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**THE HISTORY OF THE
BRITISH FILM**

1906-1914

by Rachael Low and Roger Manvell
The History of the British Film, 1896-1906

The History of the British Film, 1914-1918
by Rachael Low
is in preparation

THE HISTORY OF THE BRITISH FILM

1906-1914

by

RACHAEL LOW

Based upon research of the History Committee
of the BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE

Chairman: Cecil Hepworth

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PART ONE

THE INDUSTRY

INTRODUCTION TO PART I

This book is not intended to be a history of cinematograph apparatus—studio equipment, laboratory processes, projection machinery and so on. Obviously the close relationship of developments in film technique (in the artistic sense) to those in the technical equipment available is a very important factor in the story of the film industry. But such an aspect of development is certainly worthy of a book on its own, and this has still to be written. For although passing reference has been made to such things as studio lighting when facts of especial interest came to my notice in the course of other researches, the scope of the present book is both broader and—necessarily—shallower than that.

So much happened during these years which must be included in a general picture of the British film industry. The showman, not satisfied with a penny-gaff public, sought a more dignified position in society, initiating an era of “cosy little bijou palaces” in his earnest attempt to convey an impression of greater refinement; the existence of the new form of entertainment was officially recognized by special legislation; industrial integration resulted in the establishment not only of trade organization on a national scale, but also of a form of censorship; and consciousness of the artistic character of film-making began to be accepted not only by the genius but by the hack. My aim has been to assemble enough factual material to give a general picture of all this, which I hope will be of use as a background for further and more detailed research.

Among the many who have helped me with information and criticism I would like to thank Ray Allister for material on Kinemacolor; L. H. Beales of the London School of Economics; Adrian Brunel; R. H. Cricks; Ralph Dewsbury, formerly with the old London Film Company; F. E. Durban of J. Frank Brockliss Ltd.; Maurice Elvey; Cecil Hepworth; Roger Manvell; G. A. Smith; and Arthur Vessello. I would also like to thank Oliver Bell and R. W. Dickinson of the British Film Institute for

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The Industry and the Public

(I) SHOWMANSHIP

1906 to 1914 was for film exhibitors, as it was for film dealers, a period of experiment from which crystallized the eventual structure of the trade. In 1906 the moving picture show was still seeking a home of its own, still appearing mainly in fairgrounds and music-halls and turning up in illustrated lectures to enliven or replace the still lantern picture. But during the next two or three years exhibitors tried many new, and often extraordinary, ways of reaching the public before they finally settled down in picture palaces.

It was in 1906 that Hale's Tours were started in Oxford Street, and for 6d. a time the would-be traveller could sit in a jolting railway carriage and watch the illusion of passing scenery. By August 1907, according to the manager, a thousand people a day were paying their sixpences, and a naval rival called "Scenic Exhibitions," complete with sea breezes and the roll of the ocean, was patented by a Mr. Starr a year later. Hale's Tours ran for some six years and were one of the more feasible of many ingenious ideas. Repeated attempts to associate films and food were less successful. On New Year's Eve, 1906, films were introduced at a restaurant in Piccadilly where they ran as an after-dinner attraction intermittently for some years, and many were the efforts to link tea with living pictures, an idea which came from France and spread through London to the provinces. Bioscope Teas were particularly popular at the New Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly, where in 1908 the lady from the suburbs could pause in her afternoon's shopping, and for a shilling enjoy a "dainty cup of tea and an animated display."

Nor was this all. The mobile cinema of years later had already appeared:

On Friday, the travelling saloon car of Messrs. Ailion Limited, which is on an 8,000 miles tour throughout the United Kingdom, stopping at each town through which it passes, arrived at Lyme Regis from Charmouth, and took up

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its station in The Square. At eight o'clock a bioscope entertainment was given from the top of the car to an assembly of between 1,000 and 2,000.¹

Less wisely, films tried to break into the legitimate theatre before establishing a theatre of their own. The Graphic Cinematograph Company's *Ride of the Valkyries* which was used at Covent Garden Theatre in 1907 and subsequent seasons, scenes in a ballet at the Alhambra, and even sequences in music-hall sketches² are only a few examples of the film episodes which were incorporated in plays, pantomimes and operas. The film was seen as an excellent mechanical contrivance for bridging gaps in stage plays. Falsifying both film and stage, these compromises were greeted by many with delight. For besides providing an answer to the "deficiencies" of the stage, did they not (accompanied by suitable music) give the stage hands an admirable chance to shift the scenes in peace?

All these were false trails, however, and the main places of exhibition remained the fairs, music halls and "penny gaffs," as the shop-shows were called. The standard of projection in music-halls outside London was frequently deplorable, but nevertheless the status of the bioscope turn was improving. No longer regarded as the stop-gap and advertised without enthusiasm, it crept up the bill to be the pride of the evening. Fair shows were still in full swing, Hull fair alone having as many as eight at a time. And then, of course, this was the heyday of the penny gaff. By the summer of 1910 the *Bioscope* could claim that the latter's day had passed, but not before it had done further violence to the reputation of the film by its dirty and disreputable appearance, its bad projection and get-rich-quick policy.

One curiously persistent attempt to make such places more respectable was the endeavour to foist daylight projection on an unwilling public. Walter Tyler Ltd. were using it in May 1908 and soon³ a big demonstration of a system patented in England by its French inventor a couple of years earlier was held near Marble Arch. Briefly, the theory was that if the screen were placed in a black-lined alcove, the pictures could be shown in a fully illuminated hall. In 1909 several firms were specializing in suitable equipment.⁴ It was, in fact, rumoured that some such system would be made compulsory under the Cinematograph Act. It was further claimed that it would relieve the eyestrain still feared by so many, and, more

¹ *Bioscope*, October 7, 1909, page 7.

² E.g. John Lawson's *Unwritten Law*.

³ February 1909.

⁴ Tyler, J. P. Martin, Fabbro, Daylight Cinematographs Ltd.

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important, discourage both the pickpocket who was supposed to haunt the picture theatre, and "improper behaviour." Not that all showmen took their moral responsibilities so greatly to heart. One of them complained:

I have tried the light and the dark halls, and find the public prefer the latter, especially the young couples, who like to see the pictures and have a canoodle at the same time. I found that I lost nearly all the courtiers—the biggest portion of my patrons—by adopting the lighting principle, and soon went back to the old principle.¹

The frankness was unusual, but the experience common. The project lingered in the background until at least 1912, and came to the fore from time to time whenever scurrilous reports of misconduct in the theatres caught the public fancy. But the disadvantages were too obvious, and in time, as the more sensible practice of shaded lighting replaced the earlier blackness, the idea was forgotten.

The theatres and halls in which films were shown in 1906 were still largely the province of the travelling showmen. Permanent shows were still relatively scarce, and the special Picture Theatre, except in penny gaff form, was almost unknown. In this respect Britain was admitted to be behind America, and as a possible explanation of this it was suggested that exhibition absorbed less enterprise than production in Great Britain, where talent seeking openings in cinematography was more apt, until 1906 at least, to flow into small production firms. Whatever the explanation, between 1908 and the First World War a transformation took place. The fixed show, with the specially built picture theatre following hard on its heels, was to draw millions of pounds into the exhibiting side of the industry at a time when British production was falling behind that of other countries. From 1908 onwards began a financial boom in exhibition which incidentally scattered England with a new type of impersonal community centre, as well as a new and very distinctive architecture. The penny gaff was to give way to the age of the Bijou Palace.

The first theatre in this country entirely devoted to films seems to have been the Balham Empire, in the summer of 1907:

WAKE UP, JOHN BULL!

EXCELLENT PICTURES AT THE BALHAM EMPIRE

A theatre devoted entirely to the display of living pictures is a new thing in

Bioscope, August 15, 1909, p. 35.

this country, dating back to the time when the Balham Empire opened its doors a few weeks since. The program of pictures, exclusively provided by the celebrated firm of Pathe Freres, is one lasting about two hours, and consisting of a very fine selection of their best productions.¹

Round about this time the music hall showmen were convinced that no one would pay 6d. or even 3d. for films alone when for the same sum they could go to a music hall, where as often as not films would be included in the bill. Nevertheless in the winter of this year several film-exhibiting companies followed the example of the Balham Empire and rented theatres for a season consisting entirely of films.² The London music halls were in the forefront of this movement, but in the next step, the building of special picture theatres, it was the provincial cities which gave the lead. But the old feeling that moving pictures were merely a temporary fashion had not yet vanished, despite the success of each new venture, and despite the big new plans that were being made. Many of the new "picture palaces," as they were beginning to be called, were converted from the rinks recently built for skating, and on all sides a similarly short craze was forecast for films. Many of the showmen themselves believed this and built hastily and badly, ran their business as temporary goldmines, and preferred big dividends to extension or consolidation of their companies. At the same time the more discerning began to settle down and form considerable circuits, and, with companies worth thousands of pounds behind them, their desire for respectability became an obsession.

In the three years after 1908 the gilded glory of the fairground shows and the comfortless thrills of the penny gaff gave way to the "dainty" school. More and more effort was spent in impressing the audience with comfort and elegance, and proving the pictures worthy of better-class audiences. Red plush and marble, ferns in brass pots and plenty of electric light were guaranteed to give that "air of cosy refinement" which was wistfully sought by a trade anxious to disclaim its low birth. The foyer must have bevelled mirrors if it was to acquire the prized *bon ton* which would make it a really "high-class rendezvous." Refinements like shaded lights, uniformed young (sometimes very young) attendants instead of the old barker, and "tasteful plaster mouldings" to adorn the front of

¹ *Kinematograph Weekly*, August 29, 1907, p. 245.

² Walter Gibbons at the Islington Empire; New Bioscope Company at the New Theatre, St. Martin's Lane.

the up-to-date pretty picture palace became a cult. The theatres varied in size from a couple of hundred seats to 1,000 or even 2,000, but size and splendour were of less importance than good taste, elegance, and the preoccupation with daintiness. In the matter of names, too, was reflected the same search for class—Olympia, Bijou, Empire, Jewel, Gem, and Mirror were favourites, and endless variants such as Electroscope, Picture-drome, Pallasino and even Palaceadium. Such inept efforts to be dignified may have made a more favourable impression on the working-class public than on the classes for whom they were intended.

Programmes varied considerably in arrangement, but in general consisted of a one- to two-hour show changed twice weekly. The early ideal was a programme of varied short films—a drama, a few comics, a couple of interest films and a topical—and even after the advent of the long feature film many exhibitors clung firmly to the idea that what the public wanted above all was variety. The question of whether the programme should be interspersed with song slides or variety turns, too often inferior, was the centre of another sharp controversy which lasted for years, and variety turns persisted well into 1912 in the provinces although they had long since ceased to be popular in London. Other problems had to be faced. The danger (partly real and partly imagined) of fire, Sunday opening, and whether films should be accompanied by a lecturer all exercised the showman about the same time. Should programmes be continuous or twice nightly? The continuous programme became more general from 1909 onwards, and brought with it the delicate problem of how to persuade the fascinated audiences to leave after seeing the show through once. Ingenious solutions like specially numbered tickets or systems of electric light signals were suggested by some anxious individuals, and it was some time before the feeling disappeared that an official chucker-out was necessary.

An even more confusing dilemma arose. Which were the best seats? Theatrical tradition said those in the front, common sense denied this. But the habit died hard, especially as all too few of the bijou palaces had been provided with a sloping floor. The *Bioscope* recommended stern measures to reverse tradition, and dispassionately instructed that "separate entrances and exits must be provided for the cheapest people." Prices on the whole seem to have ranged from 3d. to 1s. or 1s. 6d. in the suburbs

and the provinces, although in the more "de luxe" of the West End theatres they rose to the extravagant level of 2s. Some were cheaper, of course:

The height of absurdity in the picture business has been reached at last. At a bioscope show in the Whitechapel Road four children are admitted for 1d.¹

But by 1910 the penny gaff was dead, although cheapness was still the mainstay of the picture theatre business. The showman's new longing for the *ton patrons* was able to exist side by side with a businesslike acceptance of the humble foundations of his rapidly growing fortunes, and when in 1912 some of the casualties of increasingly cut-throat competition suggested that all difficulties would be removed by a general rise of prices, the answer came from the showmen themselves that the moving picture show was the people's art, and would thrive only on low prices.

