

charity"? What precisely does it mean? Is the Sunday exhibitor to be regarded in future as a mere collecting agency for the Catholic Seamen's Home or the St. Luke's Children's Outing Fund.

We shall never arrive at the hard commonsense of this Sunday opening question until we either make it illegal for the picture palace to open on this day at all, or allow it to open for its main and ostensible object—which is to provide amusement for the public and as good a living as possible for the people who conduct it. I will not say which course I favour myself, but I am utterly opposed to the policy of calling things by their wrong-names for the sake of a puritan prejudice. Let us know when we are being charitable, and let us know when we are enjoying ourselves. If the cinema proprietor likes to give away his "actual profits" on a Sunday to the British Hospital for Mental Disorders there should be no law to stop him. But he is only too likely to become a candidate for that asylum himself if he is graciously granted leave to open his theatre, hedged about with restrictions as regards his programme and his employees, and then told that he is working for the good of the cause. Charity suffereth long and is kind, but it is a grotesque proposition to make the picture theatre owner suffer for his charity.

Possibly, however, this is a subtle move on the part of the L.C.C. to close down the cinemas altogether on Sundays. If so it should be effective.

### Next Week: FILMS OF ALL NATIONS (ii).

#### WARLIKE SCENES IN THE STUDIOS.

Doubtless inspired by the stirring events in Europe, and not unmindful of a possible conflict between their country and Mexico, members of the Essanay Company have just banded themselves into a volunteer cavalry troop and are being rapidly drilled into martial shape.

E. H. Calvert, formerly a captain in the U.S. Army, is responsible for the organisation of this unique corps, and his capable first lieutenant is Richard Travers, who fought with the Canadian troops in the Boer War. Another officer is Second Lieutenant Sydney Ainsworth, who, holding a commission in the Wisconsin National Guard, fought in the Spanish-American War.

Harry Dunkinson, Essanay's famous fat comedian, was promoted to non-commissioned rank, so it is stated, because in any manoeuvres on foot the excessive amount of frontage he required continually threw the squad out of alignment. As sergeant-major of the troop he is, of course, exempted from drilling in the ranks. Harry Beaumont is another of the n.c.o.'s, and Edward Arnold holds the rank of commissary-sergeant, or quartermaster-sergeant as its equivalent rank in the British Army is termed.

A riding school attached to the Essanay studios is being used as the headquarters and training centre of the troop, which at the moment is about seventy strong, and recruiting is proceeding at a brisk rate.

Should the time arrive when America is no longer, in the immortal words of her President, "too proud to fight," and there comes a call for volunteers, Captain Calvert intends to offer his troop of actor-cavalrymen to the War Department.

## 1894—1916. AN EARLY SHOW AT MARLBOROUGH HOUSE.

With reference to the recent command performance of the Hepworth picture play version of Helen Mathers' famous novel, "Comin' Thro' the Rye," which took place before her Majesty Queen Alexandra, on August 4th, it is interesting to recall Mr. Hepworth's previous appearance at Marlborough House.

This was in 1894, when Mr. Bert Acres, one of the earliest pioneers of cinematography, gave an exhibition of a few short films before the late King Edward and Queen Alexandra, then Prince and Princess of Wales.

In those days films were looked upon by most people as merely interesting toys, and the pictures shown were only about 30 or 40 feet in length, consisting of breaking waves, street scenes, and express trains, etc.

In the previous year "young Hepworth," who was scarcely more than a boy (his father, T. C. Hepworth, the well-known photographer and lecturer, was still alive),



Alma Taylor in "Comin' Thro' the Rye."

had invented a new electric arc lamp, which was the forerunner of the arc used in every cinema theatre to-day all over the world. This really was the cause of Mr. Hepworth being at Marlborough House. Not unnaturally, the inventor was better able to handle his own lamp than anyone else, and Bert Acres, anxious to give the best possible show before the Prince and Princess of Wales, arranged that "young Hepworth" should be in charge of the electrical side of the proceedings.

Mr. Hepworth must have felt very strongly the contrast between the performance of twenty-two years ago, when he helped to show those few short films, and his appearance on Friday last, when he presented the latest example of his genius—a superb picture play, 6,000 feet in length, a living representation of a famous novel, complete and perfect in every detail.

It is often said that the ideal film play will render sub-titles unnecessary, and we have had one striking example within the last few weeks. There are some people certainly on whom they seem to be entirely wasted. After Miss Vesta Tilley's delightful performance in "The Girl who Loves a Soldier," we heard an old gentleman remark, "What a pretty girl that boy makes!" and he went away quite convinced that he had discovered a new and talented female impersonator.