LORNA DOONE (Thomas Ince Corp.—Associated First National, 1922) Produced and Directed by Maurice Tourneur; Scenario by Katherine Reed, Cecil G. Mumford, Wyndham Gittens and Maurice Tourneur from the novel by R.D. Blackmore. Camera, Henry Sharp; Art Direction and costumes, Milton Menasco; 70 mins. With: Madge Bellamy (Lorna Doone); John Bowers (John Ridd); Frank Keenan (Sir Enzo Doone); Jack McDonald ("The Counsellor"); Donald MacDonald (Carver Doone); Norris Johnson (Ruth); May Giraci (Lorna as a child); Charles Hatton (John as a child). NY premiere: Strand Theatre, December 1922.

Although it is probably too old-fashioned a novel ever to be filmed again (except possibly as a British tv mini-series) Blackmore's popular 1869 novel has been filmed many times. The British did it three times, in 1912, in 1920 and in 1924 (two versions were released back to back) and Hollywood tackled it in 1922 and 1951. In terms of fairly close adhesion to the novel, and its many complications and characters, the 1924 version is the most faithful, but thanks to director Tourneur's pictorialist, this silent version tonight is probably the best. The novel however has never been fully realised on the screen, some of its highlight sequences (a chase across a frozen lake for example) calling for the brevity skills of a Griffith, while its action and pageantry really demand an epic-like production that it has never received. Usually because of its content, including a stagecoach hold-up, much riding and battling, it has been turned into a thinly-disguised western. (In tonight's version, one of the horse falls is even a stock shot from an Ince western!) In a way though this is logical, in the Doones — though their story is much fictionalised and romanticised here and originally by Blackmore — were Britain's James and Dalton gangs rolled into one, and apart from Dick Turpin and Robin Hood, were about the only really colorful outlaws that British history can boast of!

"Lorna Doone" was made shortly after Tourneur's masterpiece "The Last of the Mohicans" and shares some of its blood-thirsty qualities. It also marks something of a turning point in his career; his later American films were less interesting and merely assignments rather than projects he really wanted to do. In the mid-twentieth century, he became famous for his work of making films (in Germany, England, mainly France) right through the 30's and 40's. His American success became a prominent Hollywood director, specialising in horror films and thrillers on an elegant level with almost the same pictorial flair as his father. While "Lorna Doone" certainly can't match Maurice's best American efforts, which are probably "The Blue Bird" and "The Last of the Mohicans", it shares their pictorial charm, wonderfully lit interiors and superbly composed exteriors, often given an almost mystical quality. And Henry Sharp, who photographed "Lorna Doone", was a superb cinematographer. Here, one of his glass plates in the court sequence are splendidly achieved. The cast is fairly light-weight, but interesting with Madge Bellamy a charming Lorna, Frank Keenan (Keenan Wynn's grandfather) a grand old ham in the old tradition, and John Bowers (the tragic star whose death inspired the Norman Maine character in "A Star Is Born", although he himself was never a star of that magnitude) probably the best of a not very imposing selection of John Ridds. (John Loder and Richard Greene played the role in the other two major adaptations and was a much better original and looks superb on screen — but it is sixty years old, and in addition has just undergone an arduous 18-month tour of European archives. So while we don't anticipate it, we ask your indulgence if a splice parts or if there should be some other brief interruption.

--- Ten Minute Intermission ---

THE CANADIAN (Paramount, 1926) Directed by William Beaudine. Associate Producer, William Le Baron; Scenario by Arthur Stringer, with titles by Ralph Block, from the 1913 play "The Land of Promise" by W. Sonkom; Camera, Alvin Wyckoff; NY premiere: Paramount Theatre, Nov. 1926. 84 mins. Erratum: Titles are by Julian Johnson, who also served as editor; Ralph Block, listed above, was a production associate.

With: Thomas Meighan (Frank Taylor); Mona Palmer (Nora); Wyndham Standing (Ed Marsh); Dale Fuller (Gertie); Charles Winninger (Pop Tyson); Billy Butts (Buck).

Like "Lorna Doone", "The Canadian" was extremely well received critically, but probably owed whatever commercial success it had to the great popularity of star Thomas Meighan. It's the first (until some presently unknown and forgotten film shows up) of those curious woman-against-the-wilderness stories that in different ways fascinated so many individual directors in late 20's, especially William K. Howard ("White Gold"), Victor Sjostrom ("The Wind"), and John Ford ("Ride the High Country"), until "Girls in the Wild". Like those films it is fairly placid and leisurely, but it has a mood all its own, and is often very moving. It also marks a remarkable artistic high point in the career of William Beaudine, coming right after his quite outstanding Mary Pickford vehicle "Sparrows". Usually ignored or maligned because of his later association with so many Monogram "B's in the 40's and 50's, Beaudine was, given the opportunity (the British "White Gold takes a Walk" was another one) a really good director. "The Canadian" was filmed largely on location in Alberta, with a limited amount of studio work at the Astoria Studios in Long Island. Mona Palmer, a graduate of Paramount's star-building school, is surprisingly effective, especially for a newcomer, but her career was short-lived. To my knowledge, she made only three more films. (Many sources also give her surname as Palma).

Program Ends approx. 10.25.

--- William K. Everson