But the costs of exhibition were rising steadily with the rising standard of technical efficiency, the cost of films and front-of-the-house expenses. Costs naturally varied enormously between different theatres, but some idea of the change is given by a comparison of the Central Hall, Colne, one of the first buildings claimed to be especially constructed for picture shows, and the Palace Cinema in Princes Street, Edinburgh. The former, a small and modest hall, cost £2,000 to build; whereas the latter, the last word in sumptuousness some seven years later, cost £19,000. Building sites, of even greater importance than the cost of construction, rose even more. But other factors were not subject to such a conspicuous rise and if a suitable hall could be hired it was still possible in 1914 to run a modest show on relatively small capital. The cost of projection equipment varied from about £20 to £100 according to make and condition, and electrical equipment from £20 upwards depending on how much installation was necessary. Staff usually consisted of an operator, for whom 35s. to £2 a week was suggested by the *Bioscope* in 1912; a pianist for even less; a cashier, a doorman-cleaner at 25s. and a young attendant. The average weekly wage bill was estimated by F. W. Ogden Smith in 1914 as £12. At this time the average cost of film hire was said to be about the same. £10 had been sufficient in 1909 to hire 5,000 feet of the very best first-run films for a week, and £7 or £8 for the average programme, but by the summer of 1912 film prices had risen so much, because of the appearance

¹ *Bioscope*, December 2, 1909, p. 11.

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of the long feature film, that it was complained that a good first-run programme cost £20 or £24 a week and a second-run programme £16. But only the larger companies could afford such prices and £12 a week was still a more normal price, while the distinction between large, luxurious first-run houses and the "flea-pits" was becoming marked.

75,000 people were said by F. W. Ogden Smith to be engaged in the film industry in the theatre side alone by 1914.¹ The spread of more expensive, more carefully planned picture theatres was bound up with the appearance and consolidation of large companies with two or more halls and the most important feature of the boom which had taken place in picture theatre investment in these pre-war years was the expansion of the larger circuits. This reached a peak in 1910:

Dealing first with the theatre side of the business, we find the year 1910 must be termed the year of the boom in the business, and the day of companies with large capital. The average per company of registered capital is £10,000, whilst 1911 shows slightly in excess of £4,000 per company. . . . Judging from the figures of the past three months, 1913 will give the average capital for this year nearer £3,000, which shows that the Trade has a tendency to single theatre ownership.²

Although capital continued to pour into the industry and in 1913 even exceeded the 1910 figure, the tendency after 1910 was towards a greater number of smaller companies and the increase of large-scale organization was temporarily slackened.

Board of Trade figures show the rapidity with which film exhibition became a field for speculation:

1908	3 companies	Capital	£110,000
1909	103 "	"	£1,451,824
1910	295 "	"	£3,035,951
1911	306 "	"	£1,309,272
1912	464 "	"	£1,924,075
	<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/>		<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/>
	1,171		£7,831,122

Ogden Smith claimed that £2,500,000 should be added to the total to cover private capital in the business, giving a figure of over ten million pounds. The 544 companies registered in 1913 gave an additional capital

¹ *Bioscope*, June 4, 1914, p. 1009.

² *Ibid.*, March 27, 1913, p. 941.

of £3,298,285 bringing the total up to £13,629,407, or nearly £15 million if Ogden Smith's £1,000,000 new private capital is included.¹

The growing financial strength of exhibition interests is best realized by an examination of selected individual companies. One of the pioneer circuits was Electric Theatres (1908) Ltd. Founded originally at the end of 1907, it ran shows at Shepherd's Bush and Walworth and, with a capital of £50,000, had big plans for the opening of new theatres. Weekly receipts from the two original theatres more than doubled during the first year's working, and dividends of 40 per cent were paid. About a year later five theatres were in operation and seven more were planned. The policy of the company was typical—to supply a continuous 75-minute programme with a twice weekly change of films at an admission charge of 3d., which was exceeded only at the luxurious Theatre de Luxe in the Strand. By July 1909, the number of theatres had risen to twelve with a further sixteen planned or under construction. In this year the directors, needing money to carry out the planned development, tried to rush the shareholders into a big expansion of the company, which was thenceforward to have a capital of £400,000 and in addition to acquire control of both the production of films and the manufacture of raw stock. To do this, and to ensure that their unprecedented increase of theatres could continue without placing the company at the mercy of others for their film supply, the directors planned to buy the London Cinematograph Company, (producers and renters), the British and Colonial distribution rights of all Lumière films—this included the non-flam films of which people had such high hopes at the time—and extensive shares in one of their keenest competitors in the exhibition field, Biograph Theatres. This interesting scheme for vertical, as well as horizontal, integration fell through because of the opposition of the alarmed shareholders, who felt that dividends of 40 per cent were not to be lightly risked in this way. Nevertheless Electric Theatres continued to expand in a less spectacular fashion and by July 1910 had twenty-three theatres in operation. The disadvantages of being a pioneer now made themselves felt, however. Those theatres which had been built some years before were comparatively small and unambitious and were in constant need of alterations and modernization. Dividends

¹ It should be pointed out that Ogden Smith calculated these additions on an estimate of 6 to 7,000 picture theatres, which was probably far too high. The figures are of interest, however, as the only ones available.

dropped from the historic 40 per cent to 10 per cent in 1910 and the next year, and then to 5 per cent in 1912. By 1914 the circuit comprised only seventeen theatres and, although still one of the largest, was relatively unimportant.

Another pioneer company, Biograph Theatres Ltd., had much the same history. It was formed in October 1908, with the same capital as Electric Theatres and had five theatres in London districts by February 1909, and plans for seven more. Its dividends of 17½ per cent in 1909, and then 20 per cent in 1910, fell to 10 per cent in the next year and then to 7½ per cent, for the same reasons that had caused the similar decline of Electric Theatres. A worse case was that of Electric Palaces, which started in a small way in 1909 with a capital of £6,000, became a public company a year later with a capital of £75,000, and apparently through mismanagement was in the hands of the receivers by 1915.

The largest picture theatre company in point of capital in 1913 was Provincial Cinematograph Theatres Ltd., and in 1914 its recent offshoot, Associated Provincial Picture Houses. Formed in November 1909, with a capital of £100,000, the former had R. T. Jupp as its managing director and as its chairman Sir William Bass, sportsman and financier—a new type of participant in film business. Pursuing a policy of building large, important theatres in the more thickly populated provincial centres, this company was frequently quoted as a model of good management and made full use of the economies of large-scale organization in centralized booking, technical, musical and other departments. By early 1911 it had eight theatres. Next year this had risen to thirteen, and the capital was doubled. In 1913 this was doubled again and the London Film Company was promoted, immediately to become one of the most important British producing firms. This was the second time that an exhibiting company had entered into the field of production, but this time, unlike the ill-fated attempt of Electric Theatres (1908) Ltd., four years before, with complete success. By the beginning of the war, Provincial Cinematograph Theatres Ltd. had eighteen first-class theatres and, since July 1913, the distinction of being the only picture theatre company whose shares were quoted on the Stock Exchange—another sign of the times. Progress was irresistible, and in January 1914 this firm promoted yet a new company, Associated Provincial Picture Houses Ltd.,

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which was legally distinct but had the same directorate. This company, with a capital of £500,000, was bigger even than its parent company, and the biggest yet planned.

In 1914 there were 109 circuits in all, comprising some 15 per cent to 20 per cent of the total number of picture theatres in Britain. They varied in size from two to twenty-nine theatres, but most of them were quite small. No less than 96 had less than ten each. The thirteen larger circuits named in the accompanying table had an average size of fifteen and comprised 32 per cent of the circuit theatres. By far the largest proportion of the circuits (10 per cent) and especially the smaller ones were strictly local affairs, although those with their head offices in London, some third of the circuits, were less apt to be localized.

Circuits with 10 or more halls in 1914*	Registered Office	Number of halls
Albany Ward Circuit	Salisbury	29
Weisker Bros. Ltd.	Liverpool	22
United Electric Theatres Ltd.	London	21
Provincial Cinematograph Theatres Ltd.	London	18
Electric Theatres (1908) Ltd.	London	17
Broadhead's Theatres	Manchester	16
J. P. Moore & Montague Beaudyn Enterprises	Manchester	16
Thos. Thompson	Middlesbrough	16
Black's Theatres	Sunderland	12
Coutt's Circuit	Swansea	11
London and Provincial Electric Theatres	London	11
Central Hall Co.	London	10
George Green Circuit	Glasgow	10

* *Kinematograph Year Book* directory, 1915.

Estimates of how many picture theatres there were at any time during this period vary a great deal and are extremely unreliable. In 1913 a widely accepted estimate of picture theatres in the world as a whole was 60,000, of which 15,700 were stated by *Kinematograph Year Book* to be in America.¹ The *Bioscope* gave 4,000 as the figure for Great Britain in 1911, and by

¹ *Kinematograph Year Book*, 1914, p. 3.

1914 estimates varied from 5,000¹ to 7,000.² It is not indicated how these figures are computed, however, and in view of the fact that the 1915 *Kinematograph Year Book* directory lists only about 3,500 theatres it seems likely that the previous estimates were too high, for this edition of the directory was probably fairly complete. That published in 1914 had admittedly not been so, but there was plenty of time for enlargement and revision before the second edition was published, and moreover, the list in the *Bioscope Annual* for the same year tallies almost exactly. Nor can the discrepancy between 3,500 and the figures current at the time be due to the inclusion in the larger estimates of music-halls and other semi-permanent shows, since these are also to be found in the directories. Consequently, even allowing for the omission of a relatively large number of small out-of-the-way theatres, 4,500 or even 4,000 seems the largest figure possible.

The same unreliability is found in early estimates of the number of theatres in individual towns. In May 1910 the *Bioscope* credits London with 300, yet only one month later the *Daily Chronicle* with equal lack of confirmation puts it at 500. As much as five years later the *Kinematograph Year Book* directory puts the figures for London at 444 (London) and 129 (suburbs), making hardly more than 600 for Greater London even allowing for some omissions, and in the same year the *Bioscope Annual* directory lists 463 picture theatres for the London postal area of nine miles around Charing Cross. Incidentally Greater New York, with its smaller population, was said at the same date to have 1,200, or about twice as many.³ As far back as 1907 Carl Laemmle, on a visit to England, had marvelled at London's backwardness in establishing shop shows, and apparently London had continued to be relatively ill-served by picture theatres. It should be noticed that these figures are considerably higher than comparable figures to-day, a fact to be explained by the greater size of the modern theatre. Probably the town with the greatest number of theatres per head of population was Manchester, with its 111 theatres for a population of 714,000. Liverpool, on the other hand, had only 33 for an even larger population, and was still considered quite well served.

The Tables in Appendices A, B, and C to this chapter give a general picture of the extent to which picture theatres had by 1914 become a

¹ Ellis Griffith, *Kinematograph Year Book*, 1915, p. 55.

² F. W. Ogden Smith, *Bioscope*, June 4, 1914, p. 1009.

³ *Kinematograph Year Book*, 1914, p. 3.

normal feature of the urban, if not yet of the rural, scene. Heavily industrialized cities had by far the highest proportion of picture theatres per head, as indeed would be expected, for despite the new snobbery the film catered above all for the industrial worker. Quiet market towns, seaside resorts, the older University towns—all these lagged behind. Development was extremely uneven, and although there were still places with no permanent picture shows at all as late as 1910, very little later there were eight in a single quarter-mile radius at Peckham, and Tottenham Court Road already had three, while Bradford by early 1913 had ten and Birmingham was reported to have 100.

By 1911 many were feeling that theatre construction had gone far enough. R. T. Jupp, himself one of the most important exhibitors, was of the opinion that for a population of 200,000 one large continuous show of the 6d. to 1s. type was ample. But by 1914 this ratio had already been left far behind, and one show for every 10,000 people would have been nearer the actual figure. Towards the end of 1912, however, the pressure of too many shows was said to be making itself felt in London at least by thinner attendances all round. Yet construction continued unabated, and such a well-informed observer as Walter Reynolds of the L.C.C. could complain that the "promoter of picture theatres—the 'cinema adventurer'—has gone off his head."

Much of the criticism of continued building was no doubt merely the crescendo of warning voices which, ever since its inception, had foretold the imminent death of the new "craze." In actual fact there seemed to be little slackening in the growth of the film-going public. At the same time the older, smaller, and less well-equipped theatres were undoubtedly suffering from the presence of the more recently designed bijou palaces, and an incidental result of the increased competition which few people regretted was the final disappearance of the rattle-trap and murky penny gaff. The shady days of the picture show's robust infancy were past, and it had succeeded in acquiring a new, if desperately thin, air of refinement.

(2) THE AUDIENCE

The size of the picture-going public is even more debatable than the number of theatres, and only the humblest of guesses, in the roundest of

figures, is possible. Out of the general welter of self-congratulation in the trade Press were flung occasional figures which were startling, but fragmentary and unproven. On Easter Monday 1909, for example, it was reported that one in every twelve Birmingham citizens trooped to the pictures; in 1910 a champion of Sunday opening was so far carried away by the angry disputes of that year as to cry that half a million Londoners would be deprived of their Sunday entertainment if the picture theatres were shut: while *From Manger to Cross* and *Dante's Inferno*, the box office sensations of 1913, claimed their 25,000 a week each at certain theatres.

