"The Bond" (First National, 1918); Directed by and starring Charlie Chaplin; with Edna Purviance, Albert Austin; reel

Made for the Liberty Loan Committee, "The Bond" was one of several propagandist sales pitches made by prominent stars. Fairbanks, Mackford and Bill Hart likewise made similar little shorts, and in films like "The Foundling", Mary Pickford used bond-selling vignettes as prologues. Exhibitors Mary did this not in "The Foundling" but in "The Hoodlum", 1919 film, explaining that bonds were necessary in peace-time too. Chaplin's little film is good-natured and amusing, but hardly as dynamic as Mary's which had a persuasive "hard-sell" technique that today's TV commercial-writers might envy. Whether it actually sold bonds or not we don't know, but it's a curious little item, and its pictorial style of simple white silhouettes against a black backdrop is quite effective.

"The Life of an American Policeman" (Edison, 1905) Directed and photographed by Edwin S. Porter; reel

Although certainly very well photographed, and altogether quite a good little film for 1905, "Policeman" does rather tend to confirm that Porter really didn't understand what he had stumbled on to with his editing in "The Great Train Robbery" two years earlier, and certainly didn't know what to do with this device. There is no progression from that film, and if anything, this is far looser in its construction. The runaway sequence in Central Park is a perfect example of how not to build tension in a potentially exciting sequence; by doing every scene in the same static manner extreme length is shot, and letting the gallop up to the camera, the sequence is not only deprived of suspense but of reality too. However, it does allow us some generous glimpses of a clean and unloitered park, and indeed all of the film is invaluable as a pictorial record of New York at the turn of the century. The thwarted suicide at the docks is unintentionally a little amusing; hordes of policemen spring from nowhere, and as the victim is hauled from the river, you'll note that this woman who was tired of life still recognizes the propriety required by it; the river has disarrayed her skirt and left a knee exposed, so hastily she covers it before resuming her sown. In terms of story-telling, the film follows far less of a straight line than "The Great Train Robbery". The opening scene of a policeman's happy home life suggest that we are to follow one policeman through a typical day; but due to the absence of closeups, we never really get a good look at him, and in any case we soon leave him to see what other policemen are up to. Curiously too, as though the audience might weary of such austere documentary fare, the final segment in the film is a little comedy vignette showing how a policeman, almost caught sneaking a drink in a stable by the supervising police "boudman", manages to extricate himself from his predicament by a method rather involved and not sufficiently explained in the title-less sequence.

"Putting Pants on Phil" (Hal Roach-MGM, 1927) Directed by Clyde Bruckman; supervised by Leo McCarey; two reels.

It has been some five or six years since we last ran this Laurel and Hardy classic, and a revival seems well in order. One of their most unusual, and certainly one of their best, with some brilliant pantomime from Laurel, some marvellous sight gags, and a methodical construction that builds steadily, it's a delight throughout. We're deliberately saying nothing about plot since, if you haven't seen it, the sheer shock value of some of it will pay off better through knowing nothing in advance.

-INTERMISSION-

"THE SORROWS OF SATAN" (Paramount, 1926; released Feb.1927) Produced and directed by D.W. Griffith; based on the novel by Maurice Maeterlinck; screenplay by Forrest Haley; adaptation by John Russell; George Roll; photography by Harry Flashbeck; 2 reels.

The Casts: Prince Lucio de Rimanos (Adolphe Menjou); Geoffrey Teaspe (Ricardo Cortez); Princess Olga (Iva de Putti); Nasia Claire (Carol Dempster); Amelia (Ivan Lebedeff); The Maid (Marcia Harris); Lord Eton (Lawrence O'Graefy); Dancing Girl (Nellie Savage); Nasia's chum (Dorothy Hughes) and Eddie Dunn.

