

REVIEWS OF THE WEEK

Quality Plays.

Gaumont (Front line Series). Featuring Clive Brook, Gordon Craig, Hugh Miller, Jerrold Robertshaw, Gladys Jennings and Gibb McLaughlin. Six two-reel subjects. Released one weekly from February 4, 1924.

"The Reverse of the Medal," "Darkness" and "Finished," three dramas, are worthy of being featured at any hall. The comedy, "Constant Hot Water," with speeding up, should be a good item for any program.

Only the four plays mentioned above were Trade shown, and they provide as good short material as we have seen for a long time.

The dramas have an individuality and novelty of their own, and stories that hold the attention by the cleverness with which they have been worked out. The comedy has less novelty, but contains plenty of humour of a farcical but not slap-stick nature.

"Darkness."—A man dashes through the storm into the house of the man he intends to murder. As he enters the lamp is blown down and smashed. From where his supposed victim is sitting by the fire he learns that his enemy is dead. Years ago Gandhill had ruined Keever's father, and he had nursed this hate for twenty years, and had now come to kill. Finally, the figure by the fire rises, and Keever sees a man racked by suffering—Gandhill, a priest, and dead—to the world. With a cry of terror Keever flees.

"The Reverse of the Medal."—A general decides to send a message by aeroplane instructing the general commanding that wing to withdraw. That message he desires to crash in the enemy's lines to mislead him. The flying officer for duty reports. It is his own son. He wavers, but finally sacrifices his son to duty. The battle progresses until the enemy are on the run. Later comes a message that his son is safe, his aeroplane having fallen into a river.

"Finished."—The Comte de Lormerin was old, but he considered himself not yet finished. He gets a letter from a girl he had loved telling him that she still loves him. He goes to see her. She is old, and he, disillusioned. He sees her daughter, admires her, but when she goes to help him from his chair, saying that her father always told her she must assist old men, he feels a pang. Reaching home he looks in the glass, and sinking in a chair tells himself that he is finished.

"Constant Hot Water."—Eardley Adams hires a flat for himself and friend at the same time as Rosina Tennant took one for herself and a friend. The men get No. 9, and the girls No. 6. Rosina's friend arrives first, and the drowsy porter gives her the key for No. 9, and the lady is having a bath when Eardley arrives. Explanations followed, and then they find they cannot get out because of a patent burglar proof lock. Meanwhile, Eardley's friend has been given the key for No. 6, and has gone to bed, so when Rosina arrived there were more compromising situations. Finally, peace is restored.

Origin.—British.

Production.—All these plays are characterised by the same economy of action, and a strong sense of conviction and individuality.

In "The Reverse of the Medal" every action helps to build up the conception of the general's state of mind when he has to sacrifice



Darkness : "Quality Plays" (Gaumont)

his son. It is a brilliantly directed study with everything contributing to the sense of reality and intimacy. In "Darkness" we have the same effect: an intimate knowledge of the characters portrayed and a subtly conveyed insight into their conflicting emotions. The lighting in this picture is exceptionally effective. For the major part of the film the light is only thrown on the face and hands of the man sitting by the chair, and on the man who has entered to murder.

It is enough to say of "Finished" that George Cooper has managed to translate a story of Guy de Maupassant on to the screen without ruining the author's intention, and conveying exactly the same impression.

At the Trade show this picture appears to have suffered from an addition to the sub-titles. When we were privileged to a private press show of the film there was a reproduction of a letter which actually appeared in Maupassant's story, and which was indispensable to the proper elucidation of the motif. This has apparently been cut out, and instead a two line subtitle is shown, which is not nearly so effective. It is to be hoped that the original letter will be re-inserted.

Acting.—There is no space to deal with the acting with the fullness it deserves. Each cast is, however, without a weakness. Clive Brook gives the best performance we have seen him give as the general in "The Reverse of the Medal." Hugh Miller is excellent in "Darkness," as is Gordon Craig in a child part. Jerrold Robertshaw's rendering of the Comte de Lormerin in "Finished" could hardly be bettered.

Both Gladys Jennings and Gibb McLaughlin help to make "Constant Hot Water" the pleasant comedy it is.

Photography.—Good. Clever lighting effects in "Darkness."

TRADE SHOWS AT A GLANCE

	NATIONALITY & RUNNING CERTIFICATE.	TIME.	TYPE.	TECHNIQUE.	SUITABILITY.
WHEN DAWN CAME ... Colleen Moore (Western Import)	American (A)	80	Sentimental drama	Good story, well produced and photographed, but suffering from false sentiment. Good acting by all the cast.	Useful where sob stuff required.
DON QUICKSHOT ... Jack Hoxie (European)	American (U)	60	Western comedy	Very good entertainment of excellent technical quality. Fine horse-manship and quick action.	Good general bookings.
A COUPLE OF DOWN AND OUTS ... Rex Davis (Napoleon)	British (U)	75	Drama	A clever little story, well told, with some stirring war scenes. Good sentiment with an object. Needs cutting.	Good general bookings.
GIPSY BLOOD ... Pola Negri (Pioneer)	German (-)	75	Tragedy	Excellent acting by star and fine dramatic scenes; well directed. Shows signs of severe cutting.	Good feature for most halls on star's performance.
BONNIE PRINCE CHARLIE ... Ivor Novello (Scala)	British (U)	90	Romantic drama	Weak and drawn-out story, beautifully set and well photographed.	If cut a good costume drama.
MY DAD ... Johnny Walker (Wardour)	American (U)	70	North-Western drama	Quite a good story, well acted	Average general entertainment.
SURE-FIRE FLINT ... Johnny Hines (Graham Wilcox)	American (U)	65	Comedy drama	Very good plot, working up to fine denouement. Full of quaint comedy and strong drama; beautifully set and acted.	Excellent general bookings.
SECRET OF THE MONASTERY ... Tone Swedenborg (General)	Swedish (A)	75	Tragedy	A reissue of Seatrom's beautiful production	Excellent for better class halls.
COMIN' THRO' THE EYE ... Alma Taylor (Hepworth)	British (U)	70	Victorian melo-drama	Artificial story, generally over-acted, wants substantial cutting, but has great pictorial beauty.	Average good-class bookings.
MAN'S SIZE ... William Essell (Fox)	American (U)	50	North-West melo-drama	Impossible story with strong prohibition flavour; wooden acting and good photography.	Only moderate popular stuff.
THE WHITE FLOWER ... Betty Compson (Paramount)	American (U)	85	Drama	Interesting Hawaiian story, good settings and photography and acting. Efficient direction	Good general bookings.
THE BUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME ... Lon Chaney (European)	American (A)	125	Drama	A beautiful film adapted from Victor Hugo's novel. Excellent in settings, lighting, photography and direction. Brilliant acting by Lon Chaney	Excellent anywhere.
QUALITY PLAYS ... (Gaumont)	British (U)	-	Dramas and Comedies	Another series of these excellent two-reel comedies and dramas. Full of individuality and interest. Fine acting, detail work, and direction	The dramas are deserving of a feature position and the comedies are good items for any program.