THE NEW THEODORE HUFF MEMORIAL FILM SOCIETY
Tuesday June 21st at 8:00 pm,
The Marine Room, 5th floor,
Capitol Hotel, 8th Avenue & 51st Street, New York City.

CLARA BOW
"MY LADY OF WHIMS"
THE JAZZ AGE
and
THE FLAMING TWENTIES!

Produced by Arrow Films (1925) for States rights distribution
Directed by Dallas H. Fitzgerald; scenario by Dorothy Schroeder from the story "Protecting Prue" by Edgar Franklin. Camera: Jack Young.
The Cast:
Prudence Severn (CLARA BOW); Bartley Greer (Donald Keith); Wayne Leigh (Carmella Gerghy); Dick Flynn (Lee Moran);
Holf (Francis MacDonald)

"WALKING BACK" (1928)
A Cecil B. DeMille production for Pathe, directed by Rupert Julian.
Scenario by Monte Katterjohn from the story "A Ride in the Country" by George Kibbe Turner; photography by Joe Nescall; editor - Claude Berkeley.
The Cast: Patay Schuyler (SUE CAROL);
Smoke Thatcher (Richard Walling);
Beaut Thibaut (Ivan Lebedeff);
Thatcher sr. (Robert Edeson); Mrs Thatcher (Jane Veeckley); Mrs. Schuyler (Florence Turner); Gyp (James Bradbury sr.) Pat Masters (Arthur Rankin); crooks (George E. Stone and Billy Sullivan).
"My Lady of Whims"

When thinking of the great boxoffice names of the twenties, one automatically places Clara Bow along with the select few — Garbo, Gilbert, Valentino, Chapay, Novarro — in really typifying that era. Yet strangely, no "classic" Bow film ever seems to have been made — or if it was, it has long since vanished into the sands of time. Garbo and Gilbert had "Flesh and the Devil," just as in a later era Harer had "Bombeball," Bow, it seems, made a never-ending stream of "typical Bow vehicles," all of which were no typical that name seems to stand above all the others. Nostalgia and empty-headed columnists seem to have relegated "It" to the honored position of "Bow vehicle," a classification it hardly deserves. Today this constantly-touted film appears as just one gigantic hunk of nothing, devoid of pop and pace, and a thorough waste of the talents of Clara, Anthony Forno and Gary Cooper.

"My Lady of Whims" was an independent film, made before Bow got into her hotchpotch stride at Paramount. Nevertheless it remains as a solid cross-section of the sort of vehicle that Clara was ruminating through in those days. Doubtless it is better than many, and certainly gives the young star more scope than did, for example, Paramount's "Dancing Mothers" (screened by this society a year or two ago). At the same time it is certainly not the best of Bow either; if memory is not too clouded with nostalgia, "Ladies of the Mob" in which she cavorted with Richard Arlen under William Wellman's direction, was slightly better.

When "My Lady of Whims" hit the market, exhibitors were up to their ears in flapper frolics — from the big polished sets at Metro and Paramount down to the exploitation cheapies like "Daughters of Desire," put out by Excellent Pictures Corp. At the time, it understandably created no great furor. The Film Daily, a leading trade paper, accused it of being a none too subtle relash of "We Moderns," the only difference being in switching the honeymoon venue from an airship to a yacht. It went on to say however: "Clara Bow is good, working hard and effectively, as the jazz-and-flapper ... she injects a lot of pep into the bacal proceedings. . . . the film has sufficient jazz scenes and "art" atmosphere to please sensation lovers." Suggesting a selling approach, the review winds up: "You can appeal strongly to flappers with this, for it has the elements they never tire of."

The weakest element of "My Lady of Whims" is undoubtedly its plot, which is in somewhat vague and lacking in motivation. However, with Clara once again as the carefree flapper defying family convention to live in Greenwich Village artists' colony under the threat of constant seduction from Francis McDonald, we — in 1925 — needn't be concerned too much about "motivation". The print itself is a thing of joy, and unlike most old 16mm prints which used at most two tints throughout, this one enters properly into the spirit of gay abandon and uses four tints — quite indiscriminately but it is added! Moving from one room to another, one leaves behind a pleasing amber tint to be confronted with a seductive rose tint! The blue hues used for the night scenes are so bright and cheerful that they completely nullify their purpose. . . . but rather a tint any day, than a dull filter.

For the record, some of Clara's better-known films were: FREE TO LOVE, CHILDREN OF DIVORCE, KID BOOTS, ROUGH HOUSE ROSE, THE WILD PARTY, THE FIRES OF THE WILD PARTY (with the names Jean Arthur and Jean Harlow also in attendance) KICK IT, THIRLE NIGHT, LOVE IN THE KITCHEN, DEVIL AND THE BRIDE, CALL US SAVAGE, Clara first attracted attention in Elmer Clifton's DOWN TO THE SEA IN SHIPS, and was promptly signed up by independent producer B.P. Schulberg who put her into a series of independent vehicles that included "The Plastic Age" with Henry B. Walthall — and newcomer Clark Gable. Schulberg, a former Paramount man, returned to tins studio in 1925 and Clara followed soon after.

