"All the World's a Stooge" (Columbia, 1941) Produced and directed by Del Lord; Camera: Benjamin Kline; 2 reels
With: The 3 Stooges, Lelah Tyler, Emory Parmell, Ollie Hytten, Bud Jamison, Richard Fiske.
Our first 3 Stooges is hardly up to their highest (i) standards, but is certainly representative of their fast, violent and often (till the early 40's at least) under-rated comedies. (Later, admittedly, they were abyssmal.) It's fast and vicious, the speed of the gag making up for the unattractive ones that fall flat, while old Sennetsonian Del Lord plays the good sight gag (and the closing one is a beauty) with a real flourish. One tooth-racking foray in the dentist's chair is particularly savage and sadistic. Normally dental comedy is too painfully close to our own experience to be funny - but at times, as here and in Fields' "The Dentist", it can be so lunatic as to overcome the basic nastiness. Unless of course one happens to have a tooth-ache while watching it!

"Four Parts" (Hal Roach-MGM, 1934) Directed by Charles Parrott (Chase) and Eddie Dunn; Camera, Francis Corbin; 2 reels
With Charley Chase, Betty Niek, Florence Roberts, Sunshine Sammy.
Despite the title, Chase actually takes on nine parts in this delightful and original comedy. The plot premise is good enough for a feature. It certainly has more possibilities for example than Laurel & Hardy's "Our Relations" - and at two reels it moves too quickly for the most to be made of it, or for it to build up to a real climax. But Chase is as engaging as always, and the photography - often rather sloopy in Roach's shorts - is quite as expert (if less showy) as the trick stuff in "Bugs". When he wanted to, Roach could come up with photographic expertise that even bigger pictures could be proud of. Cuming use is also made of a remarkable double for Chase in several semi closeups. All in all, a really different and charming little comedy.

"The Good Fairy" (Universal, 1934, rel: 1935) Directed by William Wyler; Produced by Henry Hamigton, presented by Carl Lammle; script by Preston Sturges from the play by Ferenc Molnar; Camera, NoBERT Provine; edited by Daniel Mandell; 10 reels

With Margaret Sullivan, Herbert Marshall, Regina Owen, Frank Morgan, Alan Hale, Beulah Bondi, Caesar Romero, Eric Blore, Al Bridge, George Davis, June Clayworth.

Incredibly (and this should make us all feel our age) it is almost 12 years since we last ran "The Good Fairy". Other than for tv, it has not shown up again in the interim - and in these years we have lost many of its talents: Sullivan, Marshall, Bondi, Sturges. More than a dozen Molnar properties were brought to the screen by Hollywood, primarily in the 30's. Few of them were successful enough to spur remakes, although oddly there were three versions of "The Swan". Hollywood was perhaps too over-impressed by Molnar to do right by him; only "The Guardian" really, totally, succeeded, and that because it had the wit not to over-produce and all its talent to build a part not to waste theatrically and leave most of the work to the artistry and superb timing of the Lunts. "The Good Fairy" is typically sumptuous and laden with talents, and yet in toto is somewhat of a disappointment. Part of the blame can attach to the manner of its making; its script behind schedule, the film was written as it went along, Sturges handing Wyler a few pages of script and then retreating to a hideaway to turn out more. This undoubtedly accounts for some of the uneven quality, and especially the excess amount of footage devoted in the middle portions of the film to Frank Morgan's buffoonery. However, one cannot blame Sturges entirely. (Too many of his early scripts were handed to directors like Mitchell Leisen who seemed to operate on totally different wavelengths; that Sturges was a fine writer from the very beginning is proven by "The Power and the Glory", directed by William K. Howard, which stands up beautifully today). "The Good Fairy" is a little on the stodgy side, lacking the wit and sparkle that a Lubitsch could have extracted from the same script as it stood. Nevertheless it has some very interesting and enjoyable things in it; especially the earlier scenes at the orphanage, and the priceless moments in a large opéra bouffe theatre. Its main drawback is just that Wyler was always too methodical and slow a director to produce much warmth or spontaneous comedy. Even "Roman Holiday" scored far more on its charm and its playing than on its comedy content. However, "The Good Fairy" has occasional magical moments, impressive (if overly-elaborate) production mountings, and polished performances from Marshall, Sullivan and other old friends from the 30's. Quite certainly it is entitled to its reappearance at the Huff after a twelve year hibernation.

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