried the roof but it was well barred with iron bars and screws. Then one of the thugs suggested that they break the lock on the iron bar that runs around the outside, then paste some fly-paper on the window; about ten pieces was what they put on the window. Then they took a hammer and hit around the edge of the fly-paper until the window was broken. When they took the paper down, the pieces of glass came down with the paper and didn't make any noise. Then they went into the bank and looted it and got away safely without anyone seeing or hearing them. About a week after I saw the show a couple of boys and myself tried the trick and it came out successfully."

It is to be noted that those who committed the crime in the picture were "thugs," whereas the narrator's associates were merely "boys." He goes on to tell how he and his friends looted a store by means of that clever technique so successfully learned, and got safely away.

"I have tried that trick on quite a few stores and it has come out successful each time. I have never been caught in an act of robbing a place. I have been locked up a number of times. I was always put in jail when someone would tell on me or the police would pick me up on suspicion. I have gone to the 'Boys' School' for little things such as being bad in school, riding in stolen autos, etc."

Stirred to enterprise by the adroit techniques he had assimilated from the movies, he began to seek for new information bearing upon his vocation. He found what he describes as a gangster book entitled "The Blue Boy," which gave him the idea of using a glass-cutter for removing panes of glass from jewelry shops to facilitate robbery. Though he was almost caught, he managed nevertheless to escape with several hundred dollars' worth of jewelry. After this he entered a new phase of criminal activity. Heretofore he had been an unarmed young thief and petty burglar. Something, however, gave him a new idea.

"I saw another picture a year or two before I came down here [the penitentiary]. If I am not mistaken the name of the picture was 'The Night Streets of Broadway.' [He is probably in error as to the title.] I cannot remember the name of the star character. The character was a young man of twenty-five or twenty-four. His people were in a state of destitution; he was out of work; his father was out of work, and his mother was sick. He had a small brother and sister. He had tried hard for a job but to no avail. One day when he was around a poolroom, he heard some boys about his own age talking about a job they had pulled off. Each of

them had a large roll of money. That inspired him to try the same racket. He went to a friend of his and borrowed a gun. He went out that night and stuck up a rich couple in their car. He went home and gave some money to his father, and told him he had a job working nights and had drawn on his salary. He went along for a long time robbing people and taking care of his family. One night he went to stick up a taxi driver; he was caught in the act by a policeman. When he went to jail he told the judge why he had committed the crime. The judge was going to give him a light sentence in jail when a rich man stepped up and told the judge that he would give the boy a chance if the judge would place the boy in his charge."

That story, needless to say, ends happily for the young criminal, but as the narrator frankly admits, "I did not pay that part any attention. I wanted to get some money at the time I was looking at the picture. So I went home and stole my father's pistol out of his writing-desk and went down to F—— (Street)."

Together with a friend he proceeds on this new venture—robbery with a gun. Steadily growing in crime, he has steadily continued to get his suggestions and techniques from the motion pictures as a sort of hand-book. The first efforts of these boys, which he describes in detail, were quite successful.

"K—— and I met the next night. We decided that we would work out north. We got off the Elevated at —— and ——. We went east about a block, then we went north a couple of blocks until we got to a gangway. We saw a man coming down the street. We got ready for him and pulled down our caps and put up our coat-

collars. I went up behind him and told him to put up his hands and not to make any noise, the same way I had done the first man we stuck up. He told us to take the money and not take his watch. When K— was going through his pockets, the man coughed. I thought he was trying to make a break for a gun. I almost shot the man. I told him to walk straight ahead and not look back. K— and I ran through the gangway, then down the alley to the Elevated. We got on the Elevated and went on the back and counted the money. We had four ten-dollar bills, a two-dollar bill, six one-dollar bills and some change. I got off at T— and I—, and told K— that I would meet him around the poolroom the next day.

"When I got home I went in my room which I shared with one of my brothers and thought, I had almost wounded a man or killed him. I said to myself, if I had killed a man and got caught, I would have to pay the death penalty or life imprisonment. I thought for a long time. Then I said I would not try that racket any more because I will sometime run up on some fellow who will try to resist and then I would have to save myself by wounding or taking his life. When I told K— that I wouldn't go with him any more and told him why, he told me that I was yellow. I told him if he had killed a man, I would be in it just as much as he would. He went and got another partner and I quit the racket. He and his partner are now in the Joliet prison for robbery and attempt to kill with a pistol. I am glad that I quit in time. I have one to ten years for larceny, and he has one to life. I know that I will get out and get a discharge a long time before he will."

