"One Hundred Percent Nerve" (Pathe, 1923) Written, produced and directed by Leo Maloney and Ford Beebe; Two reels; with Leo Maloney, Pauline Curley, Ed Burns, Bud Osborne, Fred Burns.

The Leo Maloney 2-reel western of the early 20's seemed fairly obviously patterned on the successful Hoot Gibson formula of light-hearted fare with poppy pacing, as much comedy as action, and villainy that was never too serious. This one moves along quite breezily without ever getting anywhere very definite, and the climax is a gimmicky one of suspense rather than thrills, but it's a pleasant little outdoor film, well photographed and quite neatly put together.

"Never Weaken" (Pathe-Hal Roach, 1921) Directed by Sam Taylor; Two reels; With Harold Lloyd, Mildred Davis, Roy Brooks, Mark Jones, Charles Stevenson.

"Never Weaken" is one of the best and slickest of the Lloyd 2-reelers, and one that we repeat every five years or so. It's a forerunner of the formula of comedy plus thrills that made "Safety Last" so successful, and as in that feature, while the climactic building-climbing business is obviously the highlight, it nevertheless doesn't overshadow the fast and very funny gags that precede it.

INTERMISSION

"HILLS OF KENTUCKY" (Warner Brothers, 1927) Directed by Howard Bretherton From the story "The Untamed Heart" by Dorothy Yost; scenario: Edward Clark With Bin Tin Tin, Nanette, Jason Robards, Tom Santschi, Dorothy Deau, Billy Kent Schaefer.

The Bin Tin Tins seem to divide themselves neatly into two groupings: the great ones ("Tracked by the Police", "The Night Cry") and the merely good ones ("The Lighthouse By The Sea", "Where The North Begins", "Clash of the Wolves"). "Hills of Kentucky" falls into this latter category, and was probably one of the last of a specific group - made at the end of an exhibition-season, when exhibitors were just playing off features long ago bought and contracted for. Come the new season and a new contract, and exhibitors have to be impressed all over again - so up goes the budget and the production care. "Hills of Kentucky" gives every indication of having been made without too much care, in the knowledge that, good or bad, it would bring in the same revenue, and that even if it was a trifle below standard, the next season would make up for it.

But if the script-writers took things easy, and the director didn't strain himself overmuch, nobody apparently told Binty he could goof off a little, and so he comes through like a real old trouper, holding the show together when nobody else seems to care too much. Not that "Hills of Kentucky" is a bad one. It has a certain amount of production polish, including some good glass shots. The locations are often excellent, and the beautiful river and waterfall locale is the same one used some years before for "Tiger Rose", and presumably remembered by Howard Bretherton, who was an assistant director on that film. Tom Santschi makes a wonderfully disreputable and lecherous villain, and the story keeps nicely on the move, though devoid of really spectacular stuff until the climax, and that too is marred by a couple of rather clumsy trick effects. Still, it's a rousing "Way Down East" type windup. Billy Kent Schaefer, invariably cast as the crippled little brother, seems to cast somewhat of a baleful influence over his heroes. Just a few weeks ago in "The Ice Flood" sister Viola Dana was helpless in a small boat at the mercy of the melting ice. Here sister Dorothy Deau is adrift on a raft, and heading for the falls! Binty has some good athletic stunts, and some typically amusing bits of business to evade the villains -- once submerging in a rain-barrel, although the steam rising from the surface indicates that Bretherton wasn't taking any chances on his star catching cold!

All in all, "Hills of Kentucky" is leisurely and lesser Bin Tin Tin, but still a good, solidly-made little film. The print, toned amber and blue, is in good shape too.