Saturday, November 23rd: "HALDANE OF THE SECRET SERVICE" (1923), Harry Houdini's wild and woolly actioner; plus two Hal Roach comedies of the 20's - "CRAZY LIKE A FOX" with Charlie Chase, Oliver Hardy, Martha Sleeper; and "JUBILIO JUNIORS" with Will Rogers, Our Gang.

NOTICE: Due to last minute checkout that whole program - "SUNSHINE DAD", "THE HALBACK OF NOTRE DAME" and "BLACK OXFORDS" - is being re-scheduled for an early January date. Full details on the next Bulletin, to be mailed in early December. A reminder - there will be no shows in December.

November 16 1925
The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

3 Universal films from the mid-20's


Something of a comeback film for both Lois Weber (whose previous film had been 1923's "A Chapter in her Life", which we ran a few years ago) and for Francis X. Bushman, "The Marriage Clause" (also known at one time as "The Star Maker") was a big solid commercial hit that got good reviews, did top business and helped establish Lois Weber as a director of note. Bushman's performance, especially in the closing scenes, is straight imitation-Barrymore, but Billie Dove is lovely, and the performance quite obviously one of her best. The soap opera aspect of the film is rather emphasised by this cutdown, which is not an "official condensation" with helpful dissolve and titles, but rather a piecing together, in sequence, of various highlights. It makes sense and tells its story, but the continuity is lacking. Obviously a "big" picture, the style, sets and fine camerawork still come through in this toned print, and indicate that it was probably a better film than this rather harsly cut version indicates.

"THE TWO FISTERS" (Universal, 1926) A Mustang western, directed by William Wylor; scenario by George Plymont; 2 reels. With Edmund Cobb, Elsa Benham, Howard Davies, Norbert Wyler.

Although there are interesting comic and photographic touches that lift it a little out of the ordinary, it would be stretching a point to claim that it can equal in this little western genre of the craftmanship that was so soon to be apparent in William Wylor's features. However, it does move, being about 10% plot and 90% action. Indeed, some of the fights go on a little too long. But it is a fast and well-staged little actioner, and keeping Ed Cobb on a horse - or slugging it out with the villains (then) rather inadequate acting from being as distracting as it was in his silent Universal feature westerns. In fairness, he became quite a good character actor and villain in sound westerns, and his William S. Hart-patterned "good badman" in a quickie of the 30's, "Arizona Badman", was really quite a good performance.

"THE THIRTEENTH JUROR" (Universal, 1927) Produced and directed by Edward Leammle; scenario by Charles Logue from the play by Henry Irving Dodge; camera: Ben Reynolds; 3 reels. With Francis X. Bushman, Anna Q. Nilsson, Walter Pidgeon, George Siegmamn, Martha Mattox, Fred Kelsey, Lloyd Whitlock, Sidney Bracey, Sailor Sharkey, Noel Francois.

Hoping that he might learn the business and turn into a great director (he never did) Edward Leammle was entrusted by Uncle Carl with a number of fairly "safe" subjects - good stories backed by good stars, so that he could hardly go wrong as long as he remained a good traffic cop, and at the same time properties not so important that he could wreck the studio economy if he pulled a boner. The 13th Juror is a very typical Leammle production - an interesting story, good performers (though Anna Q. Nilsson, given first billing, is a little weak for the role), fine photography and good sets and mounting. For the most part, Leammle is carried along by all this, although every so often he seems backed up in a corner and resorts to overlong conversation scenes, with back and forth cutting and too many titles. But on the whole it's an enjoyably theatrical tale, handsomely done and with no wasted footage. One regrets that that grand old Griffith villain George Siegmamn is killed off so quickly, but he makes his weight felt. Even wearing a funny hat at a Christmas party, dear old George manages to look both evil and laconic! Bushman is good again in another role that would have suited Barrymore down to the ground - and in fact did in such talkies as "Stuart's Attorney" and "Counsellor at Law".

Author's Note: William K. Everson