SHADOW OF THE LAW (Paramount, 1930) Directed by Louis Gasnier
Screenplay by John Farrow, based on a play by Max Marcin, "The Quarry", and a 1913 novel of the same title by John A. Morosco; Camera, Charles Lang; NY premiere, Paramount Theatre; 69 mins.
With William Powell (John Nelson/Jim Montgomery); Marion Shilling (Edith Wentworth); Natalie Moorhead (Ethel Barry); Regis Toomey (Tom); Paul Hurst (Pete); George Irving (Colonel Wentworth); Frederick Burt (Mike Kearney); James Durkin (Warden); Richard Tucker (Frank); Walter James (Guard Captain).

"Shadow of the Law" is the kind of interesting oddity that has no special academic or historic value and really needs to justify its place on a program based on the juxtaposition of a later work from the same star or director or with a similarly-themed film. Having been holding it for quite some time we hope it will work well in tandem with the similarly plotted but vastly different in style British film that accompanies it.

Dapper William Powell, with Philo Vance well under his belt by this time, is admittedly somewhat wasted— and under the handicap of performing much of the film without his distinguished moustache— but rises to the occasion well, as always. It's a fairly small-scale production, made by a frankly hack director who dates back to the old Pathe serials. But it's well photographed by Charles Lang, has some interestingly designed prison sets, features two feminine players that we don't get to see too often these days, and for a comparatively early talking, moves quite briskly. The plot is neither tragic nor comic, but when studios were putting pictures into release at the rate of one a week minimally they couldn't all be works of genius, and once in a while it's refreshing to show a film for no other reason than that it's so typical of the program fodder of its day.

--- Ten Minute Intermission ---

FOR THEM THAT TRESPASS (Associated British-Pathe, 1949; US release in 1950 through Stratford Pictures (Allied Artists); Directed by Alberto Cavalcanti; Produced by Victor Skuszetsky; Screenplay by J. Lee Thompson and William Douglas Home from the novel by Ernest Raymond; Music by Philip Green; Camera, Derick Williams; US premiere, Little Carnegie Theatre; 95 mins.

With Stephen Murray (Christopher Drew); Richard Tod (Herb Logan); Patricia Plunkett (Rose); Royalty Boulter (Frankie); Michael Lawrence (Jim Heal); Joan Bowling (Gracie); Mary Merrill (Mrs Drew); Frederick Leister (Mr Drew); Helen Cherry (Mary Drew); Michael Medwin (Len Stevens); Vida Hope (Olive Mockson); Harry Fowler (Dave); Irene Handl (Mrs Sams); James Hayter (Jocko); George Curzon (Clark Hall); Valentine Dyall (SIR Archibald); Harcourt Williams (Judge).

Bosley Crowther, whose total demolition of "The Franchise Affair" most of you vehemently disagreed with a few weeks back, was at it again with this one. He felt the film for being dismal, saying that it should have been a silent (as though that in itself is a disgrace) and concluding that Cavalcanti (whose films include such classics as "Dead of Night" and "Went the Day Well"?) was an incompetent director of features who should have stayed with the documentaries for which he was (once) more famous.

True, "For Them That Trespass" is a bit on the gloomy side, and is based on the kind of novel that nobody writes any more, so that in the 80's it does have a slightly old-fashioned look. But then Associated British-Pathe was an aggressively old-fashioned company, and was probably hoping and expecting that Cavalcanti would give them an old-fashioned suspense-romance, a sort of pleasantly updated "Les Miserables"! Instead Cavalcanti, the only British director to really specialise in film noir, flung up huge stylised sets, persuaded cinematographer Patrick Williams to capture the mood and lighting style of the German silents, and came up with (next to Hammer's "It Always Rains on Sunday" and his own "They Made Me a Fugitive") one of Britain's most uncompromising film noirs. Style matters far more than content here; the plot is a bit too dependent on coincidence, and the letter of the British law isn't always too easy to follow. Its period is sometimes a bit ambiguous, though there are usually sufficient clues via newspaper hoardings, but it does raise interesting moral questions, and is particularly well acted by Richard Todd— who quickly overtook the official British star Stephen Murray, who with a usual actor, but never became the big star that Pathe expected. The general depression and squallor will enable you to enjoy next weekend's Thanksgiving break all the more, and to come back refreshed for "The Devil Horse" and "The Fire Brigade!"

--- William K. Everson

Program finishes approx. 10:35 (dependent on possible delay due to preceding jazz concert).

No discussion period tonight; hold questions for our silent program two weeks hence.