Professor Blumer and Dr. Hauser do not, naturally, ascribe the delinquency of this young criminal solely to motion pictures. None of the participants in the four-year research, for that matter, ascribe whatever criminality and delinquency they have found entirely to the movies. Other factors contribute in numerous instances to the formation of the criminal life patterns. Their research, however, was concerned with the discovery of the operation of the movies as an element in these patterns and the evidence they have assembled is impressive. Blumer and Hauser who seldom draw conclusions and usually understate them, observe of this particular history of the young negro:

"It is easy to detect in this case the strand of motion picture experience, sometimes of negligible import but sometimes of dominating significance. In providing suggestions to crime, in stimulating a certain amount of boldness and confidence in the execution of new crimes and in providing detailed techniques of crime, motion pictures operated directly on the criminal behavior of this individual. It is interesting and important to see how this boy sums up his own case." They continue to quote from his autobiography:

"I think that the movies are mostly responsible for my criminal career. When I would see a crime picture and notice how crime was carried out, it would make me feel like going out and looking for something to steal. I have always had a desire for luxury and good clothes. When I worked the salary was so small that I couldn't buy what I wanted, and pay the price for good clothes. When I would see crime pictures, I would stay out all night stealing. I have quit six or seven jobs just to steal."

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The above case, cited at some length, as well as several cases more briefly referred to, or those for which there is here no space, show not only how crime technique may be learned from the motion pictures, but also how in numerous instances the direct suggestions and influence of motion pictures propelled the spectators toward acts of delinquency and crime. So far as concerns indirect influence, the stirring of desires for ease, luxury, easy money as obtainable through criminal or illegitimate enterprise, these cases are still more numerous.

Forty-nine per cent or virtually half of a sample of 110 inmates of a penal institution investigated by Blumer and Hauser testified that movies gave them a desire to carry a gun. And carrying a gun, while not necessarily criminal in itself, very often leads to crime. Twenty-eight per cent of the same sample stated that movies aroused in them the desire to practice stick-ups, or hold-ups. Twenty-one per cent declared that movies taught them how to fool the police, and twelve per cent state on a questionnaire form that when they saw an adventuresome bandit, burglar or gangster picture, they planned how to hold up someone or "to pull a job."

Perhaps the reader will forgive a necessary reiteration when we recall that in his analysis of 115 pictures studied week by week in the theatres, Dr. Dale found that in them 406 crimes were committed and forty-three more attempted; in thirty-five pictures, fifty-four murders took place; in twelve pictures seventeen hold-ups occurred and in thirty-two pictures, fifty-nine instances of assault and battery. It is evident that on the advertising principle

which believes in constant repetition as the road to the prospective purchaser's mind, these images and ideas of crime so ceaselessly reiterated on the screen must sooner or later wear paths in young brains in the least susceptible or suggestible. In the old adage, it is the drop of water that hollows the stone. Dr. Thurstone and Miss Peterson have shown that the effects of motion pictures in any direction may be cumulative. In a way, those constantly recurring crime pictures may become for a portion of the spectators not merely a school, but a very university of crime, with a wide range of techniques, suggestions and patterns cunningly executed and vividly presented.

"Ideas and impulses," summarize Blumer and Hauser, "are checked, are held within the mind for a given time, are held, so to speak, to mere incipient activity. In the course of time they may pass away, without leaving any trace; but they may also work in subtle ways in a pattern of life." That in most cases they do pass away is fortunate, or perhaps all those of us who are motion picture addicts would become criminals and delinquents. In many instances, however, as we have seen, not only do they not pass away, but they leave imprints so powerful that a number of the criminal and delinquent attribute their wrong-doing and downfall in a measure to the potency of film suggestion. When once the full force of this truth comes home to the public, it will feel bound to demand a more carefully planned and a more subtly supervised form of entertainment.

