Here we are re-introduced to that long extinct animal that roamed the Hollywood screen in the 30's - the great Secretarial Age - the magazine "Woman's Picture", The Woman's Picture! - the epoch-making "Imitation of Life", "Back Street", "The Significance of Sin" and "Madame X", but so overblown, over-dressed and over-cliched to the point of utter superficiality, but recognisable contact with reality that made the original article so sturdy and enjoyable. Faith Baldwin of course was the High Priestess of this kind of novel, her characters invariably virtuous, yetmeshed in circumstances which suggest they are not, and confronted with webs of problems which manage to sort themselves out quite happily for all concerned in the last reel. The right girl gets the right boy, nobody gets hurt, and we wind up with the kind of super Happy Ending that Preston Sturges parodied so beautifully in "The Palm Beach Story".

"The Office Wife" is a kind of forerunner of a later Baldwin movie, "Wife Versus Secretary" (Cable, Loy, James Stewart and Harlow all nice people, all helped along by kindly Kay Bozson!) which was, and still is, one of the most enjoyable of its kind. "The Office Wife" however is a little cruder, a little more honest to its Gold-Diggers period, a little more brittle in its situations and wise-cracking dialogue. Joan Blondell spends a great deal of her time getting in and out of lingerie, and Dorothy Mackail gives her usual interesting and intelligent performance, though her role is rather inconsistently written, and her changes in moods and choices are seldom explained. However, the whole film has a rather hurried look to it, as well as might considering how much ground it covers in a mere 59 minutes. Perhaps that explains why we never really get to know what makes the incredibly boorish hero tick, and why some surprising dialogue fluffs are passed over and accepted without retakes. Lewis Stone, unruffled and dignified as ever, manages to make it all seem, if not meaningful, then at least worth our contemplation, while dear old Blanche Frederici, perennial wife/sister of Noah Beery in Paramount's Gene Grey westerns, is as delightful as an aggressive authoress allegedly patterned on Miss Baldwin herself.

"LOVE ME FOREVER" (Columbia, 1935) Directed by Victor Schertzinger; screenplay by Jo Swerling and Sidney Buchman from a story by Schertzinger; camera: Joseph Walker; edited by Gene Milford; 9 reels.


Grace Moore made a handful of musicals for Columbia in the mid-30's, initially turning out one special a year while her popularity was at its peak, and winding up with one in 1935, "Love Me Forever". She had won fame in 1934's "One Night of Love" (her best remembered, and most successful, but a film that dates badly today) and 1936's "The King Steps Out" (by von Sternberg), easily her best though she herself had harsh things to say about it. "Love Me Forever" is far below its standard, but on the whole it maintains the average standards of the others. It's one of her less known films, and certainly one of the least seen, so on that score alone warrants revival. The opening number is gay, elaborate, and unusually well out; thereafter it wanders off into rather off-beat channels, some of which work, some of which don't. Too much of it is too much, and too much of the "star" is in no way star-like. Consequently, "Boxoffice Blue Ribbon Star" for that year by the trade publication "Boxoffice"!

FOOTNOTE TO LAST WEEK'S NOTES ON "THE BATTLE OF PARIS" - E, on one of his own personal ads, it emerges that William Steiner Jr was the cameraman - or one of them at least - on that film, even though studio publicity and other reference materials omit it from his list of credits. & the film has no cameraman credit.