This print, the only-known existing one of a long-vanished Griffith film, was recently made up from the fast deteriorating original 35mm negative. Luckily the deterioration had so far reached only certain titles, and we're glad to say that the print is entirely complete, without so much as a missing frame. As always with long unavailable films, one expects a masterpiece — and nearly always, one is disappointed. "The Sorrows of Satan" is hardly top-drawer Griffith, but on the other hand neither it (nor, especially, "Sally of
Although at first there are resemblances to "Dream Street", and occasional echoes of other smaller films, "The Sorrows of Satan" is far from being a typical Griffith production. In the exotic qualities of sets and camerawork, and also in its rather slow-paced and simple story-line, it rather suggests the bizarre work of von Sternberg. I have not read Marie Corelli's novel (which is invariably described as "trashy" but which was tremendously popular and one of the most widely read books in the world when it came out in the late 19th century) which also provided the inspiration for Carl Th. Dreyer's "Leaves From Satan's Book", but I suspect that this adaptation concentrates on only a small portion of it. Since it was originally planned as a Cecil B. DeMille film, it fits very much into the "Romanela" type. The Golden Age" vogue of maximum realism inherited its script prepared for DeMille, and, anxious to make good with his imposed film under the new Paramount contract, was doubtless reluctant to tamper with it too much. Thus in terms of plot, there are few of the complications and interwoven story-threads so beloved by D.W., and one of its flaws is that there is not really enough incident to create dramatic conflict. It does seem fairly certain that the mid-way scene of the stalled car and hero just avoiding heroine was inserted by D.W. to beef up the action a little; it's an outright steal from "Orphans of the Storm"! Griffith even gives us the familiar shot through a window. In "Orphans", it's used to show the death of a woman's son. They don't work as effectively, but it's still a pretty picture! Another piece of "borrowing" is the planned dinner to which the guest never arrives - a plagiarism from "The Gold Rush" perhaps, but an extremely effective one.

There are signs that D.W. was subject to a little more supervision than he was used to, but it doesn't really seem to have hampered him. There is no comedy relief at all, but when one thinks how Creighton Hale could have messed this up, that is an asset. The cutting is generally slick, with fewer non-matching cuts and overlaps than usual. And the lighting and set-construction does show that Carl Th. Dreyer was big in 1924. But because the work was known, the scenes were generally abandoned, Mamareck studio, "The Sorrows of Satan" was shot entirely at Paramount's Long Island studio, and some of the sets - street exteriors, a huge garden for the fate and orgy scenes - are truly immense. And photographically, even though Griffith was working without Bitter or Santov, it is a brilliant job. There is a beautifully sensual and erotic quality to the Lyra de Putti scenes (surely one of the heat and most effortless "vamp" performances ever), while the charmingly sentimental love scenes retain the warm, soft photography of the Griffith of old. (Gilles exist of Lyra de Putti in semi-nude scenes and a quite different hair-do; these scenes were never included in the U.S. release prints, and were shot just for the European market).

The generally slow pace of the film is rather heightened by some surprisingly long dialogue exchanges; at times it looks almost like a silent version of a talkie. It seems probable that the original intention, in these scenes, was to use more of the book's dialogue in its entirety. But these slow passages are few, and the polished pictorial presentation - and the infrequent but effectively used moving camera shots - prevent this talkie-illusion from dominating. As always, Griffith's characterization is more interesting than the "good" and because their arrival is delayed until the half-way mark, this further adds to the slowness of the first half. Carol Dempster (Marie Corelli is said to have based this role quite largely on herself) is again made to act, occasionally, like Mae Marsh or Lillian Gish, but less noticeably so than in "America". There are odd indications in the film that she is supposed to be pregnant as the result of a one-night liaison with the hero, but this is never made explicit, and one suspects that this element may have been largely edited out. One doesn't have too much sympathy for her or Ricardo Cortez, since both seem rather spineless individuals, and thus automatically one finds oneself rooting for the Devil and the Woman of Sin. Add to this the perfect camerawork (with camera often being set up in such a way as to give a close-up at one's elbow), the lighting and background, the way she almost always succeeds in making one's soul to the devil, but in actuality, alas, it never seems to work. I've tried several times - but perhaps because the proceeds would be turned to preserving old works like this one, the cause was deemed too holy, and thus I've never been taken up on it. But for the sake of "Sally of the Savants", "That Royle Girl" and "The Greatest Thing in Life", we'll keep trying!

-JUNE-JULY SCHEDULES WILL BE MAILED IN ABOUT A WEEK. DUE ARE JAMES WHALE'S "REMEMBER LAST NIGHT", CLARA BOW IN "MANTRAP", CARRIE'S "BROADWAY BILL", etc. etc.