CHAPTER XIII

SEX-DELINQUENCY AND CRIME

TRUANCY used to be a simple thing. A boy stayed away from school to go fishing or swimming, and he was a reprehensible person and he was duly punished for it. Girls played truant but seldom and offered few problems. Then appeared various new elements including the movies—and new temptations in the field of conflict with a sense of duty, the acquisition of which plays so large a part in the education of all of us. "It is apparent beyond a slight statistical chance," observe Thrasher and Cressey, "that delinquents and truants tend more often to go excessively to the movies." Having provided our young with an elaborate and expensive school system, we have proceeded to supply them with new temptations to lure them and tempt them from the paths we wish them to follow. Today it is the girls who play truant most frequently, and generally the temptation is strengthened in the movies. Many of them find this lure quite irresistible. A number of those investigated by Blumer and Hauser give an account somewhat like this:

"One reason I went away from school was I enjoyed movies better than school. I got money from my parents for lunch so instead of going to school, I made some excuse and went to the movies." Another, a girl of fourteen, explains her troubles—

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"When I was ten years old I fell so much in love with the movies that I begged and begged my mother to give me money for the show, but she wouldn't. She said it would ruin my life if I went to the movies so often. But as she didn't give me any money, I would be a sneak and take the money off the table and go to the movies. . . . I very often quarrelled with my mother. She told me that movies weren't good for me. . . . She said they were filthy and sloppy for girls like me. Of course I didn't mind her." That girl subsequently arrived in the Juvenile Court.

Were these potential delinquents fleeing from one type of education, the education ordered for them by society, and seeking another, a premature, unsanctioned and dangerous education in sex, luxury, unrestraint and carousal? The investigator makes no attempt to answer this question—nor will the writer—but to some girls these things seen on the screen become apparently irresistible. A fifteen-year-old girl, given to running away from home, supplies this frank explanation:

"The movies make me want to have a good time, but what kind of a good time is the question. Well! I like to go with a fellow to a cabaret or to a lively dance. All I crave is excitement. Also, I like to get up and sing a song or two; in other words, I crave popularity and gayety. I like to be in with a noisy crowd so that when we go out we can have 'a hell of a good time.' I got much of this feeling from the picture in which Clara Bow played. I can't recall the name of the play, but it was like this: Her parents didn't approve of her going with this certain crowd, and she liked this crowd very much. She said she wouldn't stop going with this crowd

because whenever she went out with them she had 'a hell of a good time.' I am using the correct words she used. I would feel the same way about it if my mother had disapproved of my going; if there was anything wrong with them I wouldn't care, but if there wasn't, I wouldn't break up with that crowd. Another play I saw was Joan Crawford in 'Our Dancing Daughters' and a week afterwards I went to a party; of course I mingled with the drinks as she had done. I also sang the theme song of 'Our Dancing Daughters.'"

"A hell of a good time" may not be delinquency as yet, but that girl leaves little doubt that she is on the royal road. Of 252 delinquent girls fifty-four per cent, more than half, admitted that they had stayed away from school to go to the movies. Over one-third of them had had trouble with their parents over motion picture attendance, and about one-fifth of the total declared that they had run away from home after such difficulties and quarrels.

There are elements in certain of the pictures that set up cravings in some of the delinquent girls which seemingly they cannot combat. So that we get statements like this: "When I saw Ruth Chatterton in 'The Right to Love,' I craved nothing but love and wild party." Forty-nine per cent of the 252 delinquent girls said that the movies imbued them with a desire to live a gay fast life, and nearly as many admitted a craving for wild parties, cabarets and roadhouses as a result of movie inspiration. The "flaming youth" period, in other words, was inflicted ad lib. upon the screen. And the screen turned about and took to mass production of flaming youth.