Such figures say little. Overall estimates, if they give a more general picture, are at the same time even more dubious. It was widely held before 1914 that the weekly attendance in Britain numbered seven or eight million (as against twenty-five to thirty million in 1947) and £15,000,000 was quoted as a rough figure of annual box office takings. It should be clearly realized that these figures were based on, and are of no greater validity than, the exaggerated figure of 7,000 picture theatres current at the time.

Whatever the number of the picture-loving millions, it was a constant thorn in the exhibitor's flesh that they seemed to lack "class." A nagging shame drove him to patronize the people he served. Cinema prices catered for the music-hall public, and many people were introduced to films in the first place by seeing them at music halls. Consequently it was no cause for surprise that the audience for the two types of show was substantially the same. Cheapness and accessibility made the film the drama of the masses. They formed the weekly film habit, they queued outside and they chewed inside, leaning to one side to see round the large hat of the lady in front or simply to be nearer their sweethearts. The impropriety of this was the subject of many a letter to the papers, and those hats were no laughing matter either:

Nothing is more annoying than to be seated behind a large hat at a picture theatre. A man . . . last week was so provoked by one of these massive creations that he lost his temper, damaged the hat and assaulted the lady.¹

They hissed and clapped, whistled when the film broke down and, we assume, were suitably impressed by the potted plants and tasteful plaster

¹ *Bioscope*, May 19, 1912, p. 431.

work. Moreover they were becoming sophisticated and at ease among the conventions of life on the screen. But although they no longer ducked as the train rushed at them, the trade could still have its laugh at the old man who in the interests of safety demanded that the screen should be made fireproof, or that the rays from the projector should be thrown through a tube.

If the converted public was respectable and docile, the unconverted were not. Quite late in the period an irate ratepayer wrote to his local council that:

The matter was really a serious one, for there could not be the slightest room for doubt that in a respectable residential locality these places of amusement could only be characterized as public nuisances to the local residents. When planted in surroundings such as those from which they derived their patrons, no great harm resulted, but in the case under consideration they must draw their custom from a distance, to the prejudice of those who would not under any circumstances patronize the performance. . . . When the riff-raff of the surrounding neighbourhoods are drawn into a quiet residential locality nothing but wholesale depreciation can result.¹

But such choleric middle-class opposition was futile, for the working classes already adored their picture palaces, and a half-curious, half-ashamed trip of exploration was rapidly becoming fashionable in other circles as well. The Electric Theatre of Hammersmith Road in 1909 was "patronized by the élite of Kensington, many coming in motor-cars and carriages." One gratified West End proprietor became lyrical in his delight with the aristocratic clientèle of his elegant and well-run establishment, and irritated his fellow exhibitors with advice as to how they, too, could entertain "nobles and ladies." "The Classes" were becoming more tolerant as the Bijous and Gems increased their purchases of bevelled mirrors and plush tip-up seats. Surely the final seal on presentability was set by Mr. Asquith when he "for the first time in his life entered the portals of a cinematograph theatre . . . he laughed heartily, and continually made witty comments anent the pictures."²

What did this public want? Everything, it seems. Complaints that there were too many dramas—"we want to see the world"—were only equalled by the clamour for more dramas instead of the travel films. "Give us sound, sensible stuff that touches a responsive chord in every human

¹ *Bioscope*, March 9, 1911, p. 5.

² *Ibid.*, July 23, 1914, p. 321.

THE INDUSTRY AND THE PUBLIC

heart," says the showman in 1907. "Picture theatre audiences like their subjects hot and strong, and their idea of humour is broad."

Scientific surveying of audiences was many years ahead, although this reminds one strangely of an instrument used in an American investigation many years later.

A machine for recording the opinions of audiences on first nights has been invented. It is called the psephograph, and is the work of an Italian gentleman who is visiting England in order to introduce his machine into some of the London theatres. In shape the psephograph is something like a penny-in-the-slot machine, with four dials labelled "good," "bad," "indifferent" and "total." By passing a metal disc into one of the three slits one's opinion of a play can be automatically registered.¹

But such fallible machines were hardly necessary to see that the audiences loved action and pathos, with the very important condition that justice should eventually triumph. This was probably a fair statement of the position:

Undoubtedly the public want films with plenty of action, for these films are always received with loud and appreciative applause. Films in which there is a touch of pathos also seem to be favourites, and there seems a great liking for those films in which the criminal, although he temporarily escapes, is always subsequently tracked down and brought to justice . . . comics are certainly always popular, whilst films depicting sport or current events are sure to go down well. A religious subject arouses instant attention, and patriotic films seem to appeal to a more limited circle, but all classes apparently appreciate travel subjects, or those depicting moving scenes in countries far removed from their scope of travel.²

But everyone had his own idea of what was wanted, based at least as much on his own predilections as on his experience of audience reactions in any particular district. There seems to have been quite a substantial number of enthusiasts determined to prove, in optimistic defiance of the obvious popularity of sensational melodramas, that the public was pining for the old actuality film. Conflict was sharpest over the Industrial Film. The sniping had already begun between those who held that reality and instruction were the proper field for the film, and that fiction was a

¹ *Bioscope*, September 30, 1909, p. 11.

² *Ibid.*, October 7, 1909, p. 4.

dangerous ingredient to be used sparingly, and those who asserted with equal vehemence that the cinema should be used to make people cry and laugh, not to study the factory or mine where they spent the best part of their lives. Provided that they were neither too long nor too frequent, industrial films seem to have been well enough liked for a few years. But as usual, the public itself was inarticulate.

The endless gambling on *What the Public Wants* was already in full swing. Already the depressing divergence was emerging between the business man who wants to play down to the lowest level and the artist who believes in the audience's capacity to follow him to the highest. Emerging, moreover, as a chasm between those who sold the films to the public and those who made them. The film's dual existence as an industry and as an art was already troubling those who lived by it and those who loved it.

To the Editor of *The Bioscope*.

Sir, To my mind, the most interesting of the many interesting points raised by your symposium on "What the Public Wants," is the question as to whether the average audience really cares for "art in the film," or whether it is quite content with commonplace mediocrity. By "art in the film" I mean the kind of work which is imaginative, individual, and really creative as compared with that which is merely a reproduction on conventional lines of something that has gone before.

Personally, I firmly believe that the public is really interested in the technical and artistic development of the picture play, and that it is quite ready to support the manufacturer who shows originality and imagination. There are many exhibitors who systematically feed their audiences upon banal, mediocre stuff in the sincere belief that the latter will not appreciate anything better. That this fear of anything novel is unnecessary has surely been proved by the immense success of such films as *The Mysteries of Paris*, *Quo Vadis?* and several other masterpieces, most of which, at the time of their first appearance, were regarded with faint-hearted misgivings by many exhibitors as "too artistic" for the public's taste. . . . If the public is not given an opportunity to test and select, how can it ever be in a position to want anything.

Yours, etc.,

JUNIUS.

London, S.W.

February 21, 1914.¹

¹ *Bioscope*, February 26, 1914, p. 955.

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To the Editor of *The Bioscope*.

Sir, It is all very well for your ingenuous correspondent of last week, "Junius" to write in a high and lofty, but entirely theoretical, manner about "art in the film." He, in common with a good many other people, seems to forget that the picture theatre industry is a *business*, and not merely a spare time amusement. Business being business, the only standard by which a film can be judged is its commercial value.

The exhibitor is not altogether a fool, nor wilfully a "Philistine" (as "Junius" no doubts likes to regard him), and, in nine cases out of ten when he turns down a film as being "too artistic," his judgement is perfectly sound. It would, of course, be a very delightful world if we could all indulge our artistic fancies regardless of any solid mercenary considerations; but unfortunately, it is the public's taste that we have to consider, and not our own caprices. The exhibitor who kept a good thing from his public out of wanton spite would be quite as blameworthy as the exhibitor who forced upon his public a so-called "artistic" thing it did not want. But there are few exhibitors who are such bad business men as to commit either of these follies.

No, if "Junius" is concerned about the nature of the fare provided for the public's consumption let him go forth bareheaded to the street corners and tackle the *public* upon the point—not bullyrag the unfortunate exhibitor, who is quite innocent of any desire, save to cater for his audiences in the manner which is most satisfactory to them.

SHOWMAN.¹

Kennington, S.E.

March 3, 1914.

There was always an inferior type of showman who, lagging along behind everybody else, would loudly declare in the face of any new development that the public did not like this and did not like that. The greatest timidity of their unknown audience, and perhaps too tender a regard for the supposed susceptibilities of the desirable *ton patrons*, were shown in condemnation of the gruesome in films. News films of the Messina earthquake in late 1908 were returned by many exhibitors as too terrible to show, and accusations of brutality in the fight film beloved by earlier showmen, particularly in the Johnson-Jeffries and Johnson-Wells contests of 1910 and 1911, touched the exhibitors in a most sensitive spot. The fact that Johnson was a negro, and a negro who had beaten a white man, worried them considerably. The great showman T. H. West expressed the opinion that suicides, drunks and lunatic scenes were particularly

¹ *Bioscope*, March 5, 1914, p. 1006.

objectionable to the audience of 1910 although many would say that the rising popularity of the pictures at that time was being borne along on a wave of precisely those things. For the most dearly loved of all themes was a drunkard husband or father driving some unfortunate woman to a lovely suicide, whereupon he was racked by such a fearful remorse that his mind gave way and "he became a lunatic"—a lunacy more often gruesome than pathetic.

Triumphant know-alls wagged warning fingers when the long film appeared. This time, it was felt, the manufacturerers were over-reaching themselves. The public would never stand it. It was patently absurd to think an audience would endure one film for more than an hour at the utmost, and besides, what would happen if people came in after it had started? The great charm of the picture show was its variety, and the fact that the spectator could walk in at any time. Much cunning, too, was spent in detecting "padding" in films, at a time when their artistic development clearly required that films should become longer and the pace slower, allowing a more subtle treatment of story and character. But such complaints could plead hard-headed business sense. The more action per foot the better value for the money.

Newspaper advertisements, throwaways, posters and even sandwichmen and travelling tableaux were enlisted to make sure that the public proved the showman's prognostications of what it would like. Publicity of all types, from the hoarding to the friendly chat with the editor of the local paper, became more and more important and more deliberate. Urged on by the trade papers, which made a special feature of fatherly guidance in this respect, the showmen took the old art of booming and made it a science. A "knowledge of psychology" became part of the equipment of the smart manager, and the vanity, snobbery and sentimentality of likely patrons were tactfully stimulated. The vicarious satisfaction derived by the respectable from witnessing the seven deadly sins, suitably punished, was sensibly exploited.

Much importance was attached to the "artistic" appearance of posters, and the natural tendency to represent the most bloodthirsty or sensational incident in the film was deplored by more farsighted elements in the trade. The cartoonist Harry Furniss designed a set of mock posters which were hardly more remarkable for their flamboyantly horrific appeal than the

real thing, and in characteristically violent language he ascribed the failure of the picture theatres to attract the better class audiences entirely to the vulgarity of their advertising.

Any ordinary theatrical venture would be ruined instanter by the exhibition of posters such as these. They are fifty per cent worse even than the most atrocious poster advertising the most plebeian play in the vilest and most poverty-stricken purlieus frequented by the veriest riff-raff of the amusement-going public. Decent people are instantly shocked and repelled by their flaunting hideousness, and that the less educated section of the community is in any way attracted by them is open to considerable doubt. It is questionable whether the latter study them to any extent, for they do not enter a cinematograph show for the purpose of seeing any one particular picture; the nature of the bill of fare is perfectly familiar to them, and they pay their reckoning with the intention of indulging in a full feast. For those, however, who hesitate to enter on the score of the possible vulgarity of the entertainment to be witnessed, one glimpse of these awful posters is amply sufficient. They shudder, and in scriptural manner pass by on the other side.¹

How much influence, if any, the increasing attention paid to publicity had in enlarging the picture audience is hard to say. Certainly the film was well on its way to success before that process began whereby publicity came to account for perhaps a larger share of costs than in any other industry. But despite admonishments like that of Furniss, advertising became more and more lavish, lower in its appeal and more lurid in its language as the key to the market passed from the manufacturer to the renters and many who wished nothing but good to the drama of the masses felt that the effect of violent and morbid advertising on the public was more deleterious than that of the films themselves.

For the Influence of the Film was already a popular phrase, and under its cloak were discovered a most varied collection of effects real and supposed, from the increased circulation of library books to the abolition of war, from the emptying of the churches to a new way of filling them. Sir Albert Rollit hoped

That this wonderful new invention would be the means of making every young man see the advantages of enlistment (i.e. in the armed forces) and would lead to the building up of a sturdy race, who would be able to march twenty to thirty miles and do a really effective bayonet exercise.²

¹ *Our Lady Cinema*, by Harry Furniss, 1914, p. 144.

² *Bioscope*, March 27, 1913, p. 945.

