

They will belong 'to the group "They" and not to the group "We".' Here was the value of a voluntary group such as the Club. It was built up from the existing interests of its members and had premises which they easily accepted as their own. In any group there must be a leader who must remain one of the group and who at first must follow rather than lead, 'watching and listening rather than doing and talking'.

Various public bodies and Acts of Parliament concerned with juvenile employment and welfare are then passed under review. The story is not a happy one, and Miss Stimson pleads for and welcomes steps towards co-ordination. 'Too often the short-term plan becomes the long-term policy and education is then only "rescue-work". We cannot isolate the problem of juvenile employment from the problems of juvenile unemployment, nor can we isolate it from those of further education and leisure-time interests' (p. 42). Co-operation between the school and the social worker is a vital need, the 'educators' have to be educated. The development of County Colleges according to the varying circumstances of different districts is also mentioned.

This well-conducted work of social research should be of value from many points of view. Such investigations link up with the discoveries of French Catholics about the importance of 'natural communities', and with their aim to create a Christian community in every natural community. If this is not done, and done quickly, there is no hope of converting the mass of paganised society and little hope of the survival of individual converts who are not of heroic sanctity. Our roots must be firmly fixed in the earth if the flower is to rise towards heaven. English Catholics have not a little to learn from such a book as this, and they need an active centre which could inspire and correlate such research.

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BRITISH CINEMAS AND THEIR AUDIENCES. By J. P. Mayer. (Dobson; 15s.0d.)

THE ART OF THE FILM. By Ernest Lindgren. Allen and Unwin; 16s.0d.)

In his *Sociology of Film* (reviewed in BLACKFRIARS for November 1947), Mr Mayer began an investigation into the effects of the commercial cinema on ordinary filmgoers. His method was to analyse the replies sent in to a questionnaire addressed to the readers of a popular film periodical. In his latest book Mr Mayer prints replies to further enquiries relating to 'Films and the Pattern of Life' and to 'Film Preferences'.

There can be no doubt of the importance of such a sociological study. An appendix to the present book, summarising the composition of cinema audiences, the frequency of their visits and especially those of children, reveals the cardinal place the cinema has in the national life. From what is claimed to be a representative

sample of the population, 32% go to the cinema once a week or oftener and 38% go occasionally. In the case of children of school age the figures are 44% and 34% respectively; for those aged 14-17 the figures are 79% and 18%. But the main part of Mr Mayer's book is taken up with the verbatim replies of filmgoers to specific questions, and the picture that emerges is an astonishing one. Yet one must in advance enter a caveat as to the representative value of Mr Mayer's material. His contributors are for the most part young people (women outnumber men) and they are regular readers of a film periodical who have taken the trouble to answer quite difficult questions. Mr Mayer seems to attach too universal a significance to the response of a group that is specially, not to say fanatically, interested in the cinema. It would need a far more exhaustive enquiry, carried out under stricter supervision over a period of years, to enable the sociologist to arrive at any absolute conclusions relating to the population as a whole. In the meantime Mr Mayer's documents are a valuable interim contribution.

Pascal's diagnosis of unhappiness—the inability to be at rest alone in a room—is for Mr Mayer very relevant to the problem of the use of leisure, and in particular to the cinema-going habit. 'Without films I am miserable', says a girl of eighteen in her contribution; 'ever since I was eight I have averaged three times per week, occasionally four', says another girl of twenty. It is beyond dispute that the cinema is a principal determinant of the leisure of hundreds of thousands, and the usefulness of Mr Mayer's study lies in its acceptance of that situation and in his plea that 'the film medium should be made into an active and dynamic instrument of a all-round citizenship'. Films must, therefore, 'become a deliberate concern of cultural leadership'. Such generalisations as such are admittedly of little practical use, for they presuppose a long and difficult process of education in taste and discrimination.

Mr Lindgren's *Art of the Film* (published some months ago) will scarcely appeal to the public Mr Mayer is considering, but it should be of great help in educating the educators. It is a serious essay in the aesthetic of films, and its title reveals its purpose. The sociology of the cinema cannot be separated from its artistic claims, and a negative attitude of extrinsic moralisation will do nothing to improve matters. In this connection the work of the Catholic Film Society, and especially of its admirable monthly review *Focus*, must be recognised as immensely valuable. Mr Mayer does well to remind his readers in an introductory chapter of the 'departmentalisation of our contemporary civilisation'. The cinema is the symbol of the urge for diversion, for a *participation mystique* in fantasies far removed from the dreary uniformity of ordinary life. The function of Christian criticism must be to establish the integrating principle in society for which Mr Mayer appeals. He gives no clear idea of what such a principle might be. Indeed his book is far more valuable in its analytic, rather than in its constructive, aspects.

His positive proposals are vague and inconclusive and involve platitudes about 'a unifying belief' (later he says: 'Beliefs—we have none') and 'a new purpose for a society devoted to peace'. As in so many other areas of modern society the Christian here serves more than himself. The 'problem' of the Cinema cannot be isolated from the 'problem' of a society without God, just as its artistic standards cannot be divorced from those of our culture as a whole. Studies such as those presented by Mr Mayer underline the first dilemma, and Mr Lindgren's book emphasises the second. There remains the need for a 'grammar of the Film' which shall relate the parts to the whole, and the whole is nothing new.

I. E.

ENGLISH BLAKE. By Bernard Blackstone. (Cambridge University Press; 25s.)

The book stands out with distinction among the welter of Blake exegesis with which we have recently been deluged. The portrait of Blake is well drawn, the intellectual background of his day is carefully defined. Since much of the poet's obscurity is due to the fact that he is protesting loudly in his own, and often deeply sarcastic way, at the contemporary outlook, the newcomer to Blake will be helped with many difficulties in allusion to

'The Monstrous Churches of Beulah, the Gods of Ulro dark'.

But hatred of the Deists, of Reynolds and of contemporary philosophy, art and science is only one side of Blake. He was equally concerned with theosophy, occultism and a sort of British Israelitism of his own invention. There are also the projections of his own sub-conscious world at which psychologists look so lovingly and long. Allusions to these are far more confusing and with them Dr Blackstone's book will not help. In his desire to make his subject clear to the lay reader he tends to oversimplify both the poems and their writer.

For Blake was not, as our author suggests, a clear-headed man who studies his adversaries' case and then sits down to refute it. He was a powerful thinker but he was essentially intuitive. The ideas with which he dealt were common controversial currency in the intellectual circles which he at one time frequented and which he would have heard discussed. After all, he had plenty to say about the Classics which he had never read. He was never a scholar and he had not a tidy mind. Hence we must disagree with many of Dr Blackstone's theories about him. Such as for instance that he deliberately wrote 'An Island in the Moon' 'to straighten out his ideas' (p. 27). Anything less like Blake's normal procedure it is hard to imagine, unless it is his alleged use of 'contemplation and silent prayer' in the 'training' of his wife Catherine! Neither can we believe that a learned quotation from the Principia was 'evidently in Blake's mind' (p. 236) when he recounted his vision of the nature of Time, in his Milton. This is entirely in the medieval