

we made were among the Africans, with whom we were constantly at work. We entertained them with film shows, the wireless and the gramophone; they returned the compliment with singing, music and dancing. During the tour we made over a hundred recordings, and on special occasions, at our request, villagers flocked in from the whole area with chiefs and their retinues in full regalia to stage special performances of drumming and music. It seemed a major miracle to them when a selection of these recordings was played back to them. They were extremely critical of some of their performances, and made a request to repeat recordings until they were satisfied with the quality.

It is very easy to understand the real regret we experienced in leaving these good people on the completion of our programme. Their kindly welcome, simple hospitality and unfailing co-operation left a mark which will be long in fading.

VILLAGE SCHOOL

IT is essential for the success of our overseas production units that they should have the whole-hearted co-operation of the people; and to this end they will adopt the plan which was followed on the first tour in West Africa. Whenever it is possible, arrangements will be made with the Information Officer for a cinema van to accompany a unit to each new location. Film shows will help the people to understand what is wanted of them and will enable them to see the kind of film that is being made for them.

Shows of this kind are useful to the members of the production unit also, for they enable them to see for themselves the reactions of the audience. This will help them to appreciate in greater detail the picture given by Information Officers in their periodical reports, and should be a great help in scripting.

During the tour in West Africa, *Village School* was shown to pupils from senior schools.

Some information has already been given in *Colonial Cinema* about this film, the purpose of which was to explain the working of a small English school in a rural locality in order to show what can be achieved with a small staff by a wise arrangement of the school syllabus. It shows that with comparatively small expenditure on equipment, such a school provides an education for scholars which can really help them to adapt themselves to their environment. There are many lessons to be learned from the film, such as the value of training the hands as well as the brain and the importance of including subjects like agriculture in the curriculum—points which are both vital to educational progress in the Colonies. It was expected that the film would be an object lesson to colonial teachers, while parents

seeing the film would have a better understanding of what school can do for their children.

After the showing of the film, the pupils were invited to write an essay on their impressions. The Public Relations Department offered prizes for the three best essays by boys and girls. There were about 500 essays submitted, and it has been a most interesting experience going through them to select the prize-winners. The essays have afforded a great deal of information which will be of considerable assistance to those who plan our films.

The fact that the film was shown with a recorded commentary in English probably accounts for a certain amount of confusion in the interpretation of a few of the sequences. In some cases, for example, the farm was confused with the school plot, and the farmer identified as one of the school teachers.

Perhaps the most astonishing feature was the large amount of information which the majority of the writers were able to give about the film. *Village School* contains much more matter than it is customary to include in a single film. It would appear from the essays that the film education of the colonial audience may not be such a slow process as many imagine. This was, of course, an audience much above the average; but to offset this, the commentary was not given in their own language.

The incident which impressed most of the writers was the sequence showing the two girls preventing the boy from robbing the bird's nest of its eggs; very few omitted a reference to it. Several of the girl writers considered that the incident showed without any doubt that girls had much more intelligence than boys. A large number appreciated the reason for its inclusion and remarked that this as well as other incidents in the film showed that the children at this school were kind to animals. As the last important incident, and one that was excellently acted by the young children, it was, of course, almost certain to leave an impression on the minds of any audience.

The next point that was generally stressed—and one the director had deliberately emphasised—was the happy atmosphere of the school. It was, in fact, this happy atmosphere which finally decided the selection of this school for the filming. It was indicated by the writers in many ways. The teachers looked pleased; the children looked happy in school; several spoke of the use of flowers in the school as being happy; others remarked on the good feeling that existed amongst the children and between the children and the teachers. It did not pass without considerable comment that the teacher did not get angry because one of the boys did not answer quickly. Nor was the boy beaten when he did untidy work. The unexpected amount of comment on the question of corporal punishment suggested that moral 'suasion is not the invariable rule in the schools attended by the writers.

A Village School in England.

The village School (School) I witnessed last Wednesday at the 'Rex Cinema', is a small one, attended by both European boys and girls, and was supervised by a headmaster and two lady teachers, who did their very best in giving the children a good and better education.

The grading of the School is just the same as we have in an African School. They have the infant class one, a junior class, and a Senior.

In the Senior class an essay based on 'The Farm Horse' was assigned to them. The headmaster went round, inspected their work, praised a girl's essay and encouraged them to do their very best. After that they worked some few problems based on measurement.

Because the School is a village one, they do more practical work than ^{theoretical} ~~theoretical~~ work. For outside the School is a large farm, in which the children are taught the best ways of farming, and the correct way of keeping a poultry farm. The girls are also taught the various methods of knitting and sewing garments.

The School has a library in which the children go to borrow books to read when their day's work is accomplished.

The life and the organization of the School, can be compared with any other School in more civilized towns in Africa.

Photographic copy of one of the essays written by a school pupil in Accra after seeing the film "Village School." It was not the best essay, but was one of the very few that could be photographed effectively.

It may be more interesting to have similar written comments by teachers after seeing this film. Pupils could hardly be expected, for instance, to understand the psychological implications of using sand trays for teaching writing. The general feeling seemed to be that this was a measure of wartime economy. Teachers' reactions, too, with regard to left-handed children may be different from those of one writer, who said he turned pale to see children in the film writing with the left hand, because in his school this would never be allowed.