The educational value of entertainment films, as distinct from the avowed instructional, was appreciated by a growing body of opinion. It was perceived that films were truly an international language. Comedies and dramas, as well as travel films, came from many countries and gave many a painless lesson in foreign customs. And as the wave of literary and stage adaptations began to choke the films in its improving stranglehold it was felt that at last culture (in the shape of potted Harrison Ainsworth and the too-mature Bernhardt) would really be brought to the people. On the other side of the balance the mis-education of films was the subject of another of the Furniss fulminations:

Rather might one describe them as anti-educational, a detriment rather than a help, and absolutely futile to improve the mind of the masses . . . Sarah Bernhardt as the divine Sarah is incomparable; but Sarah Bernhardt as Elizabeth, Queen of England, resembles history's Queen Bess about as much, relatively, as a 40-knot torpedo destroyer does one of Drake's three-deckers.¹

Complaints that American slang would bring ruin upon the English language did not wait for the sound film, but were aroused by the subtitles. The 1912 coal strikes, it seems, failed to lead to the usual violence because the strikers spent their temporary freedom at the pictures. Workers' clubs, evening schools and the penny bank were all said to be languishing because their patrons preferred spending their money and their time at the pictures. A chorus of complaints of the film's bad effect on higher education arose:

. . . these inane picture shows, which I regard as academies for hooligans and lubbers, and which benefit nobody but the owners and their employees. In less than ten years the country will realize the moral and intellectual havoc wrought by these baneful institutions.²

But of the most important and widespread effect there is little room for doubt—the social centre for the lower classes began to move from the pub to the picture theatre, and the weekly flick replaced, or at least offered an alternative to, the blind drunk. This was a social achievement of which the film trade was intensely and vociferously conscious. Wisely they clung to this undeniable fact, and it stood them in good stead in the continual defensive warfare against public-spirited busybodies.

It was realized very early that a large (perhaps the largest) proportion

¹ *Bioscope*, January 23, 1913, p. 257.

² *Ibid.*, July 10, 1913, p. 85.

of film audiences were children, for whom moving pictures had an immediate and irresistible appeal. The half-price admission was within their range. Theatres were open in the daytime, easy to slip into, and to sit in the dark and capture cattle rustlers, leap from a burning train or even watch a remorseful drunkard go mad—this made playing truant worthwhile. One of the chief grounds on which was based the frequent restriction of children's attendance at picture theatres in the evening was the bad effect it had on evening schools. "Busybodies and meddlers," as they were described by *Kinematograph Weekly*, found that to ban children from the pictures in the evening unless with an adult made an excellent thin end to their wedge. When, however, the temptation to "play wag" in the daytime was essayed as a reason for banning children from the afternoon performances as well, exhibitors felt that things had gone far enough. Many towns actually tried, with varying success, to make the granting of cinematograph licences conditional on the acceptance of such regulations concerning the admission of children, but all such restrictions were the subject of incessant bickering between the trade and the local authorities and no sooner did one side gain an advantage before the other was preparing to renew the attack.

Many charitable bodies and local authorities and some exhibitors endeavoured to counter the militant representatives of the social conscience by arranging special children's matinees of suitable films. Unfortunately, "suitable" usually meant dull. Apart from the annual spate of Christmas pantomime films, there seems to have been no particular effort to make special films for children. There can hardly have seemed any need, since they flocked to see the Westerns, the slapstick comics and crime stories, and took even the social dramas and sentimental moralizing in their stride. The stories were immature enough in any case. But most objections to children's cinema-going, apart from querulous fears for their eyesight, the juvenile delinquency extremists and sheer prejudice, were based on the reasonable view that although there might be nothing harmful in films as such, the majority of subjects treated were not suitable for young people.

Teachers were prominent in the protests, and a former President of the National Union of Teachers wished to substitute "clean, healthy plays and pictures of the beauty-spots of our isles and empire, together with

pictures representing the great industries of the country." Kindly meant, but hardly inspiring. But such a spokesman was more than friendly in comparison with the juvenile delinquency hunters, who were already in full cry. With heroic impatience of facts and figures they made an established stalking-horse of the film's encouragement of crime. When a little boy committed suicide by hanging, it was pointed out with more conviction than proof that it was because he had seen someone do it in a picture a few weeks previously. Boys caught housebreaking quickly learnt to plead, with tears of touching repentance, that they had learnt it from the pictures. More plausibly, little thieves switched the burden of their excuses for stealing from sweet-money to film-money, although as one indignant exhibitor protested no one had ever proposed banning children from sweetshops. Curiously enough, the trade reaction in the first place was not the scathing derision of later years but a righteous horror against the (unnamed) makers of the offending films. Methods of crime must never be shown, and it was recommended that on the contrary the penalties of crime should always be stressed. But the tone of the argument changed swiftly in the next couple of years. After a spell during which everybody disassociated themselves from the wicked films in question it became apparent that here was a body of critics who were blind to reason. Certainly, many were actuated by a legitimate anxiety and to infer otherwise would be unjust and absurd. But this particular topic seems from the very beginning of the film industry also to have attracted under its colourful banner a peculiarly obstinate type of kill-joy so offensively vocal that his prejudice brought reasonable anxiety into disrepute. The trade speedily tired of its own attitude of unctuous innocence, and began to jeer impatiently. Nor was the film trade alone in seeing the absurdity of singling out films as morally harmful, from among all the harmful factors in the environment of so many juvenile delinquents. Here and there an odd clergyman, teacher or social worker would check the fanatics with the uncomfortable reflection that the films could hardly provide the children of the poor with greater encouragements to crime than their lives already gave them. One prison chaplain, faced with a decrease in the number of young prisoners in his particular prison in a Northern industrial town, went so far as to ascribe it to "the various picture theatres, to which large numbers of people go who would otherwise be in the public-houses

or loitering in the streets." The voice of reason spoke in *The Times*.¹ Speaking of the widespread restrictions on the admission of children, it said:

No one can doubt that such restrictions make for good—if his mind is satisfied about what the excluded children are doing instead of watching the pictures.

We are face to face, in fact, with the besetting difficulty of preventive legislation. To exclude children from public-houses, or to rob the small boy of his cigarette, is not to raise doubtful alternatives.

But any proposal to exclude children from cinematograph exhibitions suggests a number of questions. Are their homes better ventilated than the "palaces," or the street corners less draughty? Are the stories they are likely to be reading more conducive to knowledge and virtue than the pictures which they are not allowed to enjoy?

Is the print of such stories, read in such light as their homes are likely to possess, any better for their eyesight than are the films? Will they go to bed any earlier or sleep any sounder for being left at home? Is the education which they receive at school presented in the most attractive way possible, and offered to them as a pathway to knowledge and activity, not as a punishment for being young?

If all these questions could be answered in the affirmative, the sooner that children, whether accompanied by their elders or not, were excluded from evening exhibitions at the picture palaces the better; although, of course, the exclusion must, in common fairness, be extended also to the theatres and music-halls.

But there was one bright aspect of the film upon which everyone was agreed—its potential value to education. And this included not merely the casual broadening of general knowledge provided by the average theatrical programme, but ordinary school education. Agreement stopped dead, however, the moment harmonious discussion of principles was left behind. The marvels of visual aids to education would be expounded in perfect peace by trade and teacher alike, but the trade, with its usual intemperate energy, was not content with philosophy. Action was pressed. And action revealed differences and difficulties so profound that by the beginning of the war, over ten years after the Urban natural science and microscopic films had suggested such great possibilities in this sphere, the outlook was if anything less promising than it had been ten years earlier.

¹ January 1914, quoted in the *Bioscope*, January 29, 1914, p. 401.

In 1907 *Kinematograph Weekly* could believe "the time draws near when there will exist a demand for subjects of an educational character." Two years later the *Bioscope* was still saying that "the development is inevitable, and when it does come we hope the trade will be in a position to fulfil adequately the important function to which it is called." (It was indicated, although discreetly, that "the adoption of the moving pictures . . . in schools . . . would mean a very large increase of business.") The head of the Lumière Company in England was more daring: "I am sufficiently optimistic to predict its universal employment as an educational means in the very near future."¹ Panegyrics along the old familiar lines ran down, were wound up and started again and again. But the curtain inexplicably failed to rise on the actual use of films in education, and all the time new criticisms were being added to the heavy mass of hostile inertia. Murmurs about the loss of individual attention, and the value of children's active participation in lessons, began to emerge from the quiet of first polite agreement.

In actual fact there were hardly any films at the time which could be described strictly as educational. There were spasmodic attempts to use the factual film for special instruction, research or even education, in a broad sense. But such examples, although interesting, remain isolated.

Research into animal movement had been one of the mainsprings of animated photography, and so of the whole film business. It was not surprising that it was occasionally rediscovered. Professor William Stirling gave an important lecture to the Royal Institution in May 1911, illustrated by Gaumont films, and suggesting that this technique of research could be extended to many physiological and biological experiments. Late in 1907 Dr. H. Cambell Thomson, assistant physician to Middlesex Hospital, broke new ground by illustrating medical lectures with films. The films had been made by the Urban Trading Company and were shown at various hospitals, and, on January 27, 1908, at the Royal Society of Medicine. Such daring caused quite a stir, and probably represented the peak of the film's invasion of the academic world for some years to come. Some other examples of its instructional use are less august. Stories were told of a prize fighter who studied films of his opponent's technique. The Women's National Health Association experimented with the use of films on baby

¹ *Bioscope*, February 11, 1909, p. 5.

care. A lecture to the Institution of Automobile Engineers in January 1911 was illustrated by films of the behaviour of various metals under test.

The subject of the paper was "Castellated Shafts," and in order to enable the eye to follow the kind of straining action which the specimens underwent during twisting, circles were painted round the circumference of the test pieces, which were also striped longitudinally. While the photograph was being taken the test was prolonged, but the film was projected on the screen in about one-fortieth of the time taken for the test. This is probably the first time that the cinematograph has been used for research of this character, and the exaggeration in the pictures produced, both in respect to the magnification of the specimens and in regard to the shortening of the time during which the changes take place, affords a valuable aid to investigations on the behaviours of material during plastic flow.¹

There were plenty of lectures, particularly geographical lectures, which were illustrated by films, and it looked for a while as though the film would continue the process begun by the lantern lecture and make education as popular as entertainment. "Cinematinees," which were more or less educational matinees, were given at the London Pavilion for some months, and Cinema House in Oxford Street ran short seasons² of "schoolboy matinees" of specially selected films. Some enterprising Education Committees toyed with the idea of letting school children spend a certain amount of their time at shows of educational films. But it was only in these isolated and unsystematic cases that interest in the educational use of the film was showing any real life and meanwhile the small proportion of quasi-instructional films which were included in the ordinary entertainment programme were steadily decreasing.

This dilatory progress of the educational use of the film was not due to any lack of support from the trade. In fact the most difficult problem, how to get the films actually into the schools, was faced by them with boundless optimism. But since substandard film was not yet in use projection equipment was expensive and subject to licence, and not until there was a sufficient pool of suitable films could any education authority be expected to consider such an outlay. The publication of Urban's large educational catalogue³ had been a sign that this enthusiastic educationist considered the time ripe for a large-scale offensive after the remarkable,

¹ *Bioscope*, January 26, 1911, p. 51.

² 1910 and 1911.

³ *Urbanora the World's Educator*, May 1908.

vigorous but still spasmodic spadework of the past five years. The catalogue contained some thousands of feet of film which could be called educational without stretching the term too far, taken during these five years. But apart from the natural history and geographical films (the latter were the usual travel film type), few would have been suitable for use in schools. There was a large proportion of quite unsuitable medical films; dramas based on incidents in the Bible; and "historical" headed a list of, first, historical pageants which had recently been produced by the theatrical producer Louis N. Parker and, second, a series of short films illustrating different methods of duelling. Such uncertain aids were hardly likely to spur teachers or local authorities to immediate action. Reasonable doubts as to whether the film was ready for such tasks were reinforced by the general question whether, indeed, it was any use taking up a passing craze like the cinematograph. Prejudice against this vulgar new thing was increased by the exceedingly unacademic impression created by many rather poor "industrials" and interest films often confused with ideal education subjects.

Enthusiasm spread, not yet aware of the fundamental need for a substantial safety film. Early in 1911 the *Bioscope* opened a campaign for the practical recognition of the educational value of the films, with a series of editorials "Appealing to the Government of this Country to Open their Eyes to the Educational Value of Moving Pictures." The avowed aim of this extremely premature appeal was to secure the introduction of educational films into Elementary and Secondary Schools, and was looked upon with some sympathy by many intellectuals. Sir Ray Lankester, the scientist, was representative:

Moreover, they can give to large gatherings of people, with the greatest ease and absolute truthfulness, a real view of microscopic life, and enable everyone to have a true conception of what the microscopist and biologist are actually studying; they make science less remote—less the possession of the privileged few, and they enlist the sympathy and interest of our fellow citizens for its glorious work. I look forward to the provision, not later than next year, of a cinematograph lantern in every board school, and in every college classroom.¹

School projectors were to be installed, and operated by travelling projectionists or alternatively some system might be arranged whereby

¹ *Bioscope*, January 19, 1911, p. 9.

neighbouring schools would jointly hire a picture theatre for morning shows. The value of visual aids was expounded vaguely and at length, with the usual unsuitable emphasis on medical and surgical films. Nor was there yet any realization that visual treatment was appropriate only to certain subjects; in the first flush of enthusiasm all subjects were included indiscriminately, and, indeed, the film seemed to be regarded as a substitute for, rather than an aid to, lessons.