Wild parties may not necessarily be delinquency, but

forty-one per cent of the delinquent girls admitted that it was the movie-made urge that inclined them to wild parties, cabarets and roadhouses—a course which ultimately landed them "in trouble." They cry out that they wanted the clothes of the movie heroines, the freedom of the movie heroines, the good times and wild parties of the movie heroines. In the result we get confessions like this:

"As I became older I started to go with older boys. I went to the movies on an average of five times in one week. . . . Then I became dissatisfied with home, and my girl friend and I planned to run away." Follows a long story of truancy, staying in men's apartments, the Juvenile Court and an institution for behavior problem girls. "The movies," declares one girl (and there are many like her) "have given me one idea, and that is how much freedom I should have." Another girl, and she only fourteen, announces with a kind of wild despair:

"I thought one day as I was at the show seeing a good picture, if any of the movie stars want to come home late their parents allow them. Why shouldn't mine? So I started coming home at three or six in the morning and soon I landed in the Juvenile Court, which I thought was a very bad place, of course, for a girl of my age to be. I got out within a month. It didn't do me no good. I started over again."

Say that the movies are not alone to blame, yet it is impressive that thirty-eight per cent of girls in a home for delinquents gave this pathetic succession of steps in their careers: Wild parties patterned after what they had seen in the movies, then truancy, then running away

from home. As one girl of seventeen, a sexual delinquent, rather pitifully sketches the process:

"The most responsible thing for getting me in trouble is these love pictures. When I saw a love picture at night, and if I had to go home alone, I would try and flirt with some man on the corner. If it was the right kind of a bad man he would take me to a dance or a wild party; at these parties I would meet other men that would be crazy for fast life. These are the kind of men that got me in trouble. I went with some boys that would tell me they would take me to a party or dance and at the end it would end up in a lonely road or woods. These are the kind of boys that led my life astray. Some boys I went with would kick me out of the car and tell me to walk home if I wouldn't give them what they wanted. The best thing I like are wild parties. Movies were the first thing that made me go astray."

2

The urge young people receive from the movies takes many forms—from the crudest assaults of certain scenes upon their emotions, affections and appetites, to occasional bursts of generosity and ambition, and to many more subtle and often comparatively harmless factors like imitation of dress, deportment and "make-up." The instilling of the desire for luxury, fine clothes, automobiles and all the accessories of wealth, which so many boys and girls bring forward, is one of the commonest of the indirect influences of the movies toward delinquency. Frequent as is this factor among boys and young men, as shown by the Blumer and Thrasher studies, it is even more pronounced in the case of girls and

young women. Clothes, appearance and a love of ease play a far greater rôle in the day-dreaming and cravings of feminine psychology. "Many of the girls and young women studied," Blumer and Hauser observe, "grow dissatisfied with their own clothes and manner of living, and in their efforts to achieve motion picture standards frequently get into trouble." A sixteen-year-old Negro girl, a sexual delinquent, expresses the entire problem in a few lines:

"In seeing movies you get a desire to have pretty clothes, automobiles and several other things that make one happy. If you have no relatives to get these things for you, usually you get in trouble trying to get them yourself." There is a kind of dreary fatalism about this philosophy which seems to creep into so many present-day young minds, irrespective of consequences and results. Over and over among the many cases studied substantially the same attitude emerges. A typical story—the teller of it is seventeen and a sexual delinquent:

"I would love to have nice clothes and plenty of money and nothing to do but have a good time. When I see movies of that type, it makes me want to get out and go somewhere where things happen. Like the picture, 'Gold-diggers of Broadway.' The girls were nothing but adventuresses and look what great times they had. I always wanted to live with a girl chum. I saw many pictures where two or three girls roomed together. It showed all the fun they had. I decided I would, too. I ran away from home and lived with my girl friend, but she was older than I and had different ideas, and of course she led me and led me in the wrong way."

Different ideas, possibly, yet not so very different.

For needy girls tempted beyond their control to obtain money, ease and luxury, the means sometimes narrow down to one form—exploitation of their sex. Upon this point there is abundance of testimony gathered, of which only a few representative cases can here be cited:

(White, 18, Sexual Delinquent) Some of the (movies) makes me dissatisfied with my own clothes. Most always I get what I want. Anyhow if it is in my power. Where there is a will there's a way. There are too many men in this world not to get what you want. There are plenty that are free and disengaged and want what you have got, which if they come after they can get. . . . They (movies) make me wish I had a car and lots of money and they also make me think how to make money. They tell me how to get it. There are several different ways of getting money; through sex, working, etc. Most always I get mine through sex.

