Montie of the Haunted (Educational, 1927) Directed by Charles Lamont; 20 mins.

With Lupino Lane, Wallace Lupino, Glen Cavender, Estelle Bradley.

"Montie" is a sad replacement for "Cowboy Ambrose", the print of which, at the last moment, proved to be too shrunken to risk projection. (We'll find a second print to use on our February 28th silent program, when it will fit in well). Whereas "Cowboy Ambrose" was a wonderful and quite elaborate satire of westerns generally, "Montie", although also a good spoof, is primarily an exercise in using the western background as a peg on which to hang Lupino Lane's acrobatic comic routines, and an ingenium prop horse, adroitly intersp run with the gemine article. Together with his Fairbanksian spoof "Sword Points", it's one of Lane's best and certainly fastest short comedies.

THE NARROW TRAIL (Paramount/Artcraft, 1917) Directed by Lambert Hillyer and William S. Hart;

a William S. Hart Production, presented by Thomas H. Ince; Scenario by Harvey Thew, from a story by Hart; Camera, Joseph August; 65 mins.

With William S. Hart (Ice Harding); Sylvia Bremer (Betty Wordin); Milton Ross ("Admiral" Bates); Robert Kertman (Moose Halleran); Fritzi ("The King").

One has to use a pretentious term in connection with Bill Hart, but this is literally the aposthease of all the Hart movies. It was his first for Paramount, so obviously he wanted to give his of best; also, though still tied to his contractually for a short period, it was his first without any kind of control, budgetary or otherwise, from Thomas Ince (though to be fair, Ince had always recognised Hart's unique skill and left him pretty much alone, benefitting enormously thereby in financial terms). Hart brings in all of his favorite themes and situations, and also provides more action than usual including a riding horse chase, a mass dance, a mobile machine that Hart usually avoids. Without Ince's script supervision, Hart does do a little overboard on sentiment at times, particularly in his slightly over-stressed titular reverence for the "clean mountains" as a cure-all for vice and disillusionment, and in his instant reformation when confronted with the beauty of the far-from-overwhelming Sylvia Bremer. However, the rest of the movie is lean and gritty enough to overcome the sentiment, which wouldn't begin to dominate the Hart films to a harmful degree until the 1920's. The film is also (pleasingly) sentimentally designed as a farewell screen appearance for Fritzi. Hart didn't mind (too much) being gyped in salary matters by Ince, but he was damned if he was going to let Ince benefit from Fritz's hard work, and with this film he took full-page ads in the trade papers to announce Fritz's retirement. Incidentally, the film contains (apart from some excellent location work in San Francisco) one of Hart's most rugged fistic horror scenes, certainly one of the toughest seen on the screen to that date. It moved Jean Cocteau to describe it thusly: "...a little masterpiece ... in the centre of a half-blind and horrified crowd, the two figures circle ... the camera draws back, moves nearer, rises higher. The naked bodies, slippery with blood, take on a sort of phosphorescence. Two mad creatures are at grips, trying to kill each other. They look as though they were made of metal, Are they kingfishers or seals or men from the moon, or Jacob with the angel? Is it not some Buddah, this great naked figure which falls to its knees and dies there like a thousand little fishes in a lake of mercury? M.Ince may be proud of himself, for a spectacle such as this seems in reecollection to equal the world's greatest literature". Whatever Cocteau was smoking at the time maywell have contributed to this enthusiastic description, but it did not matter. Critical footnote for his foreign versions, we have to warn you not to get your hopes up for the "naked bodies slippery with blood" although in a general sense the scene does justify Cocteau's rhapsoic response.

-- Ten Minute Intermission --

RED RAIDERS (First National, 1927) A Charles R. Rogers Production directed by Albert Regals;

Supervised by Harry Joe Brown; Story/scenario, Marion Jacksons; Camera, Ross Fisher, 52 mins.

With Ken Maynard (Lieut. Scott); Ann Drew (Jane Logan); Paul Hurst (St. Murphy); J.P. McGowan (Captain Ottwell); Chief Yowlachie (Joe Face Charlie); Harry Shutan (Private Izzy); Tom Day (Earl Logan); Hal Salter (Spike); Late Keeke (Lafe).

It's 34 years since "Red Raiders" was last given a NY showing, so a revival is long overdue.

The exact opposite of Hart's austere, realistic, often poetic westerns, "Red Raiders" is an all-action showcase for Ken Maynard's riding skills, and staged on a scale comparable with D.W. Good's "Tattered Owls". Though justly considered Maynard's first National series was extremely popular, and showed no signs of economy; "Red Raiders" came near the end of the series, yes is as carefully mounted and ambitiously staged, almost in the Griffith manner, as the first in the series. (Sadly, only two or three survive). So expertly were they made, that Warners were able to use the series for remakes first with John Wayne and later with Dick Foran, re-using all the big action footage, with Maynard often quite recognisable. Then it was sold to other companies as stock footage, and has even turned up in tv commercials! When the film used the Indians they were fairly sympathetically treated, not as villains, all racial and other problems conveniently disappearing when the sole badie, Chief Yowlachie, is killed off. Interesting Griffith-like historical footnotes include the identification of one Buster Keatonish indian as a Custer/Little Big Horn survivor. Some of the ethnic humor dates a little, but the action and riding stunts dominate so much that it hardly matters. Maynard was in top form here, before dialogue and a fondness for the bottle overtook him! Program ends at 10:15; discussion follows.

-- W.K. Everson