Following their campaign, which aroused considerable interest in the national Press, the *Bioscope* organized several demonstrations at Cinema House of educational films with lectures by Arthur Newman. The titles on the first programme are representative of the best that could be found:

<i>In the Twin Falls Country</i>	produced by	Essanay
<i>Birth of a Big Gun</i>	„ „	Cricks & Martin
<i>The Planetary System</i>	„ „	Pathé
<i>Nero</i>	„ „	Warwick
<i>Zoological Gardens, Rome. Series II</i>	„ „	Cines
<i>Romance of Insect Life</i>	„ „	Williamson
<i>Birds in their Nests</i> †	„ „	Pathé ¹

Next year a further series was arranged, once again with a heavy emphasis on medical and natural history subjects. Similar series were organized both by Pathé and by the *Evening News*. Such demonstrations attracted favourable attention not only from educationists but also from many eminent and respectable people who had, perhaps, never seen a film before, or not since the earliest and crudest days. But building up good-will was not the same thing as precipitating action.

As far back as the beginning of 1909 the L.C.C. had considered and rejected proposals for school projectors. When, in the summer of 1912, the L.C.C. asked the *Bioscope* to arrange yet another demonstration especially for them, people held their breath and felt at last something was going to be done. But it proved to be just one more demonstration. Members of the L.C.C. Education Committee again investigated the possibilities, and after the *Bioscope's* proudly presented shows Walter Reynolds of the L.C.C., one of the keenest protagonists educational films ever had, spoke with confidence of a plan to equip London schools and even to engage in production. But his confidence was unfounded. Proposals

¹ *Bioscope*, February 16, 1911, p. 67.

which were put to the Education Committee early the next year confined themselves to suggestions for a further series of experimental shows, this time to be tried at polytechnics. These exceedingly mild proposals were barely passed by a majority of one, and were finally shelved because of the Finance Committee's trepidation at the thought of the expensive consequences should they succeed. Unlike the enthusiasts, who shut their eyes to the present inadequacy of educational films, the L.C.C. was relieved to acquiesce in the convenient formula devised by the conservative—"it is not possible at present to give any considered judgement as to the educational value of the cinematograph as a medium of instruction." Teachers were specifically discouraged from taking school parties to any sort of film show.

For a while it had looked as if the teachers themselves, if not the educational authorities, might prove to be interested, but even this failed. In early 1913 *The School World* published three articles on the cinematograph, and occasional cases of actual use were from time to time reported—Oundle Grammar School in the summer of 1912 surprised everybody by acquiring a projector, Westgate Road Council Schools in April 1913 had a projector lent to them by Gaumont for a trial six months, and similar experiments were tried in Bradford and elsewhere. In November 1913, the London Teachers' Association appointed a committee to report on suitable topics for new films, but the general conclusion of the meeting—that proper selection of subjects and experienced presentation by the teacher were needed before the films would be a real use—while true, was unfortunately taken by teachers as an easy excuse for dropping the whole matter.

By the beginning of 1914, when the National Union of Teachers expressly declined to discuss cinematography at its annual conference, the old blithe optimism of the devotees had understandably dissolved, to be replaced by powerless exasperation. The formation of an Educational Kinematograph Society at the beginning of 1914 was the sole practical result of over ten years of educational films and six of hard campaigning. The early view of the Secretary of the National Education Association at the beginning of the period still prevailed:

I am obliged to say that I much doubt the value of bioscope pictures in education. A good teacher studies the different capacity of his class, and in

addressing them regulates his pace and the fullness with which he treats his subject, so as to carry with him the intelligence of all without strain. And this is possible when using pictures, diagrams or even lantern slides. But the mechanical regular movement of a bioscope offers no such opportunity. To the mental strain on the backward part of a class, there is also to be added the cerebral excitement and perhaps even irritation of this process; and the strain and damage to the eyesight. The last is already a terrible evil in our schools in connection with much simpler apparatus.¹

(3) THE MARKET

The practice of film hire had appeared extremely early in Britain. But in the first ten years of the British film industry talent tended to flow into the small production companies rather than into the purely commercial branches and by 1906 so little further progress had been made in market practice that Britain appeared backward in comparison with some other countries. In America, for example, hire had almost completely replaced free sale. Compared with this the British market, with only four² hiring firms, seemed primitive.*

But after the first ten years the increasing complexity of production deterred British entrants to the film world and energy was diverted to exhibiting and film dealing. Middleman activity was extremely lively throughout the period, and at least until the revival of production round about 1911 the structure of the industry was changing more rapidly in this branch than in that of production.

The system of distribution with which the period began was that of open market sale. Copies of a film would be sold by the makers to any exhibitors and dealers who wanted to buy it, and the dealers in turn would sell, or in a few cases rent, as many copies as they could. The retail price of a new film was a uniform 6d. a foot (later 4d.) regardless of the nature of the subject, with corresponding hire charges, but few exhibitors could afford such prices every week even though most of them recouped themselves by selling their stock on the second-hand market when they had finished with it. Lower prices were reached in two ways: renting prices fell according to the number of runs the film had seen, selling prices fell

¹ *Bioscope*, February 11, 1909, p. 5.

² According to William Jury (*Bioscope*, June 15, 1911, p. 497) there were only four hiring firms in 1906.

as the films were sold to 2nd-, 3rd-, and *nth*-hand dealers. Thus in both cases price varied according to the age of the print, but nothing else.

The system had its defects. It was impossible to keep track of the large number of copies of each film and, although illegal dumping by pirate firms was said to be of comparatively small dimensions in Britain, it was not unknown and the import of pirate copies from U.S.A. was regarded as a considerable evil. The custom of sending batches of films to buyers on approval was also the source of much abuse. Films were often kept lying about for days or even weeks before they were sent back or, worse still, a less scrupulous customer might exhibit them for a week and then return them, as if rejected, possibly in a deplorable condition. But the disadvantage felt most at the time was that there was no limit to the duration of a film's currency, but every reason for its prolongation. At the time when exposed film was 4d. a foot, for example, a complete programme would cost a renter some £100; supposing he let it at £6 a week he would not start to show a profit until after some four months, and by this time the films would be decidedly the worse for wear. But in actual fact programmes were often rented for less—£5 was considered normal in 1909, and the *Bioscope* regarded even £2 2s. as reasonable—since they were run for so long that even prices like these were profitable. The same conditions obtained in the selling market and the poor little films, to their makers' shame and disgust, were sold and resold until they ended, tattered and scratched and a disgrace to the industry, in a job lot at a farthing a foot. Even "topicals" circulated long after they had ceased to deserve their name.

Meanwhile scores of new films were being poured on to the market week after week, and the total stock available to showmen was growing to enormous proportions. Fifty copies of Williamson's little best-seller, *Still Worthy of the Name*¹ were sold in its first two or three weeks, while greater favourites such as Hepworth's *Rescued by Rover*² and Haggart's *The Poachers* sold some four hundred copies each and circulated for at least four or five years. The makers' fear that this accumulation might actually drag down the price of films in general became vocal early in the period with the entirely inappropriate shibboleth of "Overproduction!"

The bogey Overproduction called forth its twin, Undercharging. It

¹ 520 ft., released August 1908.

² 425 ft., released late 1905.

was in the latter part of 1906 that the large international firm of Pathé reduced its price from 6d. to 4d. a foot. This lashed indignant competitors in the British market into a fury, and Pathé's largest English rival came out in a rash of vicious advertisements announcing "Honest trading is not affected by dishonest competition," with broad hints that Pathé could afford to bring films out cheaply because they "rob other firms of their ideas and pirate their productions" (an insinuation which, by the way, met with more than a little sympathy). But majestic wrath was useless against a firm whose output constituted some 20 per cent of all films circulating here, and within a month or two every British firm had perforce followed Pathé's example. Despite complaints of uneconomical charges it seemed possible that English makers might even be forced into another downward step in the price war by Pathé, which had thus lost its temporary advantage and was seeking a new one. The film purchaser, who had so far reaped the benefit, hopefully awaited the next development. Signs of this were already appearing. In 1909 Cricks and Martin issued a film at 3d. a foot, murmuring apologetically that its production had been very cheap because it contained few actors and little set scenery, while the Clarendon Company so far forgot itself as to distribute one of its less successful films free, a desperate gesture which lifted a good many eyebrows.

The price war and its related problem of the duration of a film's circulation is discussed later¹ in connection with the growth and interrelation of the trade bodies. It was more, however, than a question of sectional interests, to be settled simply by the relative power of these bodies. It reflected a very real problem of such far-reaching implications that its solution could only be achieved when the time was ripe for a fundamental change of attitude to films as such.

The basic question was simply on what principle the price of a film was to be determined. The uniform price per foot with which the period had opened implied that all films were of approximately the same value to their purchasers, units in a more or less standard line of goods. By the end of the pre-war period a large proportion of films were recognized as highly individual products with values as incalculable as those of works of art. The commercial transition from Merchandise to Art had been affected in company with a parallel psychological shift.

¹ Chapter II, Section 2.

Recognition that exposed film was not a homogeneous commodity was implicit in the descending prices of second- and third-hand films and the resulting distinction of price between first and second run films which was general by 1910. But by the following year the original advantage of securing new or first-run films, the good condition of the print, was becoming subordinate to their prestige-value. The films were valuable, not because they were in good condition but because they were the latest thing. There was some practical foundation for this view, in that if the picture made much stir people who had seen it on its first run at the Bijou would not go out of their way to see it at the Gem a week or two later. But such considerations did not carry much weight until the individual feature film was well established, and by that time it was openly recognized that differences of value might also occur because different conditions of supply and demand had attached to them in the first place: supply referring in this case to costs of production, which might vary between £50 and some £5,000 by about 1912; and demand to the extent, frequently quite unpredictable, to which the maker had succeeded in pleasing prospective buyers.

Cricks and Martin's issue of a film at 3d. a foot was an attempt to adjust prices to a depression of these factors, the exceptional prices charged for Cherry Kearton's films of the Roosevelt big game expedition, handled by the Warwick Trading Company in 1910, an attempt in the opposite direction. The stormy controversy which centred round all such experiments showed broadly the following alignment. On the one hand were those who feared that only by a uniform price could buyers be prevented from driving down the quality of film production by buying for cheapness rather than for quality, thus encouraging makers to cut their costs below a reasonable amount. On the other hand were those of a more aggressive turn who felt that in the interests of quality makers must be able to spend on production (and therefore charge) whatever they saw fit. Both groups feared the deterioration of quality involved in falling prices; but whereas the former group believed consumers' misplaced economy would inevitably force prices down if these were allowed to vary, the other group ascribed the price fall to absolute overproduction.

The latter group were on the right lines in suggesting that although quality might be maintained at a uniform price it could only be improved

at a variable one. But they over-simplified their difficulties in ascribing them merely to overproduction. It was not a smaller total volume of production that was to prove the answer but the production of outstanding films, with which the more enterprising makers forced the issue and established the system of exclusive hire. In 1913 the "exclusive" film was said by Dr. H. Fowler Pettie to have the following characteristics: "special quality of the film (plot, staging, etc.), special hiring terms for territorial areas, and special prices or renting charges";¹ renters frequently acquired the films by auction, and rented them to only one showman per run in any particular district, charging as much as they could.

This system was already beginning to emerge by 1910 when the *Bioscope*,² impatient of the standard price controversy, suggested a compromise whereby films should be priced as subjects rather than at so much per foot, but retain the 4d. rate as a basis and merely add something extra if the film was an exceptional one. The following month an article by F. Elvin, from whose unorthodoxy the *Bioscope* carefully remained aloof, suggested that a film might be released at a high price for an initial period, during which it would be almost exclusive (the word itself was used), while at the end of something like three months it could be re-issued at a lower price, and so on. And a few months later still W. G. Barker's much-discussed method of handling his *Henry VIII* was in effect an early manifestation of the exclusive system. He claimed that his film had been so expensive to produce that no dealer or showman could afford to buy it; consequently he hired it for limited runs at very high prices which had been driven up by the limit he deliberately put on the film's life.

Barker's scheme was practicable because it included the condition essential to the exclusive system, that the film was for hire only and consequently under the control of one dealer. No conditions could be attached to a film's distribution if it was to be handled by more than one dealer, and exclusive territorial rights for showmen, with the high prices they commanded, could not be established until the dealers themselves had secured exclusive control of any one film. For this the partial replacement of open market sale by hiring was necessary. This was proceeding rapidly throughout the period, less copies being printed of each film as

¹ *Bioscope*, August 14, 1913, p. 486.

