Tuesday next, October 26th: Two complete prints of British films each out by Mr-En-Hour in the U.S.; "LADY GODIVA RIDES AGAIN" (Launer and Ollivant, 1951) with Dennis Price, Alan-Dale Sim; followed by "THE SNAKE RACK BOD" (Poelwell and Pressburger, 1948) with David Farrar, Kathleen Byron, Robert Morley, Leslie Banks.

October 18 1927

The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

"THE MIRACLE OF THE WOLVES" (Filmes Historiques, 1924) Directed by Raymond Bernard

Assist. Dir: Jean Hemard; Scenario by Paul Antoine from the novel by Joseph Dupuy-Lagardère; Camera: Brissay, Forster, Bujard, Latron; Photography: Armand Charlot; The Cast: Victor Fonfrède (Vion); Pierre sany (Champenois); Philippe Dullin; Charles the Bold (Vanni-Farcoux); Robert Cottereaux (Sevred Jourd); Poqueux (Keaupin); Tristan the Hermit (Philippe Heriat); Lord of Chateauvort (Gaston Kodot)

I apologize in advance for the earlier-noted rather academic form of presentation tonight, without the rich score that this film deserves. But its story, a mixture of history, romance and legend, is told with extremely frequent and longish titles giving pertinent information as to dates, places, names and motivations. Even with an understanding of the titles, the film is complicated enough to follow; without them, it would be impossible. Thus, since they are only in French, we have no option but to translate them over a microphone as we screen, and this precludes any kind of a score. Initially we had thought to fall back on the old Hopalong Cassidy technique of introducing music towards the end, for the action sequences - but since the last half of the film is literally all action, that just wouldn't work. Forvermore, there is a short section missing in reel two (involving the introduction of Gaston Kodot); at that point we will drop the film for a moment and fill you in on the missing scenes. The whole film however is such a stunner that we feel sure you'll soon adjust to the silence, and probably provide your own score mentally. Incidentally - and curiously - when the film opened at the Criterion in New York in 1925, the Times review particularly criticized the English titles, which it suggested were hurriedly written and very vague.

Raymond Bernard, son of novelist Tristan Bernard, intended this film as the first of a series of historical spectacles. It was the best, and best-received (it opened at the Paris Opera, with the President and cabinet in attendance) of what was to be a short-lived "series". Presumably "Mr. Gance and "Napoleon" would soon steal much of his thunder. As a spectacle, it is a staggering film - with the medieval castle of Carcassonne as one of its principal backgrounds, it is the most impressive thing of its type that we've seen short of the Babylonian sequence in "Intolerance" - with horses of extras, obviously authentic costuming, armor, weaponry and overall decor - and largely unfamiliar (to us) players adding to the reality of the whole. Moreover, despite a complicated plot and a necessarily slow beginning, it gets into the swing of action very quickly, and is unaturing in its movement and violent warfare. No Cecil B. de Klee or Frank Lloyd tableau here; the action is played for all that it is worth. It covers the familiar contretemps between King Louis and the Burgundians, which most of us know mainly in restrained, pantomime, almost operatic form, thanks to the Francois Villon legend which has virtually monopolized this period on the screen. Here however, Villon is not even mentioned - and King Louis, in the hands of Charles Dullin (whom you may remember as the Huff a few weeks back in the more recent "Les Jeux sont Fait") is far less a grotesque than as played by Basil Rathbone or Conrad Veidt.

More than anything else however - and more even than such films as "The Atomsen of Gosta Berling" - the film is a prime example (if one were still needed) of the influence of D.W. Griffith on film-makers abroad. Everything about it harks of D.W.: the construction (opening prologue, introduction and interweaving of characters, building towards a climax more than a steady accumulation of pace to a second climax); the staging of the battle scenes (with actual fighting); the action cutting to individual action, details of loading and using weapons; the intercut close-ups of watching women and terrified children; the iris, the panoramic long shot, the panel shot. Individual scenes can be readily traced back to their inspiration; Lillian on the ice from "Way Down East" is here, as is Brown Eyes" rape by the scene in "Intolerance". Perhaps the climax, with its race to the rescue and its monumental battle scenes, goes just a little too far, but it would still have been more than implied had it been dissipated. Our print, thanks to the cooperation of the film's director, Raymond Bernard, is from his original negative, and in excellent condition, photographically it is a stunning production - apart from a strange stress on dissolves, "strange" because the several cameramen never seem able to master them and come up with a jerkiness that D.W. could never have allowed! - W.R. Everman -

"Anto-ollastically, and with appalling programming sense, but just because the film is on hand, short (56 minutes) and just passing through, we will follow "ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA" (MGM) with Sally Eilers, ZaSu Pitts, John Beery, Brown, Charles Starrett and Wini Shaw; a pleasant time-killer of a romantic-comedy-melodrama-musical somewhat on the lines of "Transatlanticerrygorund"; enjoyable, a trifle, with one quite wild musical number."