(White, 16, Sexual Delinquent) In regard to ideas, there are two kinds of ideas, good and bad. The bad ideas I get from such pictures are to go out and have a high, rough and tumble life just like some of the rest. Go to a sporting house and make money and travel from one place to another.

(Negro, 17, Sexual Delinquent) When I ran away from home I went to a show nearly every day, sometimes seeing the same show two or three times over. In this way I got to wanting to live the way the actresses lived. And so I used to go and get men to support me for a month or so and then change around and get me another man to live with.

(White, 16, Sexual Delinquent) When I see pictures with people who have snappy clothes, automobiles, etc.,

it makes me feel that I would like to have the clothes I see on the wearer. Movies of that sort make me feel that I would like to tear the clothes that I have on right off. I often wish I had a good car like some of the actresses have. When I go out from here I am planning on getting a good car that I could go riding around in. I like to see movies where young girls and boys make a lot of money. I can think of over 100 ways of making money in your younger days, especially in the teens and twenties, with a slow or fast life. I think of making money, such as working in factories, doctor's office or any big office; but I can think of more ways in a fast life, which I will not mention, because I've seen it done and have experienced it myself. Therefore I know something about it."

3

One remembers reading often in the newspapers to what an extent female delinquency has increased in recent years. We have heard of bobbed-haired bandits, female participation in kidnappings and hold-ups and many other instances. Chiefly, however, sexual delinquency is still the one great path to our correctional institutions for women. The question we are here concerned with is, To what extent do the movies with their vivid presentation of visual images, play a part in female sex delinquency? Impossible though such measurement may be in any precise fashion there were, nevertheless, a few indications.

Some of these avenues and incitements we have already seen. Easy money, wild parties, the desire for clothes and luxury, these are the common incentives to

erring. In a group of delinquent girls in a state training-school, twenty-five per cent of them conveyed that movies in a variety of ways were a direct contributing influence to their delinquency.

Some of the girls frankly declare that a picture like "The Pagan" rouses them to the pitch of jealousy of the heroine, to a desire to be loved like her. "When I see a fellow and girl in a passionate love scene, such as 'The Pagan,' I just have a *hot feeling* going through me and I want to do everything bad. When a girl really loves a fellow and he takes her to his house and makes her stay there with him, she gives in to his wants like in 'The Modern Maidens'." Another more briefly summarizes her reactions, "The movies that excite me and make me fall into my lover's arms is passionate or love plays. They give you just what you are craving for: *Love*."

These girls are sixteen. Their experiences speak for themselves, but there are delinquent girls of fourteen and even younger who write much in the same tenor. "After I have seen a romantic love scene," writes a fourteen-year old, "I feel as though I couldn't have just one fellow to love me, but I would like about five." In a state training-school for delinquent girls, one hundred and twenty-one out of 252, virtually half, declare that they "felt like having a man make love to them" after they had seen a passionate love picture. In the cases of these girls, as Professor Blumer points out, the distance between feelings of passionate love and sexual behavior is small. As one inmate, sixteen years old, admits with singular lucidity:

"When I was on the outside I went to the movies almost every night, but only about twice in two months

to a dance. I don't like dances as well as I do movies. A movie would get me so passionate after it was over that I just had to have relief. You know what I mean."

A contemporary of hers gives an even more graphic description of her thrills and stirrings under the impact of sex movies:

"When I see movies that excite me I always want to go home and do the same things that I saw them do. Pictures where a fellow kisses a girl and holds her a long time is what gets me excited, and I just want to do that myself . . . Passionate love pictures do stir me up. Some and most times I go out from a movie and stay out late with a fellow. Sometimes never think of coming in until two-thirty in the morning. . . . One night I went to a movie with a fellow of mine who drives a very chic little sport roadster. In the movie he sat with his arms around me, and every time the fellow would kiss the girl, he would look at me lovingly and squeeze my hand; after the movie we went to my girl friend's house and got her and her fellow. Then we all went for a moonlight spooning ride and had sexual relations."

"Movies," declares a seventeen-year-old delinquent, "taught me a lot pertaining to men: They have taught me how to kiss, how a girl should appear in the presence of her beau, how I should go about loving a fellow, how to do hot dances, how to court, etc. A fellow is expected to take his girl to the movies, dances, skating parties, etc., and according to modern times he is expected to take her to a place, whatever the circumstances may be, and to make passionate love to her, and she is expected to show him a good time as he shows her."

