"DOWN IN THE DEEP" (France, 1904, produced by Ferdinand Zecca) 2 reels

This charming early so-called "primitive" (happily saved by the preservation work of the American Film Institute) is one of the best extant examples of the early hand-coloring processes. The film is sprightly, and the color still vivid and exciting.

"THE LIGHT IN THE DARK" (First National, 1922) Directed by Clarence Brown Script by Clarence Brown and William Dudley Pelley; Camera, Alfred Ortlieb; Set Design, Ben Carre; 2 reels

With Lon Chaney, Hope Hampton, R.K. Lincoln, Edgar Norton

"The Light in the Dark" was one of many mystical, pseudo-religion romantic melodramas of the early 20's that followed in the wake of the highly successful "The Miracle Man." It's an interesting example of the already quite powerful early work of Clarence Brown, soon to be a major (if sadly under-rated) director. It was made under conditions of great financial and personal stress, with at least one shut-down in production, and constant disagreements between star, producer and director, although none of this discords shows up on the screen. Brown has unhappy memories of the film, and can't be persuaded to re-see it. Its story-line is, to put it mildly, a little wild, revolving as it does around the Holy Grail, casually picked up by a New York collector for display in his living room — and passed around by all and sundry with all the reverence that might be devoted to a Medick's orange-drink container. In the original film (this is a slightly edited reissue version) the Grail disappears again, into the Hudson River — where its influence for good has not been markedly apparent. However, our main interest in the film today (apart from Chaney) is in its superb pictorial quality. Not only is it a fine example of the kind of horror touting in use before the adoption of actual color photography, but even more, it is superb example of how the silents literally "painted" with light and shadow. The effect may not be totally realistic — and realism was never a major claim of the silent cinema - but it is certainly dramatically and pictorially effective.

"PUTTING PANTS ON PHILIP" (Hal Roach-MGM, 1927) Directed by Clyde Bruckman

With Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy, Harvey Clark. Two reels

The first "official" Laurel & Hardy starring comedy (though not the first to be released, and actually following some ten two-reelers in most of which they worked to all intents and purposes as a team), "Putting Pants on Philip" is both one of their best - and least typical. There's virtually no slapstick, but a great deal of laughter gained from the anticipation of a gag, more from its execution, and further laughs still from later echoes of the same jocks. Though carefully pre-planned and visually well-designed film, it has a carefree, spontaneous look for all of its methodical construction. Much of it takes place in the bright, sunny streets of Culver City right outside the MGM studios -- streets that have hardly changed in appearance today, other than having gone to seed somewhat, the bright paint of the tidy little shops now crooked and peeling now that there's no need to keep scrupled up for the forays of Laurel and Hardy and Charlie Chase.

--- TEN MINUTE INTERMISSION ---

"THE WORLD MOVES ON" (Fox, 1934) Directed by John Ford

Produced by Winfield Sheehan; written by Reginald C. Berkeley; Camera, George Schneiderman; Art Director, William Darling; Music, Max Steiner, Hugo Friedhofer, Louis De Francesco, R.H. Bassett, David Buttolph and George Gershwin; 9 reels


In a filmed interview with BBC-TV some five years ago, John Ford mentioned a film that he had been unsympathetic to from the start. It was badly over-written, and the producer, proud of the property, insisted that Ford kill it. He did just that. He was then given the subsequently much over-length film to the producer, refusing to cut, edit, or otherwise work on it further. Without any actual proof, but knowing Ford's other films - and the mentalities of certain producers - I suspect that this is that film.

(Continued on p 2)
Apart from its concentration on a family – the underlying loyalties, separation and reunion, a favorite Ford motif – it’s certainly untypical Ford material. It’s something of a mating of "Cavalcade", "Showboat" and "The House of Rothschild", and its episodic story-line covering a hundred years certainly lends itself to post-production cutting without those cuts being too obvious, although the Stepin Fetchit character does seem to have suffered a bit, and was probably more prominent and better motivated originally. It also has far more technique for its own sake than was usual with Ford – a constantly moving camera for example – suggesting again that he may have adhered quite rigidly to a script instead of following his own (and normally simpler) inclinations. But while it’s one of his own least favorite films, it’s still an interesting and graceful work. The battle scenes, extremely well-staged and with some effective hand-held camera work, are unusually impressive, the occasional intercutting of newsreel footage is smoothly done, and there are the inevitable echoes of Griffith that seemed to be so especially prevalent in Ford’s films of 1933-1936. One off-screen reunion is again (as were scenes in "Pilgrimage" and "Judge Priest") a direct throw-back to a similar scene in "The Birth of a Nation".

Ford devotees, perhaps affected by his own opinions, tend to be disappointed in "The World Moves On" while conversely, those who don’t concern themselves with Ford and regard it just as an individual movie, often find it quite rewarding and a well-above-average specimen of the "family-cavalcade" saga which became a kind of cycle in itself in the Hollywood of the early 30’s. A major Ford it certainly isn’t, but it isn’t a lesser one either, and is quite undeserving of the shunted-aside, "best-forgotten" reputation that it has gathered during all the years when it has been out of sight.

William K. Everson

IMPORTANT A reminder (and a notice to those few of you who may still not be aware of it) that despite an official confirmation from the distributor, "SMILIN’ THROUGH" is still not available and probably won’t be until next year. Thus, next week, we are substituting an equally rare and in-demand (though rather different) film – the 1935 "SHE" from the "King Kong" unit, with Helen Gahagan, Rendolph Scott, Helen Mack, Nigel Bruce, Gustav von Seyffertitz – and a dynamic Max Steiner score. The supporting program remains unchanged.

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Piano Score for Silent Films

Arranged and Played by

STUART ODERIAN