

Pearl for Pearl.

Walturdaw (Quality Plays). Featuring A. B. Ineson, Dezma du May and W. G. Saunders. One reel. Released March 29, 1923.

This short drama is artistically produced, tells a clear story, with a great economy of sub-titles, and should be a welcome feature in any program.

Set in an island in the South Seas, the plot sketches in the love of a Kanaka boy for the daughter of a quarter-cast pearl trader, who beats him for weaving her a wreath of flowers. The trader is visited by Wu Wang, a buyer of pearls, with whom he sits down to play for their ill-gotten gains. The trader, furious at having lost all his pearls to Wu Wang, stakes his daughter to try to recover them. But after draining the cups of whisky brought to them by the Kanaka, rage possesses them, and both fire at each other and fall dead. The Kanaka then explains to the girl he has saved how he put cayenne pepper in the whisky bottle.

There is nothing but praise for the direction. Great restraint has been shown in the handling of the love interest and the lashing of the Kanaka, and almost every scene contains some natural touch by which the characters are made to live.

The economy in sub-titles is very noticeable, and adds very much to the value of the film; it stands as an effective piece of work of first-rate technical quality.

The acting contributes to the sense of artistic finish, all the members of the cast maintaining a high standard.

The trader's wrath at losing his pearls is very ably conveyed, also the Kanaka's sense of injury towards him and his corresponding love for the daughter.

Origin.—British.

Photography.—Good

Suitability.—A very good short dramatic feature for any hall.

Thorns and Orange Blossoms.

Walturdaw (Preferred Pictures, Inc.) Featuring Estelle Taylor, Edith Roberts, Kenneth Harlan. Seven reels. Released immediately.

This rather artificial story of a Spanish girl who wreaks vengeance upon the man she loves until the touch of the baby of the woman he has married brings her to sanity is well photographed and acted. It tends to become boring, as the theme is rather slight to warrant the length of footage.

Adapted from a popular American novel, it has some dramatic points, and the temperament of the Spanish girl with the glamour of fame over her may appeal to some audiences, while the tenderer love of the other woman may also find sympathy. There is nothing to prevent the film from making an agreeable hour's entertainment, but, prolonged, it may seem tedious, while very critical audiences may cavil at the want of any real artistic feeling.

Story.—Alan Randolph, visiting Sunny Spain, kisses a Spanish dancer, Rosita Mendez, unknown to him, by moonlight, is reminded by his friend of his engagement to Violet in America, and is induced to sail next day. Rosita, having fallen in love with him, also visits America, and stirs memories in Alan, who persuades Violet to marry him secretly before the date fixed for the ceremony. On the day of the wedding proper Rosita visits Kenneth, swears he will never marry Violet, and in struggling with him fires her revolver, which wounds her. A remark of hers while half-insensible causes the blame of manslaughter to fall on Alan, who is subjected to five years' imprisonment. Rosita refuses to give the evidence that will save him, effects his escape only to learn he will not go with her to Spain, and is eventually softened by the sight of Violet's baby. She makes her confession and returns to the life of a dancer.

Origin.—American.



Fascination: "Thorns and Orange Blossoms" (Walturdaw)



The Flower Wreath: "Pearl for Pearl" (Walturdaw)

Points of Appeal.—Taken seriously, the story is weak and somewhat shallow; at the same time the setting is pleasing, the character of Rosita is well acted, and it is possible for an audience to be carried away enough to forget the rather feeble plot.

The dramatic scene where Rosita fires on Alan, and her performance at the prison, together with other peeps we have of her as a dancer are all assets.

Production.—The sequence of events is not natural, but artificially formed so as to make a so-called climax at Violet's supposed wedding day. But as we know she is already married some of the suspense falls rather flat.

Violet's subsequent scene with her father, however, is well done and more convincing than the others, because some character drawing has been allowed to stray into it.

On the whole, there has been too much sentimentalising over scenes in prison, where Alan is frequently visited and embraced by his wife.

Rosita's change of feeling when she sees Violet's baby strikes one as most unreal, not because such a thing is not possible, but because one is feeling all the time the scene is there for effect.

The love passage with Alan in Spain is too drawn out. One really artistic scene would have told the audience what feet and feet of film are occupied in telling. Moreover, the scenes are of the pretty, pretty kind without any virility or conviction about them. The kiss on the spur of the moment given to an unknown charmer by moonlight has been used before in story-telling, and is apt to be weak at the best of times. There is also something feeble about the friend who drops in when wanted to give advice and disappears conveniently from the story.

However, there remains much in the setting that is attractive, and various of Rosita's dances are charming. It is the essentials that the film lacks, not the trappings.

Acting.—Estelle Taylor acts well with emotional vigour as Rosita, and is a graceful dancer. Edith Roberts as the faithful young wife is also satisfactory, and the male element, which is not responsible for much character, is chiefly represented by Kenneth Harlan as the put-upon but strictly honourable Alan.

Carl Stockdale gives a good thumb-nail study of Violet's father.

Photography.—Very good.

Suitability.—As somewhat sensational drama, it should go down well at most halls, especially if cut.

PLAY UP THE TITLE.

Emphasise also the innate mother love which in a fiery-tempered woman can sometimes work wonders.

Monty Banks Comedies.

Pearl (Ben Wilson Productions). Featuring Monty Banks. Two reels. Released July 16, 1923.

It can be said at once that these comedies are quite innocuous and succeed in avoiding the commonplace themes. At the same time the spirit of fun has been captured by force, and one feels that every incident has been carefully thought out with a view to making the characters behave unnaturally in order to secure the amusing point.

However, as there is a good deal of ordinary slapstick in between-whiles—an attempt to tell a story is made in each case, which usually winds up with an event such as a canoe race or a bull fight—moderate entertainment at the least is provided, and applause on numerous occasions can be counted upon.

"Pure and Simple."—Monty Blue, a simple lad, wins the affections of a young lady, chiefly by the presentation of a bouquet successfully filched from a rival, but most of his time is spent in trying to get to her house, and the sensation caused by his nag that resembles a camel more than a horse is considerable. The fun is best, perhaps, when he enters a canoe race and wins it by the subterfuge of walking on the river-bed while apparently propelling his craft in the ordinary way.