"THE FAILURE" (American Biograph, 1911) One reel; directed by D.W. Griffith; starring Wilfrid Lucas, Dorothy Bernard and Lily Cahill, with Donald Crisp, Charles West and Joseph Graybill among the extras.

So many of Griffith's Biograph shorts are justly famous for their cutting, spectacle, artistic and other innovations, that far too many of the one-reelers that represent nothing more than good solid film-making have been completely ignored. Our two Griffiths on today's program are typical: well above average subjects for their time, quite beautifully photographed, and effectively underplayed, but with a stress on story rather than technique. "The Failure" is a well done little film, with particularly good performances from the two women. Lily Cahill, incidentally, was one of the first society debutantes to go into films. The film is minus its original titles, but none seem to be needed, as it tells its story quite eloquently. We need only explain that the letter that Wilfrid Lucas receives towards the end of the film is to tell him that he has inherited his uncle's farm. Penniless, he is unable to do anything about it - until the saloon girl, Dorothy Bernard, comes to his aid. Much of the film was shot around Fort Lee, and there is one wonderful long shot of Fort Lee's Main Street in 1911 -- looking something like a frontier street from an Ince western!

"THROUGH DARKENED VALES" (American Biograph, 1912) One reel; directed by D.W. Griffith; starring Blanche Sweet, Charles West and Joseph Graybill, with Grace Henderson, Kate Bruce, Fred Mace.

Likewise filmed around Fort Lee, "Through Darkened Vales" is a very moving and unusual little romance. Griffith utilised several teams of players at this time; Lillian Gish & Walter Miller, Mae Marsh and Robert Harron, and, as in this film, Blanche Sweet and Charles West. Reputedly D.W. was not as fond of Blanche as of Lillian, Mae, and some of his other stars, but she and Charles West, as a team, turn up in some of his best early pictures - among them "The Battle" and "The Last Drop of Water".

"WATER WAGONS" (Mack Sennett-Pathe, 1926) 2 reels; directed by Del Lord; with Sid Smith, Madeleine Hurlock, Andy Clyde.

Sid Smith always seemed one of the unfunniest of the Sennett comedians - and yet the films he was involved in were often among Sennett's best. This is one of the fastest of all the Sennett's of the 20's; little more than a long chase, by rail, road and water, interspersed with some really violent slapstick, and some racial gags that certainly wouldn't get by today! Incidentally, for reasons best known to Del Lord, Andy Clyde plays two different roles within the same film.

INTERMISSION

"THE MOLLYCODDLE" (United Artists, 1920) 6 reels; directed by Victor Fleming Story by Harold MacGrath; edited by Tom J. Gerahty; Assistant Director - Theodore Reed; photographed by William McGann and Harry Thorpe; Art Director: Edward Langley; Technical effects by Robert Fairbanks.

Starring DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS, with Wallace Beery, Adele Farrington, Betty Bouton, Ruth Renick, Morris Hughes, George Stewart, Paul Burns, Bull Montana, Charles Stevens.
"The Mollycoddle" was, in Ted Huff's opinion, Doug's best picture. Personally I don't share that opinion, and consider it one of the weaker of his non-costume adventures (though automatically superior to all of the swashbucklers that followed it). But what matter? Any Fairbanks of this period was a thorough delight, and if "The Mollycoddle" falls short of "When the Clouds Roll By", it's still an enchanting mixture of sprightly comedy and lively action, with an amusing cartoon sequence thrown in for good measure. Doug's penchant for lengthy, over-wordy titles is well in evidence too -- with an occasional "shock" gag title that really pays off.

Following his fine Artcraft (Paramount) series, "The Mollycoddle" marked the third of Doug's UA group. ("His Majesty the American" and "When the Clouds Roll By" preceded it). It represented almost the end of the old Doug; "The Mark of Zorro" followed it, and apart from "The Nut" (made before Doug was sure of the success of "Zorro"), it was to be nothing but swashbucklers from now on. In a sense then, "The Mollycoddle" is the end of a period for Fairbanks -- a period that most of us seem to think was his peak, and certainly a sprightlier and more enjoyable period than was offered by his heavy and pretentious swashbucklers.

"The Mollycoddle" starts off in fine fashion, with a typical zippy opening. Then it switches its style (though not its peppy pacing) to comedy for several reels, and doesn't get back to the action and excitement until the last two reels, which have some fine stunt work and an astonishing fight between Doug and Wally Beery - starting atop a mountain, and finishing in a raging torrent. There's a good avalanche thrown in for good measure too! The leap from cliff to tree is doubled for Doug by Dick Talmadge, but most of the other action seems to be handled by Doug himself. In any event, with his cheeky self-assurance, and his grace, it's Doug's show all the way. No one else matters at all, which is as it should be, though Beery makes a good villain, and Charles Stevens, Doug's old pal, here described in a title as "a college Indian gone wrong", makes an ever-reliable henchman to the villainy. There are echoes of Doug's previous films not only in the basic plot (The Easterner becoming a he-man out West) but also in individual scenes (the delightful picture of a New York peopled by cowboys, the smoking by-play with the Indians), but there's nothing routine or assembly-line about "The Mollycoddle". Thanks mainly to Doug, it's a delight from beginning to end. Our print is quite complete, but a dupe of only fair quality, so that the original photographic quality (especially in the climactic chase sequences) is somewhat dimmed. However, since it hasn't been shown in NY for a great many years, it is largely unknown to silent film devotees who have been converted to the cause over the past decade, and thus any print is well worthy of revival. We hope you'll enjoy it.

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Program Notes & Enquiries: Wm. K. Everson, Bradford Hotel, 210 W. 70th St., NYC 23 Committee of the film society: Edward S. Gorey, Charles Shibuk, Dorothy Lovell

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Next Program: Tuesday Sept. 23rd at 7.30. CHAPLIN PROGRAM

THE KID; THE GOLD RUSH (3 reel condensation); RECREATION.