We are happy to be able to report to our members that most of the restrictions that descended upon us at our last meeting have been lifted, and that we will thus be able to continue using this location as a base of operations. Since this particular room is so centrally located, we are glad that no more has been necessary, and that the difficulties with the proprietors have been settled to our satisfaction. Only one minor restriction remains: the elevator service will still cease at 8:00 p.m. However, the obvious way to overcome this has been to bring our starting time forward to 7:30 p.m., leaving a 30-minute elevator service for late-comers. Should members arrive later than 8:00 p.m., the front stairway will remain open and illuminated, doing away with the back-stair explorations that were necessary at our last meeting.

During our short "close-down" period, the committee has been active screening prints for future showings, and we can promise you good things for the future. Incidentally, it would have been possible to have re-started operations two weeks earlier, but we felt this undesirable since it would have clashed with the presentation of "La Chienne" during the MLA's Reminiscence Festival.

FROM THE RANGER TO THE CROSS (Copyrighted October 23, 1912)


The Cast: Robert Henderson Bland (Jesus of Nazareth); Mary, the Mother (Gene Gauntlet); Julius (Robert Vignola); John (Jack J. Clark); The Boy Jesus (Percy Dyer); Mary Magdalene (Alice Hollister); Martha (Helen Landroth); Andrew (J.P. McGown); Lazarus (Sydney Baber); The Blind Man (Sidney Olcott).

Ever since we first announced this film, our members have expressed tremendous interest in seeing it. We don't think it will disappoint them. The print is in good physical condition, and is absolutely complete. In fact, it is more than complete since the final reel includes some additional footage that was incorporated into the film for a later release.

The film -- which is one of several contenders for the "first feature" title -- was begun in late March, 1912, in Egypt. When Bland (formerly an actor with Sir H. Deavorree Tree, and well known too as a poet) joined the unit, production was moved to Jerusalem, in April. When the picture was completed in May, the Kalem players returned to Ireland to make a series of films there before leaving for America in September. Gene Gauntlet preceded them with the negative, cut and titled the film, which was released publicly for the first time at John Hammens' Auditorium in New York on October 16th. Glad terrors and members of the clergy attended the screening, which was introduced by the Rev. W.H. Jackson. During the screening itself, an organ and string ensemble and a mixed chorus, furnished the music.

Despite its age, FROM THE RANGER TO THE CROSS does not date over much. It contains one or two moving shots, and frequently beautiful composition.

Comparison with Delilah's much later THE KING OF KINGS is obviously unfair, but even when such comparison is made, the Olcott film can hold its own in many ways -- certainly it has a curious sort of power which was quite absent from Delilah's vulgar audacity and showmanship. It is worth noting that while THE KING OF KINGS was (quite profitably) banned in England, and has only recently been made available there to film societies through 1918's Main dept. FROM THE RANGER TO THE CROSS has been in constant release in England. Historians Louis Jacobs and Leslie Wood assert that church opposition to the film in England was considerable, and yet in 1912, Dr. William Inge, Dean of St. Paul's, praised and recommended the film highly. The Bishop of London remarked "nothing, not even the Passion Play of Canterbury, brought home to my mind the realities of the life and work of Jesus as did this great film". One critic did remark "This new development makes me shudder ... I protest against the lowering of events in the life of our dear Lord to the level of interesting melodrama. I wonder what the police authorities will do?" But, opposed to this, the London Times (April 17, 1920) wrote a substantial review, and pointed out that it remained "surprisingly wholesome". In fact, the British reacted much more violently when Kalem re-released "Rong Chloree" in 1916 during the Irish rebellion under the title of "The Irish Rebel!