The case above is of a girl who probably ought never to see any movies, and least of all such movies as those whence she gleaned her principles. Nevertheless, all movies are open wide, alike to moron and philosopher and to all that come between, with all the sanction and seeming approval that a broad and general publicity carries. The results are—the results.

Girls, of course, differ in temperament and physical constitution. All these who are here testifying were in a state institution expiating sexual delinquency. At least twenty-five per cent of them acknowledge engaging in sexual relations after becoming aroused at a movie. That they were possessed of a propensity to sexual experience is entirely likely. Nevertheless it appears quite clear that motion pictures were a direct contributing influence and incitement. Those who admitted it are, as we see from their statements, exceedingly frank—perhaps merely more frank than their reticent sisters. What, for example, could be more open and explicit than this account of a seventeen-year-old girl?

"I like to see men and women fall in love in the movies and go out on parties, etc. I also like to see them kiss, drink, smoke and make love to each other. It makes me get all stirred up in a passionate way. Love pictures, wild west pictures, murder cases are the pictures I like best, because I like to love, myself, and I know others want to do the same. After I see them I go out and make love and go on wild parties and only do worse. Movies teach me how to treat my men and fool them. When I see a wild west picture, especially when I see a cowboy falling in love with a girl and running away with her and when they go out riding with her it

makes me want to be out in the West—Colorado—with someone I could live around with and have relations with. When I saw the picture, 'All Quite on the Western Front,' I was so thrilled and excited I could hardly realize I was seeing the picture. It seems as though it was myself and the boy I was sitting with. I have always wanted to have the experience and thrill of being held in the arms of some masculine man and being loved . . . Love pictures are my favorites. They teach me how to love and kiss. Oh! How thrilled I am when I see a real passionate movie! I watch every little detail, of how she's dressed, and her make-up, and also her hair. They are my favorite pictures. The most exciting pictures are passionate plays. I get excited most when they are kissing and loving and having experiences I wish I could have. When I see these movies I leave the movies most always immediately and go out to some roadhouse or an apartment with my man and get my wants satisfied. Especially when I get all stirred up and my passion rises. I feel as if I never want my man to leave me, as if I can't live without him. I have a feeling that can't be expressed with words but with actions."

The excerpt is quoted at some length because this delinquent girl, notwithstanding a certain muddle-headedness, is probably not unique—to her sex pictures have brought a new freedom and a new stimulus, as well, perhaps, as some of the muddle-headedness. In a way, she has always existed. But the movies have brought a stream of suggestions and patterns within easy reach of such large numbers of her that they amount to a school, with the addition of public sanction—a sanction expressed by universal attendance and wide-flung ad-

vertising, by bright lights, vivid posters and press advertisements.

In Dr. Charles C. Peters' study of the effect of the movies on the national mores appear some telling details of movie exploitation. Among some fifteen hundred adjectives used in describing the pictures were found some of the following figures: Adjectives appealing to the baser emotions, 110; adjectives appealing to finer or ennobling emotions, 23. Superlatives are rampant. The adjective "great" figures 410 times; "big," 212; "sensational," 166; "tremendous," 99; "thrilling," 93. Among cuts and illustrations the figures are still more pointed. Pictures showing a man and a woman embracing, 275; religious scenes, 3; marriage scenes, 2. In the Thrasher and Cressey study, as will be seen, the actual text of posters and streamers is even more illuminating.

4

Perhaps the most convenient way of illustrating the strand of movie influence in the tissue of criminal life in the case of one man, is to cite more or less fully the case of a youth of twenty-three who has served a sentence for rape, and in whose conduct and conviction the movies played a prominent part. The document, quoted by Blumer and Hauser, was written by the young ex-convict himself.

