
This Rutianian romance is an interesting and enjoyable feature, produced here in the East, during a period somewhat sparsely represented in film history today. That frankly is our main reason for screening it, since it obviously has no notable pretensions to art. On the whole, it's a handsome production, with considerable production values in the way of good sets, clean photography, and well-handled mob scenes. However, it is unsophisticated in the extreme; in fact its sophistication can be measured by its delightful subtitles, one of which rather naively tells us: "One day there was a conspiracy". Another charming touch -- a peasant girl bearing the rather unlikely name of "Lesbia"! If it seems to have rather more intrigue and romance than swashbuckling action, it's because it is, after all, a vehicle for Alice Brady. Alice, looking, it must be admitted, rather homely, plays a princess who poses as a peasant in order to go among her people and discover the cause of their unrest. Montague Love, who made such a wonderful villain in "Son of the Sheik", "Don Juan", "Night of Love" and other adventures of the 20's, is already (in 1916) running true to form as the would-be usurper of both Miss Brady's throne, and her virtue. (Homeliness was apparently no protection against assault in silent movies; in fact the record seems to show that villains would ignore scores of entrancing dancing girls for the sake of one stubborn heroine, whose virtue apparently outbalanced her lack of other assets!) Director-to-be Irving Cummings appears as the hero, who, in a tradition broken only by Stanley Kubrick's recent "Paths of Glory", refuses the white bandage as he faces a firing squad. Ultimately of course, good old democracy triumphs and the hapless villain is beaten to a pulp by "the people".

It should be pointed out that this print is shy of the original running time by a little over half-a-reel. The 35mm print from which this print derives was beginning to deteriorate fast, and no negative could be made of certain sections. Fortunately these do not upset the continuity to any marked degree, and the addition of one or two new irisings and dissolves helps to cover what would otherwise be jump cuts. For the record, here is a listing of the missing footage: some scenes at the very beginning, establishing the King and Queen as being beloved by the people, but plotted against by secret factions; a sequence in which Montague Love finds Alice Brady a prisoner in her own dungeons, promises to a tter her release, and then does nothing; and also a sequence when three rather effete noblemen propose marriage to her in the throne-room. The first two of these were in a state of (filmic) decay, and thus only the third -- a type somewhat resembling Baron Sadoja in "The Merry Widow" -- remains.

CHARLES RAY

It has been a long time since we ran a Charles Ray film (other than the un-typical "In The Tennessee Hills"), and this seemed like a good time for a re-evaluation. We're running, together, one of his early two-reelers for
Ince, before he had developed his "Country Boy" personality, and of course one of the most typical of those later pieces of sentimental Americana.

"THE GANGSTERS AND THE GIRL"  
(Scott Sidney, 1914) Directed by 
(Ray Bee) Scott Sidney, produced by Thomas H. Ince; with 

Although not as tightly-knit as 1912's "The Musketeers of Pig Alley", and certainly lacking both the fine photographic compositions and well developed characterizations of that earlier film, "The Gangsters and the Girl" is nevertheless a fast-moving and actionful little thriller. Made in less than ten days, the film has some remarkable technical finesse, including a fine split-screen effect, and a rapid change of set and locale. Its plot, of the detective who joins the gang to round them up, later became standard fare in countless B thrillers and westerns -- many of them written by Betty Burbridge, who has the feminine lead. (Miss Burbridge was especially active at Republic in the 30's, turning out one "3 Mesquiteers" and Gene Autry script after another. In the 40's, changing the names of the characters, she sold many of the same stories over again to a presumably unaware Monogram!) Charles Ray seems rather too young and slight to be convincing as the detective hero; more convincing is Tom Ince himself, who has a bit as one of the detectives in an earlier portion of the film.

(INTERMISSION)

"SWEET ADELINE"  
(Charles Ray Productions-Chadwick Pictures, 1925) Directed by 
Jerome Storm; story and continuity by Charles E. Banks; 
starring CHARLES RAY with Gertrude Olmstead, Jack Clifford, Ida Lewis, Frank 
Austin, J.P. Lockney, Gertrude Short, Theodore Lorch, Johnny Hall.

Made in 1925 for Ray's own production company, and with lovely Gertrude Olmstead in the title role, this is certainly as typical a Ray vehicle as one could ask for -- even though Ray's popularity was rapidly on the wane at the time. The lovable small-town-hick of Ray was as out-of-date in the jazz age as was Fairbanks' go-getting All American. Fairbanks had realised it, and switched to what the customers wanted -- even if it wasn't what he did best. Ray, who from all accounts was rather conceived and stubborn, either didn't realise it or wouldn't admit it, and kept right on as per formula. It was a formula that didn't last very much longer than this picture. It's a shrewdly simple tale that he tells here, guaranteed to give the Ray fans just what they wanted -- or at least what Ray thought they still wanted: Charles taking it on the chin from a bullying elder-brother and finally turning on him in a good fight scene (for some of this fight they slowed the cameras down to make it look faster and rougher); romancing sheepishly on a hayride, and finally making good in the big city just in time to pay off the mortgage. Other than the big fight scene, the only really exciting sequence is an episode when Grandpa's wheel chair (with Cramps in it) races away downhill towards a precipice. But, despite its generally uneventful pattern, it moves pleasantly along against sunny and well-photographed rural backgrounds. The sudden happy ending (in which Ray achieves fame as a singer) was typical of the rather arbitrary ways in which Ray often brought his films to a conclusion by "proving" himself. In "The Pinch Hitter", for example, the erstwhile baseball boob manages to win the game -- at the last moment -- with hitherto hidden talent. One can accept his "talent" as a singer with only mild eyebrow raising because of the lack of a sound-track; not so his success as a "dancer" in "The Clog-Hopper", wherein Ray's stomping would seem to be well within the range of anyone with at least one leg. The screen character Ray evolved was a very curious one. It was Harold Lloyd -- but without Lloyd's self-confidence or basic worth. Ray is simple and self-sacrificing almost to