As our regulars know, last month we deleted "Fast and Furious" and "Kathleen Masourney" from one of our programs in order to make room for a special screening features and transferred those two shorts until tonight's program, "Fast and Furious" and "masourney" as planned; the ad in we found we could not retain after all for this specific date, but it will be back in our hands again in a couple of weeks, and will be added to a November program.

Pressure of work has prevented our working out any kind of music for tonight's showing -- indeed, these notes are being typed just a couple of hours ahead of program time -- so we hope you'll bear with us if the ad-lib music this evening goes away at times. Thanks.

"Paris Policemen" (Gaumont, 1907) 1 reel
A charming precursor of Sennett's Keystone Cops, this is a subtle and genial globe at the laziness and corruption of Paris police force, even in the later sections of the film, when the producers are "paying tribute" to the police to make up for the earlier leg-pulling, the "tribute" is so overdone that it still constitutes pretty heavy sarcasm.

"Ambrose in a Rage" (Keystone-Mack Sennett, 1914) Director: not known With Mack Swain, Louise Fazenda. One reel
Also known as "Her Hubby Drops In", this is a typical early-period Sennett, not terribly inventive, but at least free from the incessant grimacing and unfunny pratfalls that marked so many of them. Unlike Ford Sterling - and like Oliver Hardy - Mack Swain was a comedian who could be genuinely funny and appealing with a modicum of material. He never resorts to the cavortings and posturings that Sterling used to cover up a paucity of material, and accordingly Swain's early screen character still stands up rather nicely. For the rest, it's certainly a fast-paced little film, with some nice shots of the uncluttered Venice and Santa Monica beaches, and the hills beyond, still unspoiled by gas stations, houses and motels.

"An angelic Attitude" (Selig, 1916) Written and directed by Tom Mix; starring Tom Mix and Victoria Forde; One reel
A curiously primitive and obviously partially off-the-cuff film, it's hard to realize that I've been making films for several years, that he was only a year or so away from his Fox features, and that Hart, in only two years, had made far more progress than Mix in seven years! The Seligs however were very variable, many, like this one, being just folk comedy in the Will Rogers tradition, while others were standard notioners with plenty of rough stuff for Tom. But by any standards, this is a curious and certainly a "retarded" film for 1916.

"The Switchtower" (Biograph, 1912) Directed by Tony O'Sullivan; supervised by D.W. Griffith; with Henry B. Walthall, Claire McDowell, Johnny Tanney, Lionel Barrymore, Jack Dillon, Charles West. One reel
Like O'Sullivan's "The Telephone Girl and the Lady", this little melodrama is an expert utilisation of Griffith's Biograph method, with only an occasional lapse in finesse to indicate that Griffith didn't handle it personally. The different plot elements are drawn together a little clumsily, and there's one moment as Claire McDowell leaves the frame and the camera obviously should pan with her (it doesn't, merely waiting several seconds for her to re-enter the frame again) which D.W. wouldn't have been satisfied with. But on the whole, it's a rattling good little film, well put together and nicely photographed, and with one really lovely shot of Walthall and his son watching a train depart from their switchtower vantage point. Incidentally, director O'Sullivan also plays Barrymore's chief henchman.

"Fast and Furious" (Educational-Nermaid Comedies, 1924) Directed by Norman Taurog; produced by Jack White; photographed by Barneyn McGill; with Lige Conley, Otto Fries, John Rand, Ruth Hiatt. Two reels.
The title is certainly an apt one, and "Fast and Furious" is full of so many gags and so much lively stunt work that one almost has no time to realise that everything has been stolen from somebody else. The opening comes from Doug's "Wild and Woolly", some of the later stuff from "Sherlock Jr."'s, and most of it has been lifted, somewhere along the line, from Keaton, Larry Semon and the others. Lige Conley, looking a little like an un-made-up Chaplin, is not a particularly appealing comedian, and it's really not surprising that he could
make such funny comedies and still remain obscure himself. Actually, there
are quite a few original gags in this - the egg routine especially - but
certainly all of the key slapstick is heavily derivative of Keaton & Senn.