² August 1910.

more exhibitors shared each of the copies; the printing of twenty copies of Barker's *Princess Clementina*, for example, was as much a mark of success in 1911 as the four hundred of *Rescued by Rover* five or six years before.

The surge of activity which engendered this increase of hiring brought its own troubles, including the obvious one of the abuse of credit—of which the formation in 1911 of the "Cash Film Hire Service" is symptomatic. More important was the bewildering confusion of the market with its multiplicity of firms which, as long as free sale persisted, continued to handle the same brands of film, booking them different periods in advance, in different stages of deterioration and at different rates. The increasing number of brands was confusing enough in any case, for by 1914 these numbered 175.¹ But to this was added the unprecedented increase in dealers, and *Kinematograph Year Book* for 1915 lists 242 film renters. Confusion was worse confounded by the different practices in regard to release dates. By 1911 different releasing companies would have films available for booking from two to six weeks before release, with the result that showmen found difficulty in arranging their programmes so that they neither left too little room for later films nor missed early ones by reserving too much. Worse still, the custom of issuing films on different dates in different countries was an open invitation to import pirate copies and capture the market by selling to the unscrupulous showman who wished at all costs to beat his first-run rival.

Facilitated by the conversion to hiring, the exclusive system took root and flourished. With the exception of Barker's spasm of modernity progress was at first confined to the foreign spectacle and sensation films presaged in early 1911 by Itala's *Fall of Troy*. The first film specifically handled in this country as an exclusive was Nordisk's *In the Hands of Impostors*, advertised by the New Century Film Service with the announcement of "Exclusive Rights at Reasonable Rates for the most sensational film ever produced." This was on March 9, 1911, about a fortnight after the release of *Henry VIII*, and marked the start of a race to publish a stream of the Most Sensational Films Ever Produced at rapidly mounting prices. The World's Best Film Company was formed in Chicago in the summer, to deal only in such long-feature productions on a one-town-one-

¹ See Appendix D to this chapter for a more detailed analysis of the development of the market.

film basis, and in September the Monopol Film Company brought the principle to England. They claimed "to place progressive showmen in an independent position by supplying the world's greatest pictures upon the exclusive principle," and before long Jury's, with their Exclusive Territorial Productions, were making a similar appeal. The other big dealers soon followed suit and by March 1914, when the *Bioscope* published its first index of exclusives, up to 1,000 of them had been put on the market.

Progress was rapid and before long most of the important films were being handled as expensive exclusives. At the same time the now firmly established principle that a film was worth whatever it would fetch encouraged producers to greater and greater ambition in films other than exclusives, a fact which was of material importance in the steady increase of long feature films. Prices seemed fantastically high. *Quo Vadis*, said by Low Warren to be the first film to be sold by auction, fetched £6,700 from Jury and *Anthony and Cleopatra* was sold to Ruffell's for £8,100—and all this only ten years after £12 or £13 had been the usual price of a best seller. British productions did not reach such prices apart from some of the more sensational of them and the £5,000 paid for B & C's *Battle of Waterloo* and £4,000 for Barker's *East Lynne* were quite exceptional.

Not only ambitious productions were exclusives or features. Before long a great deal of inferior material was being padded out to the requisite length and given an artificial build-up, and exploited as an exclusive for the sake of the higher rates. For it became increasingly obvious that if a film was advertised in the right way a demand could be created for it, and one of the most conspicuous features of the market during this period is the increasing importance of publicity. As the number of copies of each film diminished they were booked further and further in advance and the publicity became increasingly emphatic. Also, since it was in the interests of the renter to boost the films which he alone handled, publicity became more his province than that of the producer, and impressed his name upon the public rather than that of the latter.

The abuse of the exclusive and feature film by these inferior productions was the cause of much of the opposition aroused by the changing situation. Any change, of course, will arouse a certain amount of opposition from interests vested in the old system, in this case those of the small showman, who knew he could not meet the soaring rentals. There is

also a measure of short-sighted conservatism which resists any change, and in this case was slow to accept the possibility that individual films could exert attractions of their own to justify such prices.

Opposition on the grounds that much exclusive material was not worthy of the name was well founded, and territorial rights in a bad film hardly deserved the prices demanded, although some value was to be attached to the mere fact that the days when seven theatres in one district could all show *Dumb Sagacity* at the same time were gone for good. Again, much opposition was based on a confusion of terms, "feature" and "exclusive" frequently being used as synonymous when in fact they were not. But the core of hostility was the natural fear of the small showman, reinforced by the timidity of the unprogressive. The long important film was accused of ruining the industry. The opinion that the picture show's popularity was based on its variety is discussed later in connection with the artistic implications of the long film, but it is relevant here that the latter, whether exclusive or not, was fought tooth and nail by some sections of the trade. The trade Press, responsible commentators, and exhibitors' meetings repeatedly and in defiance of the facts expressed the view that "there are few plays which could rivet the attention of an audience for an hour."¹ Long films were said to be not merely pushing short ones from the screen but robbing the ones that were left of the best of the plots.

Thus quite apart from mercenary considerations there was a fundamental divergence between the now old-fashioned opinion that the picture show's chief merit was its variety, and the more fruitful view that individual films could have as much drawing power as legitimate plays. The changing price structure was of importance to the vindication of this second view in two ways. Firstly, and more obviously, the film's artistic development required greater length and a more elastic budget. Secondly, the new system was bound up with the growing exercise of choice on the part of both showman and audiences. No longer could an anonymous "programme" be ordered by the showman from a reliable dealer, to be billed with little descriptive matter for an undiscerning public. The hiring of a high-priced single film was a serious matter which necessitated choice, however unwisely this was exercised, and in the same way a visit to the picture theatre was fast becoming a question of the picture rather

¹ *Moving Pictures, How They are Made and Worked*, by F. A. Talbot, 1912, p. 149.

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than of the theatre. The change in the price system had, in fact, been accompanied by a change of attitude. As far as their market value was concerned films had moved from the position of merchandise to that of works of art, and if this gave many of them an economic value out of all proportion to their intrinsic value it was but following the practice of other arts.

APPENDIX A TO CHAPTER I

Analysis of Picture Theatre Accommodation in the Six Largest Towns*
in 1914†

(A)

Town (a)	Population (b)	Frequency of Theatres		Frequency of Seats	
		Number of Theatres‡ (c)	Theatres per 10,000 people (d)	Total number of seats (approximate) (e)	Approximate number of people per seat (f)
Birmingham	525,833	48	0·9	27,000	19
Glasgow	784,496	42	0·5	22,000	35
Leeds	445,550	56	1·3	31,000	14
Liverpool	746,421	33	0·4	14,000	52
Manchester	714,333	111	1·6	920,000	8
Sheffield	459,916	34	0·7	25,000	19

(B)

Town (a)	Seating range§ (g)	Larger Theatres		Capacity as per cent of (e), (j)	Smaller Theatres	
		Theatres with 1,000 seats or more			Theatres under 1,000 seats (k)	Average capacity (approx.) (l)
		Number (h)	per cent of (c) (i)			
Birmingham	300-2,300	8	% 16·6	% 39	40	400
Glasgow	500-2,800	9	21·1	54·7	53	200
Leeds	250-3,000	4	7·1	20·8	52	475
Liverpool	350-1,600	5	15·1	40·9	28	50
Manchester	100-3,700	27	24·3	25	84	500
Sheffield	500-1,900	10	29·4	54·8	24	460

* Excluding London.

† Figures compiled from *Kinematograph Year Book*, 1915.

‡ On an arithmetical average, each town had 54 picture theatres.

§ The seating capacity of some theatres is omitted, probably indicating a lower range (g) than is given. In general, theatres with no stated capacity are assumed to seat 100.

APPENDIX B TO CHAPTER I

Number of Picture Theatres in Large Towns in 1914*

Towns with Population of 100,000 or over	Population	Picture Theatres†
Aberdeen	163,891	20
Belfast	315,492	30
Birkenhead	130,794	18
Birmingham	525,833	48
Blackburn	133,052	10
Bolton	180,851	16
Bradford	235,436	31
Brighton	131,237	18
Bristol	357,048	33
Burnley	106,322	9
Cardiff	182,259	21
Coventry	106,349	8
Croydon	169,551	12
Derby	123,410	9
Dublin	309,272	13
Dundee	165,004	6
Edinburgh	320,318	38
Gateshead-on-Tyne	116,197	14
Glasgow	784,496	42
Halifax	101,553	11
Huddersfield	107,821	11
Hull	277,991	35
Leeds	445,550	56
Leicester	227,222	14
Liverpool	745,421	33
Manchester	714,333	111
Middlesbrough	104,767	7
Newcastle-on-Tyne	266,603	32
Norwich	121,478	8
Nottingham	259,904	21
Oldham	147,483	14
Plymouth	112,030	12
Portsmouth	231,141	19
Preston, Lancs.	117,088	8
Salford	231,357	17
Sheffield	459,916	34
Southampton	119,012	15
South Shields	108,647	12
Stockport	108,682	13
Sunderland	151,159	27
Swansea	114,663	19

* Figures compiled from *Kinematograph Year Book*, 1915.

† On an arithmetical average, each town with a population of over 100,000 had 22 picture theatres.

APPENDIX C TO CHAPTER I

Number of Picture Theatres in County Towns in 1914*

County Towns	Population	Picture Theatres†
Bedfordshire—Bedford	39,183	3
Berkshire—Reading	75,198	5
Bucks—Aylesbury		
Cambridge—Cambridge	40,027	7
Cheshire—Chester	30,028	5
Cornwall—Truro	11,325	1
Cumberland—Carlisle	46,420	4
Derbyshire—Derby	123,410	9
Devonshire—Excter	37,280	7
Dorsetshire—Dorchester	9,842	1
Durham—Durham	17,550	5
Isle of Ely—March	8,403	1
Essex—Chelmsford	18,003	3
Gloucestershire—Gloucester	50,035	4
Hampshire—Winchester	23,378	3
Herefordshire—Hereford	22,568	3
Hertfordshire—Hertford	10,383	1
Huntingdonshire—Huntingdon	4,003	1
Kent—Maidstone	35,475	3
Lancashire—Preston	117,008	8
Leicestershire—Leicester	227,222	14
Lincolnshire, Holland—Boston	16,673	3
Lincolnshire, Lindsey—Lincoln	57,285	6
Lincolnshire, Kesteven—Sleaford	6,427	1
Norfolk—Norwich	121,478	8
Northamptonshire—Northampton	90,064	9
Northumberland—Newcastle-on-Tyne	266,603	32
Nottinghamshire—Nottingham	259,904	21
Oxfordshire—Oxford	53,048	6
Peterborough—Peterborough	33,574	4
Rutland—Oakham		
Shropshire—Shrewsbury	29,389	4
Somerset—Taunton	22,561	3
Staffordshire—Stafford	23,383	2
Suffolk, East—Ipswich	73,932	7
Suffolk, West—Bury St. Edmunds	16,785	1
Surrey—Kingston-on-Thames	37,975	3
Sussex, East—Lewes	10,972	3
Sussex, West—Chichester	12,591	1
Warwickshire—Warwick	11,858	2
Westmorland—Kendal	14,033	3
Isle of Wight—Newport	83,691	11
Wiltshire—Trowbridge	11,815	1
Worcestershire—Worcester	47,982	6
Yorkshire, York City and County—York	82,282	5
Yorkshire, W. Riding—Wakefield	43,588	9
Yorkshire, N. Riding—Northallerton		
Yorkshire, E. Riding—Beverley	13,654	3

* Figures compiled from *Kinematograph Year Book*, 1915.

† On an arithmetical average, each county town had 5 picture theatres.

APPENDIX D TO CHAPTER I

Analysis of the Market

It has been mentioned that by 1914 there were reputed to be 175 makes of film and 240 renters. Completely reliable figures showing the expansion of the film market in the previous eight years are not available, but a picture of the various trends can be built up from the weekly reviews and film lists in the *Bioscope*. From September 1908 most of the films, and from January 1910 all of the films were said to be included in these, and by counting and tabulating them much valuable information can be discovered.¹ It should be pointed out, however, that although the approximate number of films in circulation can thus be found there is no way of discovering how many copies were printed of each, a factor of very great importance in all questions relating to screen time.² The films, moreover, are listed under the name of their publishers rather than that of their manufacturers and accordingly analysis must mainly be restricted to this aspect of the market.

Whether analysis is concerned with the increasing number of film publishers or the increasing number of films, the same feature stands out: the steadily increasing importance, both relative and absolute, of foreign films and in particular those of Italian and American origin.

