NOTICE: A Change in tonight's program

As most of you are aware from experience, film society programming is a hazardous business! The Archive society for example, has really been through the mill over their past season. Through our ten year span, we've been pretty lucky, with misfortunes at a minimum and non-arriving prints at least announcing their unreliability sufficiently far ahead for us to get out a Bulletin ahead of time. But there has to be a first time for a total let-down of the system, and now it has happened to us in a most unexpected way.

Putting our print of SECOND FIDDLER on to the projector just the night before the showing, for its first unreeing in some two years, we discovered to our dismay that it had shrunk to a point where projection was well-nigh impossible. If it had run at all, it would have been with a consistent jumping and jiggling which would have made enjoyment impossible; and such projection might well have done even further damage too. Chemical treatment can work restoration if the shrinkage isn't too severe, and we hope that this will be the case with "Second Fiddler" and that we can re-schedule it for July. Since this discovery wasn't made until the night prior to the show however, there was no opportunity for a calling to advise our members. Our only consolation is that, good film though it is, it isn't a well-known film or one likely to draw a large attendance.

No-show tonight will probably disappoint those who've seen it before, and wanted to see it again, more than those who've never seen it. But to all, our apologies - and an assurance that it will be shown in July if physically possible. Our substitute film however, is quite a rarity and a delightful little item - an early Mary Pickford vehicle (1915) entitled "The Foundling". Details on page two.

"RUBBER TIRES" (Cecil B. DeMille Productions - CGA-PDC, 1927) 5 reels; produced and directed by Alan Hale; story by Frank Woods, adapted by Zelda Sears and Tay Garnett; with Bessie Love, Harrison Ford, May Robson, Erwin Connelly, Junior Coghlan and John Patrick.

A sort of pre-depression "Grapes of Wrath" (in a far-fetched sense!) "Rubber Tires" is one of those enjoyable little pictures from the 20's ("California Straight Ahead", "Hoboken to Hollywood" and "The Driving Fool" were others) dealing with the national craze for cross-country jaunts by car. It never gets to any great peaks of either excitement or comedy, but maintains a pleasant even keel throughout. Although the countryside is patently California throughout, with the Hollywood hills putting in an appearance the minute New York is left behind, there's a reasonably authentic and certainly nostalgic feel to it all. Most of the film takes place out of doors, or in auto camps; there are pleasing rural scenes, a fine old covered bridge, and a never-ending parade of old jalopies.

Bessie Love is as pleasing and vivacious as ever; how effortlessly she breathes life and charm into the most commonplace of scenes. Harrison Ford has never (to me at least) seemed a very attractive hero, and he has the same kind of heavy aggressiveness that prevented Donald Barry from really making the grade in the 20's. But the breezy, brash heroes were a rarity in the late 20's - only William Haines really succeeded with such a type - so possibly the then less stereotyped performance of Ford came over much better.

INTERMISSION
"THE FOUNDLING" (Famous Players-Mary Pickford, 1915) 5 reels

Directed by John E. O'Brien; story by Frances Marion;
photographed by H. J. Siddons; starring Mary Pickford, with Edward Martindell, Mildred Morris, Maggie Weston, Cesar Gravina.

The really great Mary Pickford period begins around late 1916, encompassing such films as "M'Liss" and "Fright of the Clan", and ends in 1921 with "Through the Back Door". The pre-1916 films are sometimes crude and disappointing photographically; the post-21 films, "Sparrows" and "My Best Girl" excepted, too ponderous, artificial, and over-burdened with production values. But what delightful films Mary made in that interim period!

"The Foundling" however, is certainly one of the best of the early ones, despite an appalling production misfortune. (Reportedly the whole negative was destroyed by fire, and the film had to be re-shot -- this therefore representing a second version, presumably made under pressure and on a shorter schedule than usual).

While better constructed than "Rags" and many of the other earlier ones, "The Foundling" is very typical of this early period. Its Cinderella story is not always worked out in the most imaginative or cinematic terms, and depends for its plot far too much on coincidence, and for its development far too much on having the audience tell things by letters, or by overheard conversations. This was something Mary did a great deal in her early films, and it often resulted in untying endings, or breakneck paces. "Heart of the Hills" at 5 reels moves like lightning, with enough plot for a 12-reeler; in contrast, "Tess of the Storm Country" (second version) runs for ten reels, and has less plot incident than the five reel first version.

Thirty seconds from the ending of "The Foundling" there seems no possible way out of the maze of complications that have been built up; then a fortuitous note explains the whole thing and winds matters up in a hurry.

There's some charming comedy, and affecting pathos. There's also some unnecessarily confusing cross-cutting between separated characters - confusing because the cutaways are often too brief and without point. Lesser directors apparently knew the value of Griffith's method, but didn't always know how to apply them! None of the characters, Mary excepted, are too well defined either, though there is a wonderfully tyrannical brute of a woman played by Maggie Weston, and named Mrs Crimes. (Gustav von Seyffertitz played a Mr. Grimes in "Sparrows"; it was a wonderful name for an all-out villain, and was presumably inspired by the chimney-sweep villain of "The Water Babies").

All in all however, "The Foundling" is a moving and accomplished little film for 1915, far far less "primitive" than so many of the non-Griffith films of the period. Mary Pickford of course is the whole show, and while in this post-Hitzer but pre-Rosher era she isn't always photographed to her best advantage, and closeups are disappointingly infrequent, she still looks lovely. Best of all, her gamín is unforced and genuine. Whether her scenes are comic or pathetic, she goes through her paces in a pleasingly straightforward manner, without any of the tricks, bits of business, grimes and phoney gestures that she applied later to simulate the youth that here was far closer to reality.

Next program - Sunday next, New Yorker Theatre, 9.30 p.m.

FRITZ LANGE's latest - THE THOUSAND EYES OF DR. MABUSE