- I n t e r m i s s i o n -

"LUCRETIA LOMBARD" (Warner Bros., 1923) Directed by Jack Conway
Scenario by Bada Bowman from a novel by Kathleen Norris;
A Harry Rapf production; cinematographer David Abel;
With Monte Blue, Irene Rich, Norma Shearer, Marc McDermott, Alex B. Francis,
John Roche, James Marcus, Lucy Beaufont, Otto Hoffman. 6 reels

Monte Blue and Irene Rich really went through the emotional mill at Warners
in the 20's, and in its triangle story and locations this film bears a striking
resemblance to another Blue-Rich film of the period, "Erse", likewise taken
from a Norris novel.

"Lucretia Lombard" is frankly soap opera schmaltz, made interesting by good
performers, handsome production values, excellent photography, and enlivened
by a somewhat unlikely but certainly spectacular climax of forest fire, a
bursting dam and a flood. This latter is all done with red tints and unusually
elaborate miniatures. Warners used much of it as stock for years - some of
it turned up in R in Tin Tin's "Glash of the Wolves" - and it certainly brings
the film to a showmanlike climax. In fact, with its marvellously larger-than-
life characters and subtitles, its complex plot twists, its nobility and its
bang-up ending, this is really the "typical" silent drama image that is always
conjured up by those who have never seen a silent! Needless to say, it's only
typical of a specific programmer breed, but so few of this breed seem to have
survived, that it's quite refreshing to come across such an enjoyable one!

Some of the titles are joys - especially one that tells us, while superimposed
over a rushing river, that "Their love was like a sweeping torrent". Marc
McDermott churns the scenery magnificently in the opening reel, a marvellous
and deliberate ham performance. Irene Rich is serene and lovely as always,
seeming to take it all seriously, and Norma Shearer, before her nose was fixed,
often looks downright unattractive. But presumably director and cameraman were
aware of her shortcomings, and do their best to push her into camera angles
which flatten her as much as possible. But it's certainly difficult to see
potential star material here, although reviewers at the time were kind to her
performance.

The original length of the film was a little over seven reels; this print, the
standard edited Kodascope version, is a little over six, and thus shy a reel or
so of footage. Curiously, the original trade reviews all complained that the
film was far too long, and afflicted with too many lingering closeups. The
"Film Daily" remarked: "The picture, like most of the current releases, runs too
long" - and this for a 71/2 reeler. Little did they know what creeping multi-
reelers lay in wait for the unwaried in the sixties! Whether the film as we
see it tonight has been carefully "trimmed" or whether there is a block out, it
is difficult to say. None of the reviews mention scenes or incidents not
included in this version, and apparently even in its original form, it started
out equally abruptly. I have a sneaking suspicion that somewhere in the dim
past I saw a version of this containing a sequence - possibly a flashback - in
which Irene Rich's innocence in the death of her husband was far more clearly
established than here. And yet there seems no way of arriving at such a
sequence, so I may well be wrong on that score. In any event, this seems to be
beyond any doubt the kind of a film where cutting isn't going to change its
values or falsify it in any way.

Certainly it's a good piece of high-class hokum with something for everybody,
although the trials and tribulations of the last reel, with the sappy valentines
Misses Rich and Shearer, do rather cry out for Fay Wray!

--- Wm. K. Everson ---

NEXT PROGRAM: Tuesday November 12th: UNION DEPOT (WB, 1932, dir. Alfred E.
Green) with Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Joan Blondell, Alan Hale.
Warner's own "Grand Hotel", but, in typical WB fashion, peopled not by ballerinas
and counts, but by con-men, floozies and a degenerate or two! Plus shorts to
be announced.

Mailings for Nov-December will go out next week.