"One night we went up to the — (a motion picture theatre) but couldn't get our regular seats. I got one right near to a girl I went to school with and she was a keen kid in school and never fooled around much. So I just sat there and talked with her and watched the picture. Pearl White was playing in a serial at that time,

and she was a pretty clever actress. It was a good show. After the show was over we went outside, and went walking with E—. We walked around for about a half an hour and then went up to her house and sat on her front steps just talking. Gee, I don't know, but I just couldn't figure it out. This kid falling for me; she had looks—decent girl—and everything. I went home that night promising her I would meet her the next night at the show. The next night I did meet her; and gosh! I am acting and sounding goofy now, but I guess I was falling hard. We went home that night, to, without anything happening. I met the bunch on the corner after I left her and I— (one of the gang) started to razz me and said she was pretty hot stuff, and tried to fix it for me to walk over around the beach the next night so the bunch would jump her and have relations with her.

"I refused to do this, telling them that she was a good, clean, respectable girl; and I— laughed and said, 'Boy, she's had plenty of sex relations.' I was a good fighter, but I was mad, and for winning a fight I was second best that night as far as fighting was concerned. But I was hot and didn't give a damn. I picked up a house brick and started to run and threw it at him and hit him in the back of the head, and he fell unconscious."

The boy, obviously in love with the girl, whom he regarded as good, clean and respectable, actually fought in her defence, severed his relations with his gang and continued to go with her to the movies.

"About a week or so after the fight with I—, I met E— again and we went up to a show. I started to put my arm around her and kiss her and she didn't move. Now I know she was only a 'little bum,' but at that

time I thought she was in love with me. A new life opened up to me that night. I was all 'bubbles.' I played around, contented in just kissing and loving her. We didn't go to shows much then. We wanted to be alone; and this went on for a couple of nights or so. I would meet her at about six-thirty or seven and bum around until eleven or twelve o'clock.

"We went to a show Sunday afternoon down at T—, and it was a raw picture—'Adults only'—and we got in. The part of the picture that aroused me and her, too, I guess, was when the boy was loving up the girl on a couch and she leaned back and he got over her and was kissing and loving her. E— had a hold of my hand, and her hand was all wet with sweat, and she said, 'Jim, that is the way I would like to have you love me.' I looked at her and she looked into my eyes and looked as if she was going to faint. We did not wait for all the show, but left.

"After we got outside, she acted different. I was stirred up in the show but cooled off after we walked a block or so. It was about five P.M. when we got over to E—'s house, and I told her I would meet her after supper. I went home and had supper. Then I went over there and whistled for E—. She came to the door and told me to come up. I was never in her house before and I went up. Her mother had gone to visit somebody and no one was home. We went in the front room and sat down; and after we sat down and kissed a while she wanted to be loved like that girl in the picture, and I done exactly that.

"I got all stirred up, but, at first, couldn't ask her to go the limit. I didn't have the nerve, I guess. She

was aroused, too, and showed it plenty. Finally after fooling around for about a half hour like this, we had sexual relations."

It is not meant to suggest here that their movie-going was the sole factor in their relationship, but it is significant, observe Professor Blumer and Hauser, "that the motion pictures aroused sex passion in both of them and suggested techniques of love-making," which helped to change a typically adolescent love affair into one of illicit sex relations.

The narrator goes on to recount how he secured a position with a reputable business organization and became a successful salesman. In the office he met a young girl of sixteen who attracted him very much and they began to "keep company." She introduced him to her mother and his attitude is plain from his remark, "Boy, I'd have married her right then and there if she'd asked me." Up to this point he is clearly in love with the girl in a socially acceptable manner. But that condition changed. He continues:

"Sunday afternoon I made up my mind I was going to have relations with her if I had to force it. How to get her aroused was the next thing. I read the picture part of the paper, and Elinor Glyn's 'Three Weeks' was playing. I took B—, and that picture was the 'hit.' It was really sizzling in parts. B— got 'it'; and you know if you ever wanted to have relations with a girl, all you got to do is to take her to one of those plays. They give her the idea. She gets aroused, and the next is up to you. B— was aroused. I know that because I made many preliminary advances to her during the show, and she liked it. After the show we went to

— and had chop suey. Next we went to — (an isolated section of the city) and stopped.

"Well, she petted and became aroused again. I was sure from her reactions and the nature of my advances to which she did not object that she was ready for anything, but when I tried it she screamed and started to cry. I tried to use force, but she resisted. I let her go and tried to patch things up, but she wouldn't talk. I drove her home.