Taking the number of films published first, this increased from some 2,000 in 1909 to 4,000 in 1910 and by 1913 was 7,500. Figures for these three years were as follows:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Films Listed</i>	<i>Range of Monthly Figures</i>	
		<i>Lowest</i>	<i>Highest</i>
1909	1,842	66 (March)	252 (December)
1910	4,144	304 (February, June)	422 (December)
1913	7,554	564 (February)	715 (June)

The variation between the highest and lowest monthly figures in the early years is partly seasonal, for film production was greatest in the

¹ See Appendix to Introduction to Part II for classification of films by content, built up in the same way.

² The term "publisher" is used here in the sense that it was used in, for example, the reports of the British Board of Film Censors, to denote the firm (manufacturer, producer or dealer) first issuing any new film on to the market.

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summer; the films continued to be released throughout the winter but by early spring stocks were running low. On the other hand, there was also an overall tendency for monthly output to rise during both 1909 and 1910, although at a decreasing rate in the latter year. The majority of the films in these two years were still very short. But by 1913 the long film had come into prominence and although the total number of films was greater, the annual increase had not kept up its previous rate and the six-monthly increase had disappeared, the second half-year's release actually being smaller than the first. The seasonal influence, moreover, was no longer discernible.

Britain's contribution to this increasing world output was small. Because the films are listed under publishers rather than makers their country of origin is not always clear but, even giving Great Britain the benefit of the doubt wherever doubt exists, not more than 15 per cent of the 1909 and 1910 output can possibly be ascribed to British producers:

	Film Releases in Great Britain	
	1909	1910
Denmark, Germany, etc.	5	4
France	40	36
Great Britain	15	15
Italy	10	17
U.S.A.	30	28
	<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/>	<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/>
	100 per cent	100 per cent

Over half the very large quantity of French releases in Britain was produced by the firm of Pathé, which thus accounted for some 22 per cent of the world total, or more than all the British companies together. When it is remembered that an unusually large number of prints were sold of each Pathé film the quantitative importance of this firm is seen to have been very impressive in the early years of the cinema, although by 1910 its expansion was slackening, as a result of which France was losing its relative position in the world market.

With regard to the second aspect of the market, the number and character of the publishing companies, their number was already fairly large by 1909. This had largely been due to the extremely rapid influx of foreign films combined with the apparently diminishing attractions, to the British,

APPENDIX

of the now more difficult business of production. For not only were there an ever-increasing number of London branches of foreign producers, but there was an even larger increase of small film publishers relying mainly or entirely on foreign brands of film.

This concentration of the British film industry on middleman activities can be illustrated by an analysis of the state of the market in 1909. Of the forty-six firms releasing films on the British market, exactly half were British. A few large companies (i.e. those publishing over 100 films per year) accounted for most of the releases, the rest being put out by the medium-sized companies (i.e. those publishing between 10 and 100 films a year) and small companies (i.e. those publishing less than 10 films a year). Of the six large ones¹ releasing 60 per cent of the total, only one was British. This was the Hepworth Manufacturing Company, the smallest of the six; and although the Hepworth production formed nearly half the British total, it was only about a quarter of that of Pathé. Eight of the twenty-three British companies were medium-sized, and moreover occupied almost exclusively with agencies for foreign films, while most of the British firms and nearly all of those releasing British films were very small.

In the following year the percentage of films released by the large companies had increased from 60 per cent to 85 per cent, a change due to the increase in the number, rather than in the size, of these companies. There were now three times as many but this, far from indicating greater British activity, was due to the doubling of Danish output and the inclusion of one Italian company and several more American ones in this class. Among British firms there had been an increase of medium-sized agencies and medium-sized makers releasing their own films (B & C, W. G. Barker, Clarendon, Cricks and Martin and Kineto), but the majority still fell in the class of small firms handling mainly foreign films.

¹ In descending order of size: Pathé, Gaumont, Vitagraph, Lux, Edison, Hepworth.

APPENDIX E TO CHAPTER I

Foreign Film-makers with Offices or Agents in G.B. in 1910.¹

<i>Maker</i>	<i>English Agent²</i>
Aquila (Turin)	Brockliss
Bavaria Films (Strauberg)	Walturdaw Film Agency
Behr Brox (Moscow)	Walturdaw Film Agency
Biograph (New York)	Markt & Co.
Bison Films (America)	Co-operative Cinematograph Co.
Challenge Films (Philadelphia)	Brockliss
Cines Co. (Rome)	
Compagnie de Cinematographie (le Lion, Paris)	Brockliss
Continental Film Co. (Copenhagen)	Cosmopolitan Film Co.
Continental Warwick (Paris)	Warwick Trading Co.
Deutsche Bioscope (Berlin)	Walturdaw Film Agency
Duskes (Berlin)	Walturdaw Film Agency
Eclair (Paris)	Tyler Film Co.
Eclipse (Paris)	Urban Trading Co.
Edison Manufacturing Co. (U.S.A.)	
Elge Films (Paris)	Gaumont Co.
Essanay Film Co. (U.S.A.)	
Helfer (Paris)	Cosmopolitan Film Co.
Imp Films (Chicago)	Brockliss
Iris Films (Barcelona)	Brockliss
Itala (Torino)	Tyler Film Co.
Kalem Co. (U.S.A.)	Kineto
Latium Films (Rome)	Walturdaw Film Agency
Le Lion (Paris)	Brockliss
Lubin Manufacturing Co. (Philadelphia)	Markt & Co.
Luca Comerio (Milan)	Cosmopolitan Film Co.
Lux (Paris)	R. Prieur

¹ According to the *Bioscope Annual & Trades Directory*, 1910-11.

² Companies with no agent listed had their own offices in England.

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<i>Maker</i>	<i>English Agent</i>
Melies (Paris)	Brockliss
Messter (Berlin)	Walturdaw Film Agency
Nestor Films (U.S.A.)	Walturdaw Film Agency
Nordisk Film Co.	
Pasquilla & Tempo (Milan)	Cosmopolitan Film Co.
Pathé Frères (Paris)	
Projectograph (Budapest)	Walturdaw Film Agency
Radios (Paris)	Urban Trading Co.
Raleigh & Robert (Paris)	Warwick Trading Co.
Selig (Chicago)	Markt & Co.
Vesuvio Film Co. (Naples)	Walturdaw Film Agency
Vitagraph Co. of America	
Welt Kinematograph (Germany)	Walturdaw Film Agency

Rationalization of the Industry

[(I) OFFICIAL REGULATION

Except for the storm-centre of Sunday opening, official regulation of the film industry at this time sprang from the question of public safety, and consequently affected only the exhibitors. As film exhibition grew in importance both in the economic sphere and in the mental environment of the country it received its first share of official interference, at a time when the whole industry was still largely unorganized and pliable. Coherent grouping of production, distribution, exhibition and labour—formalized interrelationships between them, and between them and the community—such things had yet to set into a discernible pattern. The industry had yet to acquire not only mastery of its immediate job, but also the consciousness of itself as a group, and the drawn-out bickerings between the trade and “busybodies and meddlers” which occupied the eight years before the First World War were part of a process by which the film achieved some sort of setting in the general framework of community life.

The reactions of the trade to any form of official regulation followed a curiously routine course. Enthusiastic agreement over general principles and virtuous repudiation of the condemned practice gave way to impatience and ridicule when the welcome principle was put into unwelcome application.

The reception of regulations made for the public's safety shows this pattern to a marked extent. In the first place, no one pressed more urgently for these regulations than the showman himself, while at the same time vigorously denying that any but a very small minority of shows would be found wanting.

The reason for this enthusiasm was, of course, not entirely altruistic. The position of cinematograph shows as regards local authorities was already so complicated and illogical that it was felt by most exhibitors that deliberate legislation could hardly do otherwise than improve matters.

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For the fact that film shows had not so far been the subject of specific legislation did not mean that they were completely free of legal restrictions. Far from it. The new entertainment had grown into a network of laws, most of which seemed to have little enough sense in their application to moving pictures but which were capable of enforcement nevertheless. The position in 1908 was as absurd and unreasonable as the most exasperated showman could claim. A picture show as such required no licence. Yet under an Act of 1751¹ any place of entertainment within a twenty-mile radius of London could, unless duly licensed by the L.C.C.,² be prosecuted as a Disorderly House if it used music as part of the entertainment. The granting of these licences, for which in many cases, however, application was never in fact made, was used to impose a variety of conditions upon the showman. In addition, under the Children's Act of 1908 "a sufficient number of adult attendants" were to be present if the audience consisted largely of children, although no definition of "sufficient number" was given. Apart from this, conditions imposed by County and Borough Councils and Licensing Justices varied widely all over the country. Ventilation, exits, fireproof operating boxes, electricity installation, staffing—requirements made by people with little or no technical knowledge of film projection—varied from eminently wise to hopelessly ignorant. Many towns were without regulations of any kind. Theatres and music-halls, of course, where many films were still shown, were covered. But with the spread of the special picture theatre from 1908 onwards there were more and more places completely without supervision.

To base London regulations on a music clause in the Disorderly Houses Act was as illogical as the nonconformity of regulations from one district to another was bewildering. A nation-wide system that could be understood seemed welcome in comparison. Showmen were as anxious as anybody that fire precautions should be given an official stamp, for they were only too clearly aware of the public hostility that flared up every time a fire was caused (or was said to be caused) by the dangerous cinematograph. Whenever fire and panic in the U.S.A. or France caused hearts to flutter in England the London showmen loudly thanked God for the L.C.C. But the hopeful pretence that such rules as were enforced by the

¹ 25 Geo. II, c. 36.

² The L.C.C. had taken the place of the Michaelmas Quarter Sessions as the licensing authority since the Local Government Act of 1888 (51 and 52 Vict., c. 41).

L.C.C. or any other local authorities could guarantee safety, though comforting, was not believed by a suspicious public, and anxiety within the trade was driven on by the anxiety outside which snapped at its heels. It was not unusual for showmen to go to extreme lengths with their asbestos blankets, their buckets of sand and special fireguards. But one death due to the carelessness of one irresponsible exhibitor was enough to damage the reputation of all the rest, and ingenious pleas that the fire had been due not to the film but to a drunken projectionist, or that the panic had been really quite unnecessary, were hardly likely to reassure anybody. For the good of trade as well as for the safety of the public, fire precautions must be made so reliable that even the most fearful could have easy minds as they rested in their tip-ups.

The film industry had in Walter Reynolds of the L.C.C. a friend who was already waging its battles in another sphere, that of education. At the beginning of 1908, he made the first move to rationalize the legislative odds and ends which had been inherited by the picture theatre. He proposed to the Council that the Theatres and Music Halls Committee of the L.C.C. should send a deputation to the Home Secretary urging immediate legislation whereby picture shows could be given only in buildings licensed for that purpose.

In due course¹ Herbert Gladstone, then Home Secretary, introduced into Parliament a Cinematograph Bill the purpose of which was quite simply to empower the Home Secretary to frame a set of safety regulations, and to empower local authorities to enforce these by granting annual licences only to showmen who complied with them. The Bill, which was clearly understood to be concerned solely with the public safety and as such not applicable to shows where the new non-flam film was used² was almost universally approved. A few mild protests were heard from one quarter and another. Travelling showmen, a brand not yet extinct, had fears for their own future; warning hints were dropped both that local surveyors would be able to exercise arbitrary power in applying the regulations, and that by granting only six-day licences the County Councils would be able to prevent shows opening on Sundays. These prognosti-

¹ March 1909.

² Non-flam had recently been introduced by both Lumière and Eastman. The question whether safety regulations were applicable to it had been answered in the negative by the case of *Hopton v. Gibbon* in 1909—see *Bioscope*, May 13, 1909, p. 34; April 9, 1909, p. 9.

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cations of wider control than was intended were largely ignored. It was noticed that the new Act would not in actual fact cancel the music clause of the Disorderly Houses Act, but such timely reminders were drowned in the general self-congratulation and approval, and the only serious controversy during the Bill's passage through Parliament was over an unsuccessful attempt to bring non-flam within its scope.

The nearer the Bill came to enactment the more confidently favourable was the tone adopted by the trade Press. Moral obligations were spoken of almost with enthusiasm:

Anything which is for the good of the trade, anything which tends to raise the standing of those engaged in it, which tends to remove the reproaches that have so often been levelled at the bioscope business, must affect everyone whose heart is in his work, and who takes his business seriously. For the mere dabbler, and the casual speculator, the bioscope trade has no need.¹

But Parliament took its time and in the meantime Mr. Reynolds exercised himself, somewhat unwisely, with the more technical problem of fire extinguishers. He decided that he had found a marvellous device which would make the "hitherto dangerous kinematograph lantern . . . as harmless as a nightlight. . . . From now on the apparatus—which is very cheap—will no doubt be adopted most willingly by every kinematograph operator in the Kingdom and indeed in the world."²

Mr. Reynolds was too optimistic. A demonstration of other extinguishers was staged at the London Hippodrome at which a number of fires were started and quenched with great proficiency and the wonderful discovery, which proved to be more like an automatic lavatory cistern than anything else, caused the "father of the Cinematograph Act" some considerable loss of face.

