For the first time in our nearly 20 year history, we're showing a film without having come up with the name of the director. Anticipating no trouble in tracking down credits in the usual reference books, we made no outside search - only to find that the film, to all intents and purposes, was never made insofar as most histories are concerned. It was never even copyrighted, though Selig was usually most scrupulous about copyrighting even his much earlier one-reelers. And although it was a key film in Colleen Moore's career - her first after leaving the Griffith studio - it's one of those in particular in which we're not able to find anything whatsoever about it. So we'll have to fill you in on the credits at a later date. It's a charming little film, with some quite sophisticated trick and split-screen photography for its period. Based not on the Harold Gray comic strip (as were two quite unsatisfactory talkie "B"s), it's actually an extension of the famous James Whitmore Alley pod, traditionally used to frighten children into being good. (Schools today might take a dim view of the dire peril brought by goblins to a little boy who will not say his prayers!) The ending is quite touching and poignant, and suggests that it may have been heading for the impaled sadness of the climax of the much later "A Kiss for Cinderella", but at the last minute there is a change of heart and a simple title achieves a relatively happy ending. It's a trifle, and a far from ideal print, but a most interesting example of now quite rare Selig feature production. Incidentally, the title above is not a misprint -- the "orphan" was spelt with the "t" for this film.

"TRAPPED BY THE MORMONS" (Master Films; Britain; 1922) Directed by Harry B. Parkinson; scenario by Frank Miller; Camera: Theodore B. Thumwood; released by Astra Films Ltd in March, 1922. 6 reels

Although the Mormon Church was (justifiably) incensed at this British film of 1922, and was successful in stopping its U.S. release, nobody (unfortunately) approached us with large bribes not to show it, so here it is in its American premiere. One might think at first that it was part of a series of atheist-sponsored exploitation films condemning all religious groups, and that we might have such joys in store as "Corrupted by Catholics". "Emasculated by Methodists". "Pursued by Presbyterians". "Betrayed by Baptists". "Lashed by Lutherans" and perhaps even "Butchered by Buddhists". But no, it was merely part of a small cycle of violently anti-Mormon films made in England. The British, rather staid in some things, always regarded having two wives (at the same time) as almost as serious a breach of etiquette as having two soft-boiled eggs for breakfast. This film was made with the Mormons in mind, and violently attacked it in print, and physically opposed the centres of Mormon activity in England - specifically Manchester, where much recruiting was done. However, it's doubtful that even the British really thought of the Mormons exclusively as a sex-and-murder cult, as this film does. Director Parkinson and scenarist Miller, exploitation specialists in a day when such a genre was still virtually unknown in England, seemed to have a particular hate on for the Mormons, since they also made a little work called "Harried to a Mormon", also with Evelyn Brent (and Olga Brooke). He also made some drug and white slavery exposes, and, curiously, a series of "cultural" shorts on opera and great plays! Dramatically, it is not very daring or exciting, but has a lot of tangential interest. One scene in a caravan is composed and directed in such a way as to indicate that the director had seen and been much impressed by "Calligan".

The film also espouses some of the dubious ethical qualities of those Fascistgangster films of the early 30's: the hero pounces on and whips the Mormon minister without provocation, and this is apparently socially quite acceptable! Since we have only studio scenes, and exteriors are presumably of suburban London streets, though there are no recognisable landmarks. But the greatest joy of all lies in the style and content of the titles. Even in 1922, Evelyn Brent looked a trifle too worldly to be described as a "young flower ripe for plucking", while the Mormon HQ is given the rather unlikely description of "Gethsemane - in South Tottenham!" The frequent reference to the Mormons' chief object in life - "to decoy young girls to Utah" - does seem to rather short-change their philosophy. The cast contains at least a couple of players much more familiar to us in talkies -- Britain's Olga Sloman and Hollywood's Olaf Hytten. We suggest that you don't approach this film in a spirit of either religious outrage or films in armour, but just sit back and enjoy this incredible work in its first (and probably last) American exposure.

--- R. G. Everston ---