"Harvest Hands" (Hal Roach-Fathe, 1922) Directed by James Davis
With Paul Parrott, Jobyna Ralston; one reel

This is an amiable little slapstick farce, fast-paced, lively, with new gags smoothly interlaced with the old. Our main reason for showing it however is to delve into the Parrott mystery (Charles Parrott directed the Snub Pollard comedy later in the program) which has never been given any clear-cut answers.

It has been positively established that Charles Parrott is Charlie Chase, altho it is curious that since Chase directed so much under the Charles Parrott name, that name appears in none of the standard reference books. For years it has been assumed that director James Parrott was Charlie Chase's brother -- and it may well be. But it is also a known fact that James Parrott and comic Paul Parrott are one and the same. Now, ponder these facts.

While Charlie Chase is a struggling comic at Sennett and other companies in the 1917-1920 years, there is no sign of the existence of a Paul Parrott.

In the early 20's, Paul Parrott begins making one reel comedies. His mannerisms are identical with Chase's; but his moustache is so exactly the opposite of the one that Chase was later to use, that facial characteristics seem occasionally at variance. However, while Paul Parrott is making his comedies for Roach, Charlie Chase vanishes completely.

Then, using the new character Jimmy Jump, Charlie Chase suddenly reappears. His screen character cliques. Coincidentally (?) at the same time Paul Parrott disappears -- and doesn't reappear.

Trade biographies of Charlie Chase and James Parrott are remarkably alike. If they are brothers, such details as birthdays, etc., would be alike. But there is just enough of a difference in physical details -- a few pounds in weight, a few inches in height -- to suggest that maybe some facts had been doctored to create a phoney personality.

Through the late 20's and 30's, Chase acts, occasionally directs. Parrott directs exclusively -- frequently on Chase comedies. The careers run parallel. If the two men are one and the same, there's a busy period in the early 30's when Chase is starring in his own comedies as well as directing some of the best Laurel and Hardy films.

A seeming clincher: Charlie Chase dies in 1940. Parrott, who has been active right along, suddenly ceases to exist. No more credits. He is removed from the reference books. Yet there is no record of an obituary.

It would seem that this is a mystery that shouldn't be too difficult to solve. Stan Laurel should know the answer. So should George Stevens, Leo McCarey, and others who worked for Roach in that period. Perhaps there is no mystery at all...

"Splashing Thru" (Universal, 1927) Ep.18 of "The Collegians"; directed by Wesley Ruggles; 2 reels
With George Lewis, Dorothy Gulliver, Eddie Phillips, Hayden Stevenson, Churchill Ross, and Andy Devine as an extra.

A meticulous original toned print, this is a joy to behold and is one of the best and most enjoyable of the popular Collegians series. There's more plot than usual, some good comedy, and an exciting climax. George Lewis is more invincible than ever, his rival Eddie Phillips even more boastful and snide than usual, and there are some marvellously awful pun titles that just must have been written by our own Ed Connor.

"The Old Sea Dog" (Hal Roach-Fathe, 1922); Directed by Charles Parrott; 2 rls
With Snub Pollard, Marie Mosquini, Noah Young.
Although the charmingly "sick" opening -- a band of one-legged pirates vigorously doing their morning exercises -- creates a gag that can't be topped, this lively comedy has some great stuff in it, and some surprisingly elaborate gags. There are racial jokes, jokes of violence, and much pure slapstick. Pollard's comedies were variable, but the really good ones were usually those directed by Charles Parrott (Chase).
interestingly, in view of our prior comments, looking more like Paul Parrott than Charlie!

**Intermission**

"Lorna Doone" (First National, 1922) Directed by Maurice Tourneur; presented by Thomas H. Ince; photographed by Henry Sharp; scenario by Wyndham Gittens, Cecil G. Rumford and Katherine Speer Read from the novel by R.D. Blackmore; costumes and set design, Milton Kenaas;
original musical score arranged by Sol Cohen. 7 reels

Lorna Doone (Napoleon Bell) John R Idd (John Bowere) Sir Ensor Doone (Frank Keenan) The Counsellor (Jack Newton) Garver Doone (Donald MacDonald) Ruth (Norris Johnson) Lorna as a child (May Giraci) John as a child (Charles Hatton) A Doone bully (Dlok Sutherland) Servant (Robert Brower)

"Lorna Doone" may not have been the greatest film of 1922, but it was very probably the most beautiful from a purely pictorial standpoint. Not even D.W. Griffith's "Orphans of the Storm" could boast the stunning array of gorgeous images that "Lorna Doone" has to offer. The great pictorialist Maurice Tourneur, a French director who did the bulk of his silent work in America, had remarkable success in working with the literary classics of other countries. "The Last of the Mohicans", a superb work, was probably his masterpiece; "Treasure Island" alas we haven't seen; and "Lorna Doone", though admittedly below "Mohicans" standard, is still a captivating and exciting film. Despite working close to Hollywood, using Ince's sea frontage and the Hollywood hills surrounding his studio, Tourneur's English moorlands are thoroughly convincing. Art direction cunningly suggests bleakness here, or pastoral splendour there, even though the cleverly disguised landscapes are clearly more accustomed to Bill Hart and Roy Stewart. In "Lorna Doone" the pictorial beauty is combined with both romanticism and a suggestion of the macabre. Occasionally a color filter is used to give a greenish hue; and at times a lack of either --- were brought into play to suggest the lurking; shot of the sinister Doones sitting on horseback on the crest of mist-shrouded hills; the wrecked coach in the sea; the dramatic silhouettes against stark cliffs; the many superbly lit interiors, and all the carefully composed panel effects.