Dallin M. Fitzgerald, the director, was a competent and prolific if indistinguished director, a former stage actor who had entered films in 1910, and had directed such luminaries as May McAvoy, Beatrice Lillie and Vida bowl.

In closing, let's quote without comment — a few glorious paragraphs from Jim Tully's "The Return of Clara Bow" published in the New Movie Magazine of December, 1939, on the occasion of her comeback. (Clara had "married cowboy star Rex Bell, planned a big comeback with six movies a year . . . a comeback also, that never quite came off). On her early life, Tully writes:

"Her father was a day laborer, her mother a woman who died young. Her childhood was turbulent and full of pain. Like many proud people, she fought sorrow with belligerence instead of calm. Of her screen test: "Little Cinderella Bow stood bravely among her better-dressed competitors. The girls were handled a letter and asked to act as if it contained bad news. Clara waited many hours before her turn came. The emotionally-sensitive girl watched many go through the motions of grief. With long red hair falling on her shoulders, the little toehay smoothed her wrinkled calico frock and stood before the masters of her destiny. She took the letter carelessly, looked at it nonchalantly, while the judges and all in the room waited. There followed an aimless silence. . . ."
The juvenile Doc's tears came slowly as she read the letter. The paper quivered in her trembling hands. She looked about as if death were calling. The letter fell to the floor. A spasm of wild grief swept through the room. Contesting girls and judges looked in astonishment at one another. A great actress was among them. Her competitors fell away from her like friends from the destitute. She was promised a mention picture contract — and given an evening gown. Both signified first prize. When her father asked her how she happened to win, she replied:

"I thought of mother".

Tully goes on to tell how after her initial triumph in movies, Clara came home. "On her first night home, Clara awoke from a sound sleep. The light from the street made a long knife gleam above her. With startled eyes, she saw her mother's wild expression and disheveled appearance. The knife came down as Clara grappled with her insane mother. She was overpowered with difficulty. On her comeback plans; "She hopes to make six more films, and then retire to a million acre ranch where grease paint is no more, and the only stars visible, except herself, are those that glitter in the far-off sky."

"WALKING BACK"

"Another melodrama of the jazzy younger generation" reported Variety in July of 1928. "They were making these two years ago on the same pattern," states Film Daily, "this one is made for the flapper and college vote. Sue Carol looks like a real comer. Richard Waring does well as the youthful hero and creates really a fine part of the typical youth of today. Night club scenes give the usual jazz stuff with youth running riot."

Seeing this fast, exciting film today, it is hard to understand the casual, apathetic reviews of the day, the above two quotes being typical. All agreed that it was a good film — but felt that the jazz era was being a little overdone by Hollywood, and that one film more or less made but little difference. And this was already several months before the advent of MGM's fabulous "Our Dancing Daughters", quite certainly one of the best of all the films on the filming twenties.

Elsewhere in these notes, Richard Kraft has commented at some length on the highlights of this film so I will not cover the same ground twice. Even apart from these ingredients however, the film has two very prominent points of perhaps greater interest today then then. In a way, it heralds the end of the jazz age — and the beginning of the gangster epoch. The closing reels bring in a bank hold-up and car chase sequence which anticipate by a year or two the bullet-ridden bonanzas of gangster epics at Warner Brothers. (Indeed, Anton Grot, who did the sets for this film, worked also on "Little Caesar" and others — and the similarities are obvious). True, the clipped, repetitive speech of the gangsters (rather too time-consuming when translated into subtitles) dates rather badly today — due of course to a quarter of a century of imitation. The dialogue exchanges between gang boss Ivan Ledeoff and henchman George B. Stone are no identically with those between the two assassins in Hangover's "The Killers" that obviously there is some plagiarism involved here! Just who did the lifting is a mute point, since we're not sure when Mr. H wrote his opus.

The second point of interest lies in the comparison of this film with current "delineancy" subjects such as "The Wild One" and "The Blackboard Jungle". Then, as now, Hollywood softened the punch with a weak-sister solution. "Godless - or graceless?" asked a subtitle early in the film, during a montage of cages of destruction and youth running wild. The closing reels attribute it all to high spirits however, and tell us that these "kids" are "the salt of the earth!" In one respect, the facile for "givenness of the final reel is more acceptable in the film of the twenties than in the film of today. Then at least, reckless youth seemed bent on destroying only itself; today the menace is more widespread and affects others. However, aside from calling attention to this contrast in the film themselves, this obviously is not an issue for discussion in program notes.

"Walking Back" is still as full of zing and vibrant life as it ever was. One regrets the wakening of effect in the closing half-a-reel — but remains thankful for the preceding four and a half. Those of you who lived through this hectic era will of course find it full of nostalgia, with its flippancy in advertising slogans of the day ("Be nonchalant ... Light a Murell!" and its wonderfully enticing joists ("Pomeron Charlie's .. Leap In, Leap Out!" etc).