Today the film is still shown frequently in England, primarily of course at churches and film societies, (It is distributed by the Pathé Trust, a religious organisation which curiously releases many westerns and old classics such as "TM as well!) But as recently as 1946, the film still played occasionally in London cinemas. The director: Sidney Olcott was born on January 20th, 1876 in Toronto. Coming to New York in his late twenties to try his luck as an actor, he appeared with Joseph Pateley in "From Rag to Riches" and other plays before joining Biograph, also as an actor, in 1904. In 1907 he became the first director of the newly formed Kalem Company. (K-L-M -- the names of its founders -- George Klaine, Samuel Long, Frank Mazzola.) Among other activities, he made three film-making trips to Ireland before directing "From the Ranger to the Cross". Following the release of the film, Olcott left Kalem and remained consistently active until the late twenties, directing such films as "Madame Butterfly" (1915 -- Mary Pickford and Marshall Niven); "The Green Goddess" (1922 -- George Arliss); "Its All Old New York" (1923 -- Marion Davies); "The Only Woman" (1924 --
Nora Talmadge; "Vionnelle Beaussaire" (1924 - Valentino); "The G-Man" (1925 - Napier); "American Gentleman" (1926 - Richard Barthelmess) and (his last film) "The Glass" (1927 - Norca). One of the most important of the early silent directors - and certainly a pioneer in every sense of the word - Clift directed over 150 one and two reels, and over 50 features. He died on December 16th, 1919, at the home of his Liege-born friend Robert Vignola. Clott's wife, actress Valentine Grant, had died the year before. And Vignola - who had likewise developed into a top-flight silent director (when Knighthood was in Flavor with Marion Davies and others) - was just a month or two ago.

Cliff, despite his long activity, died a rich man and left an estate in excess of $250,000.00 to charity. One of the few survivors of the "Ganger" team - the cameraman, George Hollister, who still lives in Los Angeles. He and his wife, Alice, (an early screen vamp) received $5,000.00 each from Clott's estate. Hollister's photography (with a British Boy camera) is all the more remarkable when one considers under what conditions he worked. All the trick scenes for example (the star in the East, Jesus walking on the water) had to be done in the cameras, miles away from any laboratories. And despite heat with crammed the camera and ruined much of the raw stock, Hollister came through with some really fine work.

One could fill pages with the fascinating story behind the shooting of "From the Hanger to the Cross", but, alas, space does not permit. However, we can recommend any interested members to look up the eight issues of Woman's Home Companion beginning in October 1928. These magazines contain an interesting serialised article, "Blinding the Trail", by C'eir Crotube, which is well worth reading despite some inexcusable errors. And Leslie Wood's "The Miracle of the Movie", published in London in 1927, has several pages of valuable data on the shooting of the film. Apart from some well-bred publicity tricks about weeping nun being overcome as they watched the shooting, and Clott's alleged use of the original tack of Lazarus (1), Wood offers much extremely interesting material - and since it is largely borrowed from the book "From the Hanger to the Cross" by Robert H. Clott, published in London in 1922, it is presumably all quite accurate.

Immediately following the Clott film, we shall be screening the "surprise" item referred to on our last set of notes. We are shrugging this item in mystery not to keep our members in a high state of tension, but simply because this print has been acquired, by obvious means, prior to its official release date. It is - we can guarantee - a wonderful single reeler that is quite worth the price of admission in itself.

"THE FIGHTING EAGLE" (Pathé Exchanges Inc., 1927)


The Cast: Edna May Girard (Rod La Rocque); Countesse de Lumay (Phyllis Haver); Talleyrand (Sam de Grasse); Franceline Herz (Sally Rand); Bonaparte (Max Baerany).

"THE FIGHTING EAGLE" not only provides an interesting example of the typical Rod La Rocque vehicle but more important - it shows that real production values were packed into the high quality "programmers" of the twenties, while certainly not epic in proportion, it is produced on a fairly large scale, with elaborate sets and a meticulous attention to detail. It is equivalent today (in terms of boxoffice importance) - films like "The Highwaysman", "It Smolders Forth" - are quite indistinguishable inferior, and in fact even the alleged "specials" (Bob Rigby, "Bodome and the Boys", "Flames and the Arrow") are far below the standard set by "The Fighting Eagle".