Not that the film is all pictorial magnificence and nothing else; the action sequences are put over with real vitality and excitement, and the climactic battle sequences have much of the untrammelled savagery that characterized Tourneur's Indian massacre in "Last of the Mohicans". Certain minor liberties have been taken with Blackmore's original story. One important character - the huntsman who loves Ruth - has been eliminated completely, and Ruth herself changed into rather a stereotype. John is swept over a waterfall into the Doone territory instead of climbing up it as in the book. The dramatic chase along the frozen river has been eliminated, and the battle at the Doone village has been transferred from its original position (two-thirds through the novel) and added to the climax. This latter would seem to stem from Ince's "supervision"; the ending as it stands is constructed very much in the mould of Ince's beloved westerns, complete with the hero (led by a rider on a white horse) galloping to the rescue. However, despite these changes, the film is easily the best version of the novel to date. I haven't seen the Biograph 2-reeler of 1915, but a Columbia color version of some ten years ago (with Richard Greene) was sheer transposed horse opera, and not very good horse opera at that. But a British version of 1934, though a little crude, had a great deal of merit. Basil Dean directed, and John Loder, Margaret Lockwood and Roger Livesey appeared in support of Mrs Dean, Victoria Hopper, who unfortunately was about as winesome and appealing a Lorna as Eve Arden or Gale Sondergaard would have made.

There had been some vague thought of filming this "Lorna Doone" in England, but nothing ever came of it. The story was that Tourneur didn't think it necessary, but it is more likely that this was Ince's attitude. Tourneur and his designer Memasco worked from photographs and paintings in reconstructing the landscapes, and Tourneur himself had been to the ruins of the Doone village. (In Devon, the Doones were the local James Boys and Daltons rolled into one, and many relics of their period - the 17th century - remain.) For the impressive gateway to the Doone stronghold, Tourneur found a gap that had been dug into the Southern Sierras by a railroad company --- and subsequently not used. This gap has since formed the gateway to many an outlaw stronghold, primarily of the Texas variety. Incidentally, the film's affinity to the western is further stressed by one Ince stock shot of a rider falling off a cliff --- quite obviously from a western!

Tourneur used four cameras on "Lorna Doone" instead of the customary two, spending so much time on intricate lighting and camera set-ups that he wanted to take no chances at all on losing any of the shots. The film contains at least two particularly good glass-shots; one of them, in the spectacular Whitechapel sequence (the christening of the son of King James the 2nd) is particularly breathtaking in its foolproof efficiency, and puts today's shaky matte work completely to shame.
Hadge Bellamy ("The Iron Horse", "White Zombie") is an especially lovely and appealing Lorna. She tends to overdo some of her fright and reaction closeups, but her performance is pleasing, and I don't recall her ever having been photographed better. (Henry Sharp, who also photographed "Barbara Frietchie", was something of a master at making attractive women look beautiful, and beautiful women look absolutely ravishing). John Hovers, the rugged and good-looking hero, is the star on whom the Norman Taurog character in "A Star is Born" is based. He committed suicide by walking into the sea, although his wife, Marguerite de la Motte, was not quite the "destined-for-greatness" star of her Garbor and Garland counterparts. Frank Keenan, Keenan Wynn's grandfather, gives a robust barnstorming performance of the old school. And matching his larger-than-life performance are some magnificent subtitles, likewise of the old school -- and what a powerful and enchanting school it was!

First National really went to town on publicity for "Lorna Doone". In the Davy Crockett and tv merchandising tradition, there were Lorna Doone dolls, hats, candies, umbrellas, biscuits, hats. A Lorna Doone song plugged the picture, and there were Lorna Doone Day tieups with schools. One newspaper contest had Hadge posing for stills of the great heroines of art and history -- Juliet, Carmen, Joan of Arc, Betsy Ross, Madame Butterfly, Cleopatra and Pocahontas (shades of "Nothing Sacred") with contestants having to identify all the young ladies. For the most part, the film was sold as a love story. "The Greatest Love Story Ever Written" was one ad line; "The Sweetest Heroine in Fiction Brought to Life" was another. But there was a whale of a six-sheet stressing action and gore, and a catchline that ran "Shudder with her in the bandit stronghold of the fighting Doones -- thrill with her in the ecstasy of awakening love -- triumph in her escape -- in film as sweet as a splendid dream come true".

We mentioned before some of the savagery of the fighting scenes. Blood and physical sadism is all too common on the screen today, but the old masters knew how to turn a stomach neatly without drenching the screen in gore. One of the more charming moments in "Lorna Doone" has the hero tear the muscle from his opponent's arm in order to render him helpless.

Our print is a fine toned original, and is literally luminous -- far sharper and clearer than anything you'll see in 70mm, or CinemaScope, or what have you, on today's screens. It's one of the loveliest 16mm prints we've ever come across; what a pity that the labs don't turn out this kind of craftsmanship today!

Wm.E.Everson

Tuesday next: A Harold Lloyd program: THE FRESHMAN (1925) and its sequel, MAD WEDNESDAY (1947), directed by Preston Sturges.