Sue Carol proves once again what a delightful and assured player she was — active well into the sound period, she of course retired from the screen and concentrated on managing the career of her husband, Sam Ladd. Director Rupert Julian has always been somewhat of a "mystery. How much of "Harry Go Round" was his, and how much Stroheim's? "Phantom of the Opera", one of his biggest chores, somehow wasn't nearly the film it should have been, and one can only conjecture as to how it might have turned out had, say, Tod Browning been at the
COMING PROGRAMS:

July 19: JACK PACE in a pleasing version of TOM SAWER, directed by William Desmond Taylor for Paramount in 1917; plus JOHNNY GORDON and "Dynamite" the boxer-dog in "THE WOLF'S TRAIL", a rip-roaring Universal gloss-copy of 1927, directed by Francis Ford. Plus two fine Seminets.

August 16: THE SILENT SERIAL ... a complete program devoted to the silent chapter plays from 1912 to 1930.

Also definitely scheduled for the near future are: William K. Howard's A SHIP COMES IN with Ralph Schildkraut; JOHN BARKHORNE with Camilla Horn and Louis Wolheim in TENDER, a Sam Taylor production from a Steinbeck script; Ludwig Berger's CINDERELLA: a request "repeat" program consisting of DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS in THE THREE MUSKETEERS and Fritz Lang's SPIRIT OF THE WOLF; William Boyd and Bessie Love in DRESS PARADE, directed by Donald Crisp; Harry Carey and Fred Kohler in THE RAINFOREST; Colleen Moore and Harry Langdon in ELIA CUSTER: William Boyd, Suzy Carol, Alan Hale, Alberta Vaughn in SKYSCRAPERS; Wallace Beery, Raymond Hatton, Harry Brian and Richard Arlen in BEHIND THE FRONT: DOMINEY AND SONS, an interesting British version of 1917; THE CONFESSION with Henry B. Walthall; CAIN AND ABEL, a recently rediscovered Russian masterwork; Maurice Tourneur's LORNA DOONE with Hedges Hallam, John Bowery; THAT CERTAIN THING, a silent Cagney production with Marie Prevost; Samler's FRAMENT OF AN EMPIRE: BOOCHERI with Harry B. Walthall ... and of course as many wonderful old comedies as we can find!

COMMITTEE OF THE FILM SOCIETY:

Dorothy Lovell (to whom we are indebted for the art work on our cover): Richard Kast, Edward Connor and William K. Everson.

Program notes and enquiries: W. K. Everson, Manhattan Towers Hotel, 2166 Broadway, New York 2.

THOUGHTS IN PASSING:

Our thanks to Richard Kast for his enjoyable recap of the fabulous twenties which appears on the subsequent pages. We're always pleased to print articles of this type from members who feel that they have something worth saying, and we guarantee no shortening or re-editing ... while reserving the right to add one or two editorial comments in this column if it seems necessary. Since added pages double the postage and paper expense, we're also grateful to Dick for his contribution to the postage bill on this issue .... I'm sure you'll all be glad to know that our last two shows have been quite successful and helped to pay off some of the mortgages on previous programs. Slightly but surely we're creeping into the black, and if a few die-hard fans decide to stay in New York during the summer months we hope to remain that way .... thanks anyway, to our old faithfuls and our new members who have found our shows worthwhile ....

A very mild, not altogether dissenting, comment on Mr. Kast's recollections of the twenties, colored no doubt by nostalgic memories of his own rain-raising. I can't help feeling that Dick has perhaps pre-dated the demise of the "gentleman" hero. His references to Bushman as a heavy presumably stem mainly from "Ben Hur" - yet after that, Bushman did revert to type on occasion and in such films as "The Marriage Clause" was very much the upright, honorable leading man. What of Richard Barthelmess and Lewis Stone, of the small-town boys (William Collier Jr., the still active Charles Ray) and the always dependable William Boyd? Certainly the Bushman and started ... but it didn't really reach its culmination until the forties, when the boorish "heroes" of Hitchcock and Kirk Douglas began to lord it over the equally boorish "heroes" of Elizabeth Scott and Veronica Lake.

Nice to note that DeMille has found a spot for Julia Faye in "The Ten Commandments" ... and frustrating to record that the Barrymore-Jephson "A Bill of Divorcement" was recently showing in Hollywood for a benefit performance only .... "M.C. R.F. raisin' this instead of hankering prints of "Follow the Fleet" .... recently we watched Rudy Rate shooting "Miracle in the Rain" (a black-and-white subject) and were impressed to note how little he has allowed himself to be influenced by the CinemaScope age .... he broke up his sequences into short, pointed shots, kept his camera on the move ... and talked about Reyer, still his idol, at the drop of a hat .... let's hope that "Miracle" more resembles "Joanne Diare" than "Miracle of the Bells"!

(Our apologies for the rather chaotic state of the top of this page; serious damage to the sten教 after typewig made it necessary to make a few cuts and utilize the little space that was left.)