

# TRADE SHOWS SURVEYED

**T**HERE is a distinct falling off in very many cases of good program features, and it would seem, judging by the number of special presentations, that any film possessing merit promptly becomes, or is said to be, a "super," and after much preliminary boosting, comes somewhat as a disappointment to the expectant world, which has been led to expect a swan and finds only a goose; whereas if that same picture had been issued in the ordinary way as a sound program feature, it would meet with a warmer reception, because merit would be found in it, and it would not have been heralded as something extraordinary.

While on the subject of "supers," it sometimes seems that "length" is synonymous with "super," and if a picture plays for an hour and a half or two hours it is promptly classified above the common herd. Generally the very opposite is the case, and if that same picture had been cut to run a normal sixty-five to seventy minutes it would have filled the very urgent present-day need for good program features.

## Good Melodrama.

The film this week which comes nearest to that description, and in fact fulfils it, is "Bull-Dog Drummond" (Astra-National). It is pure melodrama, but handled in such a way that from start to finish it holds its audience. It does not become sensational merely for sensation's sake, as the exciting moments it contains are legitimately exciting because they are connected with, and incident to, the story. It is interesting, too, from another point of view, because it is an international production. It has an American producer and American, Dutch and English artistes, who are all excellent and exceedingly well cast.

"Bull-Dog Drummond" has all the attributes, quite apart from its excellence as a production, of a good showman's proposition, and there can be no doubt that its success is assured in any kinema.

Another picture which is a sound dramatic feature for any hall, although somewhat slow in parts and occasionally unconvincing, is "The Bond Boy" (Associated First National), featuring Richard Barthelmess, who gives a very finished and clever performance. Those characteristics which one has learnt to expect in Associated First National Pictures—good photography and charming country-side scenes—are very much in evidence and help considerably in making the picture appeal. That very common fault of spinning out the footage is noticeable, and accounts to a great extent for most of the duller moments in the production; cutting would benefit it considerably and eliminate this weakness.

## A British Offer.

"Was She Justified?" (Butcher) does not live up to the excellent standard set by the British National League offerings. Perhaps it was too much to expect that there would not be a falling off now and then, but it is rather to be regretted that it was seen fit to include it.

The whole production is mediocre. One of the chief faults is that the producer has relied too much on sub-titles and too little on its artistes' ability and detailed picturisation. A full review appears on another page, from which the weakness of the production can be fully appreciated.

Quite pleasant, though not outstanding, entertainment can be obtained from "The Long Chance" (Universal), a rather conventional drama with some good situations. As is often the case, a great deal of the success of the story depends on the acting of the star. Henry B.

Walthall manages to infuse life into quite conventional scenes and keeps his audience interested in his personality.

## Still Better "Shorts."

This week's Trade shows have yielded a quantity of "short stuff," and there is little doubt that there is a marked improvement in this very important program material. The *Kinematograph Weekly* has consistently advocated that some care should be taken with short subjects, and that the public was ready and waiting for more variety in programs. For a long time it has been the habit to regard all one- and two-reel pictures as "fill-ups," and very few exhibitors have thought this worthy of much attention in the matter of choice of subject.

Perhaps the most outstanding are the Quality Film Plays (Walturdaw). The first series of these productions was favourably received, and the second, which includes two comedies and a drama, is equally good. Two at least are outstanding, one a comedy, the other a very perfect specimen of the short drama, unusual, well acted, with practically perfect technical work. These British pictures are excellent entertainment, and should be regarded as an integral part of the program and not as "fill-ups"; they are good examples of British artistry, and will undoubtedly prove good box-office propositions.

From an interest as well as an entertainment point of view, the latest series of "Secrets of Nature" (Regent) are very hard to beat. It is to be hoped that these pictures meet with the reception they deserve, as they are certainly worthy of an important place in any hall's program which tries to give its public variety and good entertainment.

As regards comedy, the most interesting is "The Pirate" (Fox), featuring Lupino Lane. The star has improved greatly since his last picture, and looks like becoming as popular a comedian on the screen as he is on the stage. His facial expressions are excellent and he has an individuality of his own which is distinctly novel and pleasing.

The production itself is very good and provides excellent light entertainment. We shall look forward to seeing some more comedies with this star.

Century Comedies (European) are not particularly outstanding, but follow the well-worn lines of slap-stick; they are useful where this is required. One of their chief attractions is the employment of cleverly trained animals, and in this they are perhaps distinctive.

Masters' "Short Sporting Dramas" (Walturdaw) have a good idea as a basis, but the production and elaboration of that idea are not too good. There is little element of excitement or story value in the two Trade shown, and the photography is mediocre.

There has been a very small output of material suitable for inclusion in Christmas holiday programs, so that Hepworth's "Christmas Specials" are as welcome as they are novel. "Little Red Riding Hood" and "Three Little Pigs" are both cartoons of the well-known tales drawn by Anson Dyer, and will be very acceptable both to grown-ups and children; while "Peeps into Puzzeland" is a trick film of undoubted cleverness. They should be welcomed by exhibitors during the holiday season.

For the rest, "The Kentucky Derby" (European), is likely to be popular at most kinemas. It is a racing melodrama on conventional lines, but contains plenty of exciting situations.

"His Sixteenth Wife" (Vitagraph) is a reissue with a very limited appeal, which shows its age only too clearly.

While "The Broken Spur" (U.K.) is only a mediocre attraction, relying chiefly on the star's reputation, and the only "Western" of the week, "The Three Buckaroos" is very ordinary and disjointed. It is meant to be a travesty of "The Three Musketeers" but as it is neither a burlesque nor a cowboy imitation of it, it bears very little resemblance to its famous prototype.—L. C.

# TRADE SHOWS AT A GLANCE

TITLE.	NATIONALITY.	RUNNING TIME.	TYPE.	TECHNIQUE.	SUITABILITY.
BULLDOG DRUMMOND (Astra) ...	... Anglo-Dutch	75	Romantic melodrama ...	Excellent in all respects. A fine screen version of "Sapper's" story	Excellent for all halls.
THEY SHALL PAY (Allied Artists) ...	... American	65	Drama of revenge ...	Poor, conventional plot, weak acting; pleasant settings	For easily pleased public only.
THREE BUCKAROOS (Wardour) ...	... American	61	Western drama ...	Good idea of a travesty of "The Three Musketeers" badly carried out	Mediocre except for "uncritical" Western lovers
THE BOND BOY... (Assoc. First Nat) ...	... American	105	Drama ...	Human story well told; slow in parts; good acting	Good general booking if cut
THE BROKEN SPUR (U.K.) ...	... American	75	Backwoods drama ...	Poor story material; desultory action, occasional charming exteriors	Only mediocre on star's name
WAS SHE JUSTIFIED? (British) ...	... British	71	Domestic melodrama ...	Unreal story, poorly told and acted; over sub-titled	For very easily pleased audiences only
THE KENTUCKY DERBY (European) ...	... American	65	Racing melodrama ...	Conventional story adequately told; some good situations; somewhat unconvincing	Useful general booking.
HIS SIXTEENTH WIFE (Vitagraph) ...	... American	78	Romantic drama ...	Re-issue. British star. Shows its age, but some good settings	Useful for cheap audiences.
THE LONG CHANCE (European) ...	... American	75	Domestic drama... ...	Conventional story well told, with pathetic note; good acting by star	Useful "popular" feature.