Monday night, Nov.15th: "THE 13TH HOUR" (Fox, 1927) dir: Chester Franklin with Lionel Barrymore; a wild-and-wooley, aerial-like "old house" melodrama; preceded by "THE LIGHT IN THE DARK" (1922, dir: Clarence Brown) with Lon Chaney and Hope Hampton, and "Cools and Courtship", a 1917 Welsh 2-reel slapstick comedy.

November 8 1971
The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

"ALADDIN AND HIS WONDERFUL LAMP" (Paramount, 1939) Director: Dave Fleischer 2 reels; in Technicolor.
We're not staunch advocates of either the Popeye cartoons in general, or the later Fleischer cartoons, which were often ugly in their drawing, repetitive in their gags, and lacking the creative surrealism of the black-and-white Fleischers of the early sound period. Most of these criticisms can be levelled at this later Popeye too, but it has some academic interest in being one of the two-reel "specials" that Fleischer turned out at the rate of one a year from 1936 on. As always with Fleischer, the background design is often more interesting than the foreground action, while Popeye's incessant and unfunny "ad-libbing" is now merely an irritant.

Two British documentaries:
"MOVING MILLIONS" (Crown Film Unit, 1947) Directed by Noel Arthur
Produced by John Taylor; Camera, Teddy Cattford; 1½ reels
"CROFTERS" (Greenpark/Vertity Films, for the Ministry of Information, 1944)
Written and directed by Ralph Keene; Associate Producer, Edgar Anstey; Camera, Peter Hammesfahr; 2 reels

We very rarely play British documentaries, and these two - one dealing with crowded London, the other with a wilderness - supplement one another rather nicely. "Moving Millions" manages to make exciting and interesting the rather prosaic matter of London's transportation system - which even in this nearly 25-year-old coverage is clearly more efficient, pleasant, and certainly much cleaner than our present New York system. "Crofters", the more important of the two, is a splendidly filmed and informative pre-war documentary with the more lyrical style that came in during the war years. It makes interesting comparison with both Ford's "How Green Was My Valley" and Rouleau's "Farebique" in its rather poignant description of a simple, hard yet worthwhile life-style that is slowly disappearing. It's coincidentally interesting too that its establishing scenes of a crofter's cottage on a lonely lane match almost exactly the location chosen by Hitchcock for his crofter's cottage in "The 39 Steps". That the term "crofter" (meaning a specific kind of highland farmer) is not well known over here is emphasized by "The 39 Steps", which included in its cast list John Laurie "as crofter" and Peggy Ashcroft "as crofter's wife". Many U.S. cast-lists politely rephrased that as Mr. and Mrs. Crofter!

"THE WORLD MOVES ON" (Fox, 1934) Directed by John Ford
Produced by Winfield Sheehan; written by Reginald C. Berkeley; Camera, George Schmiderman; Art Director, William Darling; Musical, Max Steiner; Hugo Friedhofer, Louis De Francesco, E.H. Basset; DavidButtolph and George Caldwell; 9 reels

In the filmed BBC-TV interview with Ford that we ran a couple of years back, he mentioned a film that he had disliked from the start, that was over-written, that he had filmed exactly as written at the orders of the producer, and which he then turned over to M-G-M, much over-long, and refused to edit or otherwise work on further. Without any actual proof, I suspect that this is the film! It's certainly untypical Ford material - something like a rating of "The House of Rothschild" with "Showboat" - and its episodic story-line, covering a hundred years, certainly lends itself to cutting without those cuts being too obvious -- though the Stepin Fetchit character does seem to have suffered a bit, and was probably more prominent and better motivated originally. But while it's one of Ford's least favorite films, it's still quite an interesting and graceful work. The battle scenes, well-staged and with some effective hand-held-camera work, are unusually powerful and impressive, the occasional intercutting of newsreel footage is smoothly done, and there are the inevitable echoes of Griffith which seemed so prevalent in Ford's early talkies. One off-screen reunion is again (as were scenes in "Pilgrimage" and "Judge Priest") a direct throwback to a similar scene in "The Birth of a Nation". Certainly not a major Ford, "The World Moves On" isn't a lesser one either, and is quite undeserving of the shunted-aside, "best-forgotten" reputation it has gathered during all the years when it has been out of sight.

-- Wm. E. Everson --