

false hopes should not be raised in the minds of these patients or the public.

"It is perhaps only natural that new and spectacular methods of treatment and control of human diseases should be given prominence in the daily press," Dr. McKinley commented. "More frequently than not, however, such new cures and spectacular methods of control are later found to reach far short of the original claims which have been made for them. This has been experienced over and over again in the case of cancer—and is so true in this particular instance that, up until the pres-

ent at least, it has been possible to say, upon reading such extravagant reports—'of course this is untrue.'

"The very odds against the truth of such reports makes the doubt of truth practically a sure wager. Such stories, however, not founded upon fact and careful scientific judgment and control, have their tragic side particularly for those unfortunate individuals who are victims of the disease in question. New hope is raised which is turned quickly into a further disappointment when the true situation becomes known."

*Science News Letter, September 15, 1934*

PSYCHOLOGY

## Motion Pictures Sway Moral Attitudes of Children

### Young Audiences Tend to Approve Actions of Film Characters, Regardless of What They Do

**M**OTION pictures change the moral attitudes of school children, and changes in the direction of laxer standards appear more frequently and last longer than those in the direction of stricter standards, it is shown by an experiment reported to the New York meeting of the American Psychological Association today by Dr. Vernon Jones, of Clark University.

Four regular theatrical pictures were used in the experiment: "The Champ," "Fast Companions," "Abraham Lincoln," and "Tom Brown of Culver." Three large 7th grade classes of public school children, totaling 140, took part in the experiment. Half the children were taken en masse to a theatre to see the films; the other half remained at school.

Questions designed to reveal the attitudes of the children, some of them affected by the films and some not, were asked all the children before and after the film showing, and half a year later.

The greatest changes in attitude were in connection with those attitudes affected by the pictures shown, and in the direction to be expected from the nature of the emphasis in the picture.

"In the film, 'Fast Companions,' a young boy is shown stealing food on several occasions, and this is always treated with a mixture of humor and sympathy," Dr. Jones related. "One of the items on the test was, 'H steals something to eat if he is hungry.' The

rank assigned this item after seeing the picture changed more than that for any other item in the test, and naturally it changed in the direction of considering this behavior more excusable.

"The emphasis in a picture is determined not only by the acts performed but also by the total personality of the actor. For example, in 'Tom Brown of Culver,' the hero did many praiseworthy things, but he was notably lacking in courtesy and agreeableness. On the test following the picture, we find the importance of courtesy and agreeableness to have decreased."

In the film "Abraham Lincoln" the character of Lincoln was exalted. The average rank assigned to Lincoln by the group who saw the film was decidedly higher after the showing of the film. The attitudes of the others remained unchanged.

In three out of five items, the change of attitude caused by the film was completely lost after a half-year's time. In the others there was partial loss or no loss. The changes that were maintained best were those in the direction of laxer standards. The change in favor of Lincoln was one that was lost completely, but on the following item the change was maintained 100 per cent.: "D lied out of something wrong which he did and thereby protected his family from the disgrace which it would have caused."

*Science News Letter, September 15, 1934*

HISTORY OF EDUCATION

## Bathtubs And Science Entered College Together

**B**ATHTUBS and recognition of science won their places in the conservative colleges of Great Britain at about the same time. With a chuckle over "this interesting coincidence of sanity and sanitation," Dr. H. T. Tizard, chairman of Britain's Aeronautical Research Committee, illustrated an address on Science at the Universities with reminiscences of his early education during Queen Victoria's reign.

"I was at a public school at a time when to take an interest in science was held to be a sign that you were not quite a gentleman," said Dr. Tizard. A "public" school in England corresponds to the more exclusive kind of "private" school in America. "At my school there were 'close' scholarships to Oxford and Cambridge, but I was soon given to understand that these were not available for boys on the science side. . . . It does not seem so very long ago to me; yet the changes that have taken place since then are so profound that it is now considered quite respectable to be a scientist, even at a public school."

The extent of the swing of the pendulum of the British public's esteem for science has an index in the number of students now engaged in scientific study, and the willingness of Parliament to grant financial support.

"There are now about 50,000 students in the universities of Great Britain, half of whom are studying some form of natural science," the speaker continued. "This growth has been only made possible by the provision of public money; all universities in this country are now dependent on the taxpayer and ratepayer. The State alone provides annually for university education a sum nearly ten times as great as was provided before the war; and local government bodies, in addition to their direct contributions, find large sums for maintenance allowances to students.

"The student of science has to be provided with laboratories, where he consumes power, heat, light, and expensive material. He is in consequence the most costly of university students: I estimate that the public expend, in one way or another, nearly £200 a year on each student of science, with the possible exception of students at Oxford and Cambridge, who are more richly endowed from private sources."

*Science News Letter, September 15, 1934*