Much appreciation was expressed about the variety of the curriculum, which must make going to school interesting. Many pointed out that there was really not a great deal of difference between this English school and their own African school, a comparison which suggests that the choice of this particular school was appropriate.

Remarks on the livestock were fairly general, and the majority praised the careful attention given to the animals by the pupils. Here and there one found mild criticism, chiefly on the grounds that children might get germs with the over-affectionate handling of the livestock. One matter for curiosity was the lack of comment on the two magnificent horses drawing the farmer's plough. Only twice were they mentioned at all; the large numbers who spoke of the plough said it was drawn by oxen—probably a case of associating the beast with the job. There was no question of lack of appreciation of fine livestock, evidenced by the host of compliments about the farmer's remarkable herd of cattle and also the excellent condition of the poultry belonging to the school.

A multitude of remarks made here and there supported the decision to include various shots that the unthinking might have regarded as unnecessary in this film. Nothing was included without some definite purpose, and it was gratifying to find each of those incidents remarked on here and there. Comments to the effect that children do not bend over their work; pupils always seem to work even when their teacher isn't there; the boys are handy and do all sorts of jobs; it is a pity we cannot have a library at our school, justify the inclusion of certain sequences which might well have been omitted to reduce the length of the film.

There were many comments on the dress of the pupils attending the school. Judging by their variety, the subject would form an admirable one for any school debating societies that might exist. While many were shocked at the absence of uniformity in dress, others thought it preferable to allow pupils to dress as they liked as long as they were neat and clean. Two expressed very strong views on the question of compulsory uniform, one maintaining it was an injustice to expect poor parents to incur unnecessary expenditure, while the other thought it was degrading to force children into uniform as a condition to receiving education.

Generally the handwork of one kind or another was a subject of remark. The boys' essays showed almost as much interest as the girls' in the sewing and knitting, although in most cases they referred to the garments as night clothes. Garden work was not allowed to pass unnoticed, and some thought the method of planting out was not above criticism. It is highly satisfactory to find these sections of the picture receiving favourable comment in the essays, as all too frequently colonial children have little appreciation of why such subjects are included in their schooling. With the knowledge that these things are taught with thoroughness in more progressive countries, they will be quick to realise that what they are learning is not specially invented for colonial schools. This was one of the main objects in mind when the picture was made.

Some queried the wisdom of the small children being allowed to choose their own work. This question of individuality seemed to be a bone of contention throughout and may point a moral to those interested. The boy marking his own work constantly raised the question of whether pupils would be honest about it. Children working without a teacher raised a doubt in many minds as to whether this would be practicable. The monitor was obviously understood, but it raised the question immediately whether the other pupils would take any notice of his authority. All these points arose too often in the essays to pass over them without remark, and they cannot be without significance to those who control educational policy overseas.

As was fully expected, there was considerable reference to the



*Shooting what has been voted the most popular scene in "Village School."
The two girls prevent the boy from robbing the bird's nest.*

boy who drew the house in chalk. His quiet deliberation and determination certainly impressed a large number of the audience, and only one failed to recognise what he was trying to draw.

In the absence of trained observers able to send regular reports on the films shown to colonial audiences, further experiments along these lines will be of the greatest value. Educational authorities will greatly assist the Unit's work by arranging for comments to be recorded as soon as possible after a film has been shown.

Mr. George Pearson

Extract from the "British Journal of Photography"

R.P.S. HONOUR TO FILM PIONEER. We learn with great pleasure that the Royal Photographic Society has honoured Mr. George Pearson by awarding him the Honorary Fellowship of the Society. Mr. George Pearson, who joined the film industry as long ago as 1912, was before that time a schoolteacher and headmaster, and has always evinced great interest in the educational work of the film. To-day he is still practically engaged in demonstrating that interest as the Director-in-Chief of the Colonial Film Unit, a Government body which exists to make films for the cultural betterment and general welfare of the inhabitants of the Colonial Empire. Mr. Pearson has directed over 300 pictures in Great Britain, New York, Hollywood, Paris, Nice, Rome and Berlin. He has been writer of over 100 film scenarios, author of 38 screened stories, producer of 25 films, and among the films he has directed have been included nearly thirty sound films. He has directed more than 130 notable screen and stage artistes. On the cultural side of films Mr. Pearson has contributed many articles to the lay and professional Press, has broadcast on cinema art, and has lectured to the R.P.S., R.A.D.A., students and undergraduates of Oxford and Cambridge Universities, and of the British Film Institute Summer Schools, and many other bodies. He is an Honorary Life Member of the Film Producers' and Technicians' Committee of the Association of Cine Technicians. Among his well-known entertainment films have been the "Squibs" series, starring Betty Balfour, *The Better 'Ole*, based on the First World War character created by Bruce Bairnsfather, Sherriff's *Journey's End*, John Buchan's *Huntingtower*, W. W. Jacobs's *The Third String*, and he produced Priestley's *The Good Companions*. Eminent critics have stated that "Pearson was ten years ahead of his time," that he used all the techniques of montage "before anyone even heard of Pudovkin and Eisenstein," and have compared him in stature with D. W. Griffith, Murnau and Pudovkin. Mr. Pearson was one of the pioneers in the use of non-professional actors in films of a documentary character.

Editor's Note: Mr. George Pearson has been Senior Director in the Colonial Film Unit since April 1940.