

TRADE SHOWS SURVEYED

"Over the Hill," as an American super, which, besides making good with the public on the other side, has set a new fashion in themes, claims special attention among the week's offerings—the more so as it is an early release.

It is a powerful piece of work, much superior to the many imitations to which it has given a lead, both in conception and execution. Like most American sob-stuff, however, it rather obviously exploits human emotions for the sake of an overpowering effect, and restraint and, to a certain extent, probability are disregarded in the process. The artistic value of the subject is reduced by this determination to get the utmost pathos out of every episode—though not its public appeal to that proportion of audiences which like its sentiment unqualified. It remains an excellent piece of filmcraft, with fine acting and a cumulative emotional effect which will make it a good booking, if cut somewhat, in a majority of halls. It is a film for every manager's personal inspection.

The British Offers.

The Ideal Co. offers perhaps the most interesting British film of the week in "Sonia." Stephen McKenna's novel has been interpreted with some faithfulness, though there is something lacking—probably inevitably, in view of the necessity for reduction—in the scenes showing the earlier mental development of the hero. Clive Brook's portrayal of David is, nevertheless, one of the best features of the subject, though he does not quite realise the author's picture. Neither is Evelyn Brent exactly the Sonia of the book. These criticisms will, however, be limited to a comparatively small section of the public reached by the picture, which must certainly be described as above the British average.

It gives a real picture of English life, and the dramatic values of the original have been well exploited. Technical qualities are excellent, and it should be a good booking in almost any hall.

"Dangerous Lies" (Famous-Lasky British Producers) has the excellent technique one has a right to expect from this exceptionally well-equipped studio, and as a story it is better than previous efforts from this quarter, with good continuity and real dramatic value. The acting also is good and it is undoubtedly a first-class all-round booking, for better-class halls especially.

"Vi of Smith's Alley" (Walturdaw-Broadwest) has good

working-class atmosphere, and both in details of production and in photography reaches a high standard. Amy Verity scores the biggest acting success; the subject is likely to be generally well received, though possessing a special appeal to industrial districts.

As a single feature, "The Amazing Adventures of Mr. Ernest Bliss" (Imperial) is naturally more disjointed than when it appeared in series form, but it is first-class comedy-drama still and should be a welcome repeat booking anywhere.

"The Golden Dawn" (Pathé) has a rather thin story, not too well developed, and is only a mediocre booking as a first feature, and it is impossible to be any more enthusiastic about "Ships that Pass in the Night" (B.E.F.), which is even more colourless than its rather sentimental-morbid original.

Incident.

The strong stuff is rather more plentiful than usual, and of more than average entertainment value. "Cold Steel" (Jury) is perhaps the best example; it compresses enough incident for a serial into its six reels, and is well done in all departments.

Of "Colorado" (F.B.O.-Universal) the latter can also be said, though this is real drama and not melodrama, and has more than incident to recommend it.

"Where Men are Men" (Vitagraph) is also an action story—a Western in this case. It is good, straight stuff with plenty of vivid incident, and can be safely recommended for any audience which likes honest and unambitious work competently done.

Miscellanea.

Sex drama is not so prominent in the list as usual, but "Prisoners of Love" (Goldwyn) is quite frankly of that classification, and despite its good acting—it is Betty Compson's first *solus* vehicle for Goldwyn—has rather too sordid a flavour for discriminating audiences.

The big fault of "The Man who Sold his Soul" (Ideal) is the crudity of its story construction. As a film with plenty of incident it would provide fair entertainment, but the farcical introduction of the Devil in person—not as an allegorical figure, but as a rather incompetent and easily defeated melodramatic villain—completely spoils it for intelligent publics. The bond by which a harassed banker secures relief from his financial difficulties will inevitably create laughter instead of awe; the idea in this literal form, is years out of date on the screen.

"Let no Man Put Asunder" (General) is not up to the Swedish Biograph standard. Its story construction is indifferent, and its general flavour morbid for British audiences. "The U.P. Trail" (Wardour) is a rather thin North-West melodrama, with very little artistry in it.

:: TRADE SHOWS AT A GLANCE ::

TITLE	RUNNING TIME.	TYPE	TECHNIQUE	SUITABILITY.
PRISONERS OF LOVE (Goldwyn)	75	Sex drama	Bad continuity; good acting	Rather sordid, except where sex stuff appeals
VI OF SMITH'S ALLEY (Walturdaw)	80	British working class drama	Good atmosphere and photography	Good, general booking
AMAZING QUEST OF MR. ERNEST BLISS (Imperial) 90		British comedy drama (Re-issue)	Good; excellent humorous characterisation	Good anywhere
MAN WHO SOLD HIS SOUL, THE (Ideal)	60	Modern "Faust" melodrama	Good race scenes; childish in some story details	For very unsophisticated audiences only
GOLDEN DAWN, THE (Pathé)	70	British melodrama	Thin story and development; fair photography	Usable second feature
SONIA (Ideal)	85	From Stephen McKenna's novel	Generally good; very good photography	Good, general booking
U.P. TRAIL, THE (Wardour)	85	Canadian melodrama	Rather unconvincing story form; mediocre photography	For halls where incident is preferred to artistry
COLD STEEL (Jury)	80	Sensational melodrama	Good; plenty of incident	Excellent for serial and melodrama public
LET NO MAN PUT ASUNDER (General)	75	Swedish Biograph costume drama	Poor continuity; mechanically uneven	Too morbid for most halls
WHERE MEN ARE MEN (Vitagraph)	70	Western drama	Good straight story; plenty of incident	Good Western drama
SHIPS THAT PASS IN THE NIGHT (B.E.F.)	70	Sentimental drama, from the book	Mediocre	Rather colourless for most halls
COLORADO (F.B.O.)	70	Confused identity drama	Excellent	Good general booking
OVER THE HILL (Fox)	150	"Mother" super	Good continuity and emotional appeal	Good sentimental attraction, if cut
WINGS OF LOVE (Fox)	60	Farcical comedy	Good stunts and brisk story	Average comedy booking
DANGEROUS LIES (Famous-Lasky)	90	British social drama	Excellent	Good better class booking