"THE AFFAIR AT RAYNOR'S" (Edison, 1912) One reel; starring Mary Fuller.

Episode four in Edison's "What Happened to Mary" series, "The Affair at Raynor's" is rather tame in terms of melodrama or incident, but it's an interesting and neatly done little film, with some really good photography and lighting helping to offset the quite ordinary direction (ordinary that is, for a film as late as 1912). Robert Brower, Bigelow Cooper and almost all of the familiar Edison stock company faces are on view in support of Mary Fuller.

"NAUGHTY BOY" (Educational, 1927) Two reels; directed by Charles Lamont; starring Lupino Lane with Kathryn McGuire, Wallace Lupino.

Although far from being the weakest Lane comedy that we've seen, "Naughty Boy" is the weakest that we've run at the society. However, it's still a good comedy, and possibly the exceptionally good "Montie of the Mounted" and "Movieland" caused us to set our sights too high where Lane is concerned. "Naughty Boy" is a bit labored in its middle sections, but it opens up well (with a wonderful title: ".... so mean he'd steal a dead fly from a blind spider") and winds up with a fine, and original, chase sequence. And even in between, when it lags, Lane's acrobatic bits of business keep it alive.

TOPICAL BUDGET - 1921 ½ reel

This British newsreel of 1921 offers some really rare and interesting shots of Chaplin on his trip to England - from a farewell in NY, with Doug and Mary there to see him off, to a tumultuous reception in London.

"HIS MARRIAGE WOW" (Mack Sennett-Pathe, 1924) 2 reels; starring Harry Langdon with Vernon Dent.

Most of the Sennett Langdons were curious comedies; they often contained some of the very best of all Langdon material, yet they were strangely constructed and slowly paced. Sennett slapstick and Langdon pantomime were oddly mingled; each seemed willing for the other's special talent to be as prominent as his own, with the result that there was little unity to them. One wonders how audiences reacted to them in that era of really fast comedy. "His Marriage Wow" certainly, is one of the oddest of the lot. The first (and better) half is almost 100% Langdon; the slow pacing and careful pantomime pay off well; the gags are quiet, often quite charming. In part two, the Sennett mayhem takes over - Langdon plays along with it, but seems quite mystified by it all, and makes no attempt to change his own format. The result: Langdon's long takes now seem pointless, and the slapstick, including a car chase, has no bite. Langdons are few and far between these days however, and even the basic failures, like this one, are well worthy of study. Another strange aspect of this film is the normally jovial Vernon Dent, here, with grim makeup, playing a character that is a physical composite of Wegener's Golem and Chaney's Phantom.


One of the better Robert Youngson shorts, this one-reel compilation of newsreel footage from the 20's and early 30's has some fine footage on Byrd, Clarence Darrow and other political and public figures of those eras -- with some of the most diverting moments of all coming from George Bernard Shaw.

--- Intermission ---
"TEN NIGHTS IN A BAR ROOM" (Willis Kent Productions, 1930)

Directed by William O'Connor; cameraman - Vernon Walker;
screenplay by Norton S. Parker; assistant director: A.L. Schoefer.

The Cast: Joe Morgan (WILLIAM FARNUM); Simon Slade (TOM SANTSCHI); Mary
(Patty Lou Lynch); Dr. Romaine (Robert Frazer); Ann Slade (Phyllis Barrington)
Sarah Morgan (Rosemary Theby); Frank Slade (John Darrow); Bartender (Lionel
Belmore); Barfly (Thomas Jefferson); Gambler (Frank Leigh); Grandma Morgan
(Kathryn Clare Ward) Schoolteacher (Sheila Mannors); Cook (Fern Emmet)
Porter (Harry Todd); Old Hag (Daisy Belmore); Singer (John Upman).

Although revived in later years as a stunt attraction and regarded as being
good for laughs and little else, in 1930 this authentic old melodrama was
played straight -- and was so considered. In an era when the screen had just
learned to talk, and the accent was on smart dialogue plays, it's rather
wonderful to think of this old barnstormer being dusted off, treated with
respect and reverence, and turned into a movie that moved far more than many
of the static and dull films being turned out on much bigger budgets and by
much bigger companies. And it's wonderful too, to find all the old-timers -
Farnum and Santschi especially of course - being given their head in such a
production.

One can't claim too much artistry for the film, apart from certain
performances. William O'Connor, the director, was frankly a hack and a
comparatively new one at that; he'd been a property man, an assistant
cameraman and an assistant director, all within a few years. However,
direction fortunately wasn't of paramount importance here. There were other
factors - honest sentiment, good full-blooded writing, and above all, William
Farnum. What a joy it is to see some honest-to-God acting again - all the
stops out, vigorous, never once "ham", yet always a "performance" with never
a hint of underplaying. While everyone is well in character, it's Farnum's
really fine performance that is the whole show. His moments of pathos are
really intensely moving.

A prohibition-era film, its preachment against drink probably seemed more old-
fashioned then than it does now. It's a theme that has largely vanished from
the movies today (save in the "confession" stories of Diana Barrymore, Lillian
Roth et al), but in the silents it saw yeoman service, from such early
Griffith Biographies as "What Dink Did" (another variation on this same play)
and "The Dunkard's Reformation" right through to such early talkies as this
one and Griffith's "The Struggle". Presumably when drinking was legal again,
it was no longer fashionable to warn you not to do what the law prohibited you
from doing anyway.

There's a lot of nostalgia in "10 Nights" - the old-fashioned score, the
players, the fine old bar-room set - and it more than makes up for the film's
other defects. Best of all of course is the opportunity to see Farnum and
Santschi back in harness again. Almost from the beginning, the film builds to
a mighty scrap between the two antagonists of 1914's "The Spoilers" -- and
when it comes, it's a lulu. Disregarding the years in between, Bill and Tom
square off, determined to give the customers their money's worth, and show that
they can still do it. It makes a tremendously satisfying - in a nostalgic as
well as a dramatic sense - climax to a darned good show.

As to the film's original appeal, it's interesting I think to note this quote
from the original pressbook:

"AN ABSOLUTE NATURAL. "Ten Nights in a Bar Room" will bring patrons to the
theatres who haven't been there since "The Ten Commandments". Cooperation is
certain from the WCTU and other temperance leagues. Ministers will announce
it from their pulpits. Teachers will send their pupils. Churches will cooperate.

and more of the same ilk. 

------------------------ Wm. K. Everson ------------------------