Next program: Monday next, May 10, in the fourth floor screening room: AND ONE
and BEAUTIFUL (1940, dir: Robert Sinclair) with Laraine Day, Jean Muir, Robert
Cummins, and BILLION DOLLAR SCANDAL (1935, dir: Harry Joe Brown) with Constance
Cummins, Olga Baclanova, Robert Armstrong, Frank Morgan. This will be our last
program until we resume after the Summer on September 13th.

The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

May 3 1976

SQUIBS WINS THE CALCUTTA SWEET (Jury-British, 1922) Directed by George Pearson
Scenario: George Pearson, Hugh E. Wright; a Welsh-Pearson Production; 6 reels
With: Betty Balfour (Squibs Hopkins); Fred Groves (Charlie Lee); Hugh E. Wright
(Sam Hopkins); Annette Benson (Ivy Hopkins); Mary Brough (Mrs Lee); Bertram
Burleigh (The Weasel); Hal Martin (Detective Reeves); Donald Searle (Reporter);
Tom Morris (Bob); Sam Lewis (Nosey).

Although this isn't the film to prove it, George Pearson was one of the major
pioneers of British cinema, eclipsed in the late 20's when the new blood -
Hitchcock and Asquith and Saville in particular - took over. Pearson's career
extended to the years of World War Two, when he worked on documentaries, and he
died in his nineties only a couple of years ago. His autobiography, "Flashback",
is one of the best and most reliable books ever written by a director, and is
very much recommended. His acknowledged debt to Griffith is amply confirmed by
the lighting, editing and (often complex) structure of this film.

Pearson and Betty Balfour made a number of films together, very loosely in the
Mary Pickford manner, and the four Squibs films (tonight's is the second) were
exceptionally popular. They were so popular in fact that one can forgive film
2 for its assumption that everybody had seen #1 -- for they probably had. There
are a couple of introductory titles to wrap up the previous film, but even so it
takes a little time to become acclimatised to the characters. Universal did
the same thing over here with their "Mummy" series, though with far less reason
to assume that earlier entries in that series had become household words.
"Squibs Wins the Calcutta Sweeps" is surprisingly heavy and dramatic at times
for a film of its type, and certainly doesn't have the production polish of the
Pickford equivalents. Nevertheless, it's an enjoyable and interesting film from
a period of British film history all too sparsely represented, and with fine Paris
and London location work.

THE SWAN (Paramount 1924, rel: 1925) Written and directed by Dmitri Buchowetski
from the play by Ferenc Molnar; Camera, Alvin Wyckoff; 6 reels
With: Frances Howard (Alexandra); Adolphe Menjou (Albert); Ricardo Cortez (Dr.
Walter); Ida Waterman (Princess Beatrice); Helen Lindroth (Amphrosa); Helen Lee
Worthing (Wanda von Cluck); Joseph De dep (Prince George); George Walcot (Prince
Arsene); Michael Visaroff (Father Hyacinth); Michael Varitch (Colonel Wunderlich);
Nicholas Soussanin (Lutzow); Arthur Donaldson (Franz); General Lodjensky (Master
of the Hunt); Clare Eames (Princess Domenica).

This first of three versions of "The Swan" was made only three years after the
play's premiere in Budapest - and already with substantial changes, both for
commercial reasons and "artistic" ones, fully "explained" by writer-director
Buchowetski at the time. It made no great waves of protest however, and the only
criticism that the NY Times had to make was that it might not go down with the
flapper audiences! Far more Lubitsch and von Stroheim than Molnar, it's
nevertheless a handsome and snappy production, that bowls along faster than
Molnar would have liked, and is dominated by Menjou's tremendous performance. At
the time, before Menjou had come to specialise in such roles, it must have been
a doubly impressive performance, especially in comparison with the wooden acting
from Cortez and Frances Howard. Incidentally, the film makes an apt comparison
with the same director's German "Othello" (which we ran last year) in which he
frequently changes Shakespeare into Sennett while remaining faithful to the
original text.

William K. Everson