In mood it very much resembles the recent French success, "Run Man to Tulips" - it is rollicking, Patagonian material, mood with zest and vigor, and combining a delightful tongue-in-cheek approach with all its full-blooded action.

The film was made by Cecil B. De Mille's short-lived production company, releasing through Pathé. DeMille set up his headquarters at the Anas Studio on Washington Boulevard in Culver City (now the RKO Pathé studio). It was also the centre of production of many Selznick films, including "Ciao With The Wind". Here DeMille turned out a fine group of productions, two of the most famous being "The Volga Boatmen" and "The King of Kings". Donald Crisp (formerly an actor, a student of Griffith, and later of course, exclusively an actor again) was regarded as a good, popular director during the twenties, and had made such films as "Don Q, Son of Zorro", "Young April" and "Dress Parade". Rod La Rocque had made his screen debut with Rosemary in Chicago, later starring in "The Ten Commandments" and other DeMille epics prior to "The Fighting Eagle". Lebanon's "Forbidden Paradise" and of course "Walt's Clothing" are two of his best-known credits. He is still happily married to Vilma Banky. No longer active in films, he conducts a prosperous real estate business. The lovely Phyllis Haver needs no introduction to our members, who will remember her from "The Fighting Coward" and "What Price Glory?" Last year.
C. Gardner Sullivan, the supervisor, was one of the screen’s first real scenario writers and at one time, Dace’s right-hand man. (See last month’s notes for “The Return of Drew Egan”). Arthur Miller, the cameraman, had also been with the New York Motion Picture Company (the parent organization that Dace belonged to) as assistant to Fred J. Balshofer. Now in semi-retirement, and dabbling in TV work, Miller has an interesting list of screen credits including “Forever” with Wallace Reid, “The Fools of Fate,” “The Purloined Heart” and three Academy Award winners – “You Can’t Have My Valley”, “The Song of Bernadette” and “Annie and the King of Siam”.

Sun de Grasse (who died a few weeks ago) was one of the best of the silent villains. His “Guy of Gistrum” in Fairbanks’ “Robin Hood” is probably one of the best “heavy” performances that any player has ever given. He was, incidentally, the brother of director Joseph DeGrasse and the uncle of cameraman Robert DeGrasse.

Approximate running times:  
FROM THE HANGER TO THE CROSS .......... 55 minutes
THE FIGHTING EAGLE .......... 75 minutes

OUR NEXT PROGRAM --- Tuesday, March 2nd., at 7:30 p.m. ---

A unique program of American films from the twenties ---

COLLEEN MOORE and JACK HULHALL in “HUMANS AND KINEMES” (First National, 1927) with Sam Hardy, C. E. Lee and Minxy Rooney. Produced and directed by Alirector Santell. Story and action by C. E. Wilson; comedy construction -- Harnya Leboy.

The names connected with this delightful item give some indication of its quality. A really charming comedy-drama, it features some fascinating location work in New York, and rates as one of Colleen Moore’s most interesting subjects.

“HENSON AT CALIFORNIA” -- A Universal Junior Jewel Picture, presented by Carl Laemmle jr., and directed by Harry Edwards. With George Lewis and Dorothy Gulliver.

One of Universal’s popular “The Collegians” series - a rare item, and a thoroughly enjoyable one.

“THE LEATHERPUNCHERS” (Round Two) -- A Universal Jewel Picture, presented by Carl Laemmle jr., and directed by Harry Pollard. Based on the popular Colliers Magazine stories by H.C. Witwer, and filmed here in New York by the Knickerbocker Pickplay Co. Starring Reginald Denny.

We have beautiful toned prints on these subjects, and intend to add one more short comedy.

COMMITTEE OF THE FILM SOCIETY: Charles Turner (Chairman); Robert G. Youngson; Warren Rothenberg; Herman C. Neinberg; William E. Branson (Program Notes).