"The Race to New York" (Edison, 1913) One reel Starring MARY FULLER, with Edna Flugrath, Herbert Prior, Charles Ogle.

Barry O'Moore.

The 11th installment of the series "What Happened to Mary", "The Race to New York" seems to be a successor by one or two chapters to "The Way to the Underworld", which we ran not too long ago. There's less plot and more movement in this one and a climax which, although not yet at the cliff-hanger stage, is a step in that direction. Photographically, it is most pleasing, with some fine seascapes and pleasant rural New Jersey exteriors; camera compositions are often extremely good, but dramatically they are weakened by having the set-ups held far too long. However, in its overall pacing (including some quite tense cross-cutting towards the end) it is definitely a notch above the usual Edison output of the time.

"Cowboy Ambrose" (Sunshine Comedies, 1922) Two reels; with Mack Swain, Ethel Teare.

This comedy is an old Huff favorite; it's more than five years since the last time around, so it may be new to many of you. In any event, it's always a delight to see again. A meticulous remake of "His Bitter Pill", but with improvements and enlargements, "Cowboy Ambrose" is a wonderful spoof on westerns -- while in itself packing in more action and breakneck stunts than many a 5-reel western feature! Mack Swain is on top form, and not the least of the film's delights are the truly inspired titles.

"The Feast of Ishtar" (from "The Wanderer") Paramount, 1926. Dir: Raoul Walsh; starring Greta Nissen, William Collier Jr., Wallace Beery, Ernest Torrence and (not in this version) Tyrone Power sr.

2 reels

An earlier version of the recent Lanza Turner opus "The Prodigal", "The Wanderer" (in its complete form) was a lavish but not terribly eventful Biblical spectacle, hindered by having a completely unsympathetic hero. Just why he should be spared the holocaust of the film's climax (he seemed far more of a sinner than the jovial lechers who made up the supporting cast of characters!) was never really explained! Even this 2-reel version, prepared initially for smokers, parties (and worse!), and which seems somewhat inadequate for such a market, has some decidedly slow spots.

Quite certainly, the very best moments of the film are here -- even though the climax is cut a bit short. It's a big film, with some truly impressive sets and scenes, but it's big in the usual Paramount sense -- e.g., you have the uncomfortable feeling that every inch of set that was constructed is there before you, and that were the camera to waver to the left a bit, you'd see all the equipment, and maybe the cafeteria. And the special effects work betray Paramount's economy-conscious policy too. Nevertheless, it's all good fun, often very impressive (the red-tinted climax is a beauty!), and Greta Nissen, Beery and Torrence happily disregard the solemnity of it all, and turn in the kind of performances they gave in James Cruze westerns! Lovely Greta Nissen, whom we see too little of at the society, is quite literally in fine form; these three quite effortlessly steal everything away from William Collier jr.'s somewhat listless hero.

- Intermission -
"Alles für Geld" ("All for Money") U.S. title: "Fortune's Fool"
Germany, 1923. 7 reels. Dir: Reinhold Schunzel
Starring Emil Jannings, with Dagney Servaes, Walter Rilla, Reinhold Schunzel
Photographed by Alfred Hansen, L. Lippert.

Not every Jannings film was a "Variety" or a "Faust", though it is primarily by these prestige films, and his later elaborate "showcase" films -- from "The Last Command" to "The Broken Jug" -- that he is known best.
"Alles fur Geld" is a showcase in the sense that it is obviously and completely a Jannings vehicle, but it was made well before his great period, and is really only a programmer. It is however, a fairly unfamiliar Jannings -- I don't think it has had a NY showing since the last Ruff unreeling, some eight years back -- so it is perhaps as well to see it again now.

Jannings role allows him to run the gamut of just about everything -- comedy, pathos, ultra-heavy dramatics. In a sense, it parallels the far more ambitious vehicles that Edward Arnold was to make in the thirties, and its climax in particular reminds one of the inevitable Arnold fadeout -- from "Diamond Jim" and "Sutter's Gold" to "The Toast of New York" and "The Unknown Blonde".

The background is that of inflation and starvation in post-war Germany -- many of its scenes and situations pre-dating similar scenes in "The Joyless Street" and other more famous later films of the so-called "street" group. However, it remains but a background -- the scene is set, and the dramatics are merely placed against that background rather than emerging from it. Sometimes it is a little hard to know just how to take it -- the switches from drama to comedy are often quite abrupt, perhaps due partially to cutting for U.S. release. And the very much Americanised subtitles further distort the original flavor too. However, much of the comedy is quite deliberate, and has a lightness of touch quite rare in German films -- the pantomimic byplay of the duel, for example, comes off extremely well.

Photographically, the film is comparatively straightforward, though it has its interesting moments. There's a particularly elaborate iris effect during the courtroom climax. And, in contrast to most German films of the period, the film gets out of doors a great deal -- street scenes and other outdoor locations are the real thing, and not studio-bound "exterioris". Of course, this may well have been economy too. Certainly the big motor race sequence doesn't seem to be entirely necessary, since it is only used as a means to an end, so this was probably written in, largely from stock footage, in order to provide a "big" scene at minimum cost. However, whether done deliberately or solely for budgetary reasons, the outdoor scenes do help overcome the film's somewhat static quality.

The print is a dupe, but a tolerably good one. We've seen far worse. The timing is off, and facial closeups are often too harsh or burned out, this being purely a fault of the lab work and not the original photography.

Incidentally, Reinhold Schunzel who directed is also cast in a key role, as Jannings' conniving business associate.

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