"The next morning when I showed up for work, the girl, her family, my bosses and a policeman met me."

He was sentenced to three years for attempted rape. This story is of interest in that it shows not only the aphrodisiac effects of certain pictures, but illustrates also their conscious use by some men for stimulating and arousing passions and desire in girls.

One youth under sentence for robbery tells how his associates and himself would go to a sex picture as a prelude before adjourning to a house of prostitution, and another, serving a sentence for burglary, makes this frank statement:

"I would go to a sex picture but I always have a girl with me. Whenever I would see the lover on the screen making love to the heroine, I would put one arm around my girl (we always sat in the back of the theatre so that nobody would be around us) and do the same. If she became aroused, and if it happened to be during the early part of the afternoon, and not many people within the show, we would go the limit there in the theatre."

Later, in considering the Thrasher-Cressey survey of a congested area in a big city, it will be seen that in cer-

tain types of movie theatres, the conduct of this youth is quite common. As the late Dr. R. L. Whitley, one of the New York University investigators, observes: "A variety of sexual practices are observed by the boy ordinarily in the movie house and occasionally he engages in various forms of sex-activity in the house himself." The youth quoted by Drs. Blumer and Hauser concluded his remarks:

"Later on I got invited to parties and did we have hot times? We'd begin by discussing the different sex pictures we had seen and the manner by which the hero made love to the girl. It would finally end up with a girl in each boy's lap, kissing and playing with each other; and finally each boy would take his girl."

"After leaving a sex picture," recalls a young convict, "I would go back to the neighborhood and start talking to the gang about the picture and my subsequent reaction to it. We would all get together and discuss various means of getting a girl to come down to our hang-out (which was situated in an old abandoned quarry) and then hold a 'tête a tête' with her." He goes on to describe their success in enticing a girl and raping her in these quarters.

The accounts of these various young criminals show a variety of experiences in which passionate love and sex movies played a part, either as consciously used aphrodisiacs or as leading to more serious crimes, such as rape by an individual or a gang.

5

These are samples of some of the amusement supplied to the masses. When forty-three per cent of de-

linquent girls examined state that movies gave them the itch to make money easily; when fourteen per cent declare they acquired ideas from the movies for making money by 'gold-digging' men; twenty-five per cent, by living with a man and letting him support them; when considerable numbers of young men and boys in penal institutions declare that they used movies as a sexual excitant—then it means that a load is added, the burden of which they are unable to bear; that there is probably something socially wrong, something subversive of the best interests of society in the way a substantial number of present-day movies are made, written, conceived. To those delinquent girls, a few of whose pathetic cases have been presented here, the movies clearly emerge as a school. No less than seventy-two per cent of them admit having improved their attractiveness by imitating the movies. But what is more important, nearly forty per cent admit that they were moved to invite men to make love to them after seeing passionate sex pictures. For them the movies constitute an education along the left-hand or primrose path of life, to the wreckage of their own lives and to the detriment and cost of society.

The road to delinquency, in a few words, is heavily dotted with movie addicts, and obviously, it needs no crusaders or preachers or reformers to come to this conclusion.

CHAPTER XIV

DETERRENT AND CORRECTIONAL

AMONG all the many cases presented by Drs. Blumer and Hauser in their monograph, the writer can find only a single one in which the chastening effect of seeing a picture of crime-punishment had a provably tangible effect. A youth of eighteen in the reformatory contributed this pathetic statement:

"Well, the last picture I saw before I was sent over the road was 'The Big House.' After I have seen that picture I wanted to go straight. It made me get cold feet whenever I thought of pulling a job; but the next day I gave myself up to the police for some jobs that I had done a month before I had seen 'The Big House.' If I should of seen 'The Big House' before I did the crime I wouldn't be where I am now. I felt as though I wanted to be a gangster but after I seen of how quick they get caught and sent to jail, I soon gave up all hope of being a gangster and I would always think that the criminal got too much punishment. Such pictures as 'The Big House' should not be shown."

Confused, illiterate and pitiful as the above confession appears, it possesses a singular merit and interest; a young criminal, after seeing a motion picture of crime and punishment, was moved to give himself up to the police. How rare are such occurrences and how much