He had quite recovered his status as hero of the trade by the time the Cinematograph Act became law in January 1910. Two years of haranguing and pestering had resulted at last in legislation which was greeted by the trade as the "picture showman's charter." But then came the natural reaction. Principles to which no one could reasonably take exception were now particularized into rules and regulations any one of which might harass some unfortunate exhibitor to the point of desperation. The idea of

¹ *Bioscope*, April 1, 1909, p. 4.

² Letter to *Kinematograph Weekly*, July 30, 1908, p. 261.

ridding the trade of the few irresponsible showmen for the good of all became less acceptable and the usual cry of free enterprise confronted with its obligations to the community was heard more often: "we shall be legislated out of existence." Moreover, the authorities who were to administer the Act were not in the least likely to see it as a showman's charter. They saw in it something quite different, their chance first to ensure the public's safety, which was indeed the aim of the legislature; and secondly, to ensure the public's moral well-being. Exhibitors began to fear, and as it proved rightly, that licensing was to be made the excuse for all kinds of conditions irrelevant to public safety, conditions which would in effect amount to a form of censorship. In particular the granting of six-day licences shifted the centre of attention from the physical danger of fire to the superficially moral question of Sunday opening—superficially, because on neither side of the argument was the moral motive alone strong enough to have sustained them during the years of sparring which were to follow.

Sunday was a good day for London picture shows and to tamper with it stung London showmen into action. Almost immediately the Act came into force¹ F. W. Ogden Smith, who was to spend the next few years in the arduous task of persuading the exhibitors to organize, called together at the Holborn Restaurant a protest meeting which had important consequences. The meeting was called ostensibly to consider the Home Office regulations. Detailed criticisms of these were made, at very great length. Buckets of sand, spool boxes, the position of the operating box and so on were dealt with in turn, and little of the criticism could be accused of mere captiousness. Of course, there was the usual hysterical core of belated *laissez-faire* with its banner headlines of "Confiscation in Sight! 100 Millions of Capital to be Confiscated!" But the crux of the matter was not reached until the Chairman referred to "the action of the County Council² in going outside the Act, and the regulations of the Home Secretary also, and passing a resolution, before they got the Home Office regulations, that no licences should be granted to shows opening on Sundays."

Cries of "Shame!" The feeling of the meeting ran higher and in their wrath the assembled showmen described the L.C.C. as a "body of Stigginses and Chadbands." There and then the first serious exhibitors'

¹ January 5, 1910.

² The L.C.C.

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combination, the Cinematograph Defence League, was formed with the specific object of fighting Sunday closing. Support came not only from such prominent exhibitors as Jupp, Jury, and Pyke, but also from some of the chief film manufacturers, including R. W. Paul, W. G. Barker and G. R. Cricks.

Sunday shows had been a growing issue from 1908 onwards. As in the evergreen Juvenile Delinquency controversy, the trade was goaded in the next few years from its attitude of high-minded innocence to one of frank irritation and contempt. To pay a decorous visit to the pictures in 1909 to see a "sacred subject" was almost as good as reading the Bible, it was said. But less reliance was placed on sacred subjects—in all truth few enough and profane enough—as the opposition showed its teeth. The exhibitor's case was harder to answer when they became more honest, and suggested that most of the people who were filling the picture theatres on a Sunday evening were thereby emptying not the churches but the pubs.

But the fear of the "Continental Sunday" was becoming more and more vocal. Middle-class virtue might survive golf and bridge, but the Sabbatarianism of the nineteenth century had sufficient life in it still to stigmatize the vulgar new working-class entertainment as too flagrant a flaunting of the Devil's house. Not that the Churches themselves took a very active part in fighting Sunday opening; indeed, many Church workers joined the growing body of teachers and social workers who realized the valuable social function the picture shows could perform. Broadminded men and women not only concurred in the exhibitor's favourite pub-to-picture-palace defence, but even saw new religious possibilities in the film. It was a sign of this minority opinion that Herbert Booth of the Salvation Army could claim that the cinematograph was the missing link between the stage and the pulpit.¹ But provincial magistrates were becoming more refractory, backed by what the trade called the "unco' guid." Opposition to Sunday opening seemed to be increasing faster among the respectable than among the good.

But even the most sincere religious and moral convictions could provide the cause with little more than a trumpet call and a banner. Fighting organization was based on more practical considerations, and it was an

¹ *Bioscope*, October 9, 1908, p. 15.

uneasy condition of Sabbatarians, labour leaders and theatre and music-hall proprietors who finally opposed the Cinematograph Defence League in 1910. Sunday profits, a six-day week for projectionists and the rivalry between films and theatres (few of which were able to open on Sunday) were the real issues and overshadowed both the conception of Sunday as a day of religious observance, and the trade's sentimental plea for the elevating values of a "story of love depicted by pictures which reminds those who witness it that there are still some true souls and loving hearts."¹ It was no accident that the Secretary of the Sunday Defence Committee was William Johnson of the National Association of Cinematograph Operators, or that its meetings were led by labour leaders such as Ramsay MacDonald. The Sunday question did, in fact, give a perceptible stimulus to the organization of film industry labour as it had to that of the exhibitors.

The question of the hour was whether the L.C.C. was actually within its legal rights in imposing Sunday closing by means of the Cinematograph Act. Did granting licences "to such persons as they think fit, on such terms and conditions and under such restrictions as subject to regulations of the Secretary of State, the Council may by the respective licences determine" cover the prohibition of Sunday shows? Their power was soon put to the test.

Shortly after the Act had come into operation and the L.C.C. had announced their intention to enforce Sunday closing the Bermondsey Bioscope Company was prosecuted² for opening on a Sunday. The case, which was heard at the Tower Bridge police court,³ was dismissed on the grounds that the L.C.C. regulations were *ultra vires*, as the Act had been concerned solely with public safety.

The L.C.C. naturally decided to appeal against this decision. The Cinematograph Defence League, which was getting all the publicity it possibly could out of the case, had to call for extra funds to fight the appeal as "for some reason or another . . . (the League has) not received the measure of support which is due."⁴ At the end of the year the case was heard and the Tower Bridge decision reversed.

The immediate result of this legal victory was to embolden the anti-Sunday-shows faction, and early in the New Year "an influential deputation

¹ *Bioscope*, June 13, 1910, p. 3.

³ In May.

² February 1910.

⁴ *Bioscope*, November 3, 1910, p. 3.

of persons not commercially interested in the cinematograph industry" came to urge the L.C.C.'s Theatres and Music Halls Committee to enforce Sunday closing throughout the county of London. The theme on which the trade had based its defence throughout 1910 had been that the cherished "showman's charter" had been intended only to secure fire precautions and any attempt by the L.C.C. to stretch it to cover Sunday closing would be defeated in the courts. Now that this legal argument had failed them, they fell back once more on the old familiar moral plea for the film as an alternative to "rowdyism and intemperance." Very much as a second best they also dared to suggest that if the people wanted film shows on Sunday, they should have them. The *Bioscope* itself was so carried away by the idea of the people's choice that it issued a petition which asked:

ARE YOU GOING TO SEE YOURSELF DEPRIVED OF THE RIGHT TO SPEND SUNDAY—YOUR OWN DAY—AS YOU LIKE?

ARE YOU WILLING TO BE RULED AND GOVERNED BY PEOPLE WHO DESIRE NOTHING SO MUCH AS TO MAKE SUNDAY A DULL AND DREARY DAY, WITH LAUGHTER A CRIME AND SMILES A SIN?¹

This petition was to represent the Voice of the People—Solid for Sunday Opening. But it must be admitted that in comparison with the busy efforts of labour leaders, showmen, music-hall proprietors, Stigginses and Chadbands and all, the picture-going public seems to have been more or less passive. Nevertheless deputations, open letters in the Press, committee meetings and resolutions continued, with the Theatres and Music Halls Committee patiently seeking the best solution. Finally they decided:

We think it has been shown that there is a public demand for these entertainments on Sundays, and that, provided that this demand can be satisfied without necessitating compulsory Sunday labour, the entertainments may fulfil a legitimate and useful purpose. On the other hand, if cinematograph entertainments are allowed to be given on Sundays under the same conditions as on week-days, it will, in our opinion, be difficult to resist a demand that the same privileges shall be allowed in the case of theatres and music-halls. After the experience we have gained during the past year, we think that the conditions laid down by the Council last year, although in the main satisfactory, can be improved to some extent.²

Sunday opening was consequently recommended on stringent conditions,

¹ *Bioscope*, January 19, 1911, p. 5.

² *Ibid.*, March 30, 1911, p. 7.

especial significance being attached to the rule that Sunday profits should be devoted to charity. This illogical compromise had worked before in the case of music-halls, and seemed to be acceptable to everybody. The *Bioscope* represented it as a crushing blow to Sabbatarianism, but on the other hand it was difficult to pretend that it was a triumph for the showmen.

The recommendations of the Theatres and Music Halls Committee were adopted by the Council,¹ and were followed by a period of comparative quiescence. The solution was such a welcome relief to most people that attacks upon it were hopeless, although at the same time the Cinematograph Defence League's only chance of survival as the showman's union lay in continued activity, and it consequently continued to chip away at detailed requirements and conditions. But both showmen and local authorities were losing interest in these protracted struggles, which had now lasted some four years. London showmen, in particular, seem to have realized that only by lying low could they retain what little privilege they had, and when the Cinematograph Defence League called a fresh Mass Meeting it met with little response. In the first six months or so after the acceptance of the charity clause, over half of the three hundred halls in London which were licensed under the Cinematograph Act opened on Sundays and gave the profits to charity, and the proportion continued to rise gradually. All the same it was discovered, to the alarm of the L.C.C., that the conditions were by no means easy to enforce and compliance was often nominal only. It was not surprising, therefore, that for the moment exhibitors were content to remain as they were.

At this point the political activity of the trade became diverted from Sunday opening to the only other serious legislative proposal affecting the film industry before 1914, that of the official registration of projectionists. The incompetence of many projectionists, which could and did damage the reputation not only of particular film makers but of the cinema in general, had been deplored by critics both within the industry and outside it since the earliest days. It was quite normal for Press notices of film entertainments to include an appraisal of the technical presentation of the show, and disgruntled producers claimed that poor notices were quite as often due to untrained or even drunken operators as to the ragged condition of the films or to inadequate equipment. They pointed out, further, how many

¹ April 1911.

fires had been due to the carelessness or ignorance of the staff. Manufacturers, trade Press and operators' unions sought to ensure that not only were there plenty of training facilities for operators, but also that when sufficient qualified operators were available, they would not be undercut by cheap untrained labour.

As early as 1907 it was suggested that local authorities might well institute a system of licensing under which only officially qualified operators would be allowed to handle projectors. When, in 1907, the Cinematograph Bill was under discussion the National Association of Cinematograph Operators tried to slip in an amendment to the effect that only certified operators could be employed on licensed premises. By the end of 1910 efforts were concentrated on framing a special Bill, and the Cinematograph (1911 Public Safety) Bill was announced about a year later:¹

Should the Bill become law, any person desirous of becoming an operator will be compelled to present himself before a local Board of Examiners, consisting of one representative of a fire brigade, the local licensing authority, certain manufacturers and exhibitors of not less than five years standing in the business, and two working operators possessing not less than five years' practical experience, such Board to have power to issue annual licences, provided the candidate satisfies the Board that he is suitable, both practically and technically, to undertake the duties of an operator.²

Controversy was lively at first but dragged on and on and had still reached no conclusion when the war began. Opposition to the Bill was of two main types. Firstly, there was the general resistance to interference inseparable from any proposals for new legislation. It was said that all the control necessary, and more, was provided by the Cinematograph Act; that if there were to be licences they should be issued by an independent trade body rather than by civil servants; that there was "too much law at present and not enough common sense."³ F. W. Ogden Smith's indignant antagonism to what he called "Trade Unionism by Act of Parliament" was merely a more extreme version of the same viewpoint. But it is to be feared that the most violent opposition aroused by licensing proposals of this sort, and the solid support given to sincere *laissez-faire* critics such as Ogden Smith, was based on a second, less creditable, motive. Neither qualified operators nor the better-class managers had

¹ October 1911. ² *Bioscope*, October 5, 1911, p. 3. ³ *Ibid.*, March 2, 1911, p. 59.

anything to fear from such a measure. "Interference" in how a manager ran his own business in this respect was only to be feared where he preferred to undercut his rivals by using operators who were in fact below a reasonable standard of efficiency.

The fire question received fresh attention at about the same time as this renewed interest in operators' qualifications. The Cinematograph Act—which, apart from the controversial loophole through which Sunday closing had been introduced, was a pronounced success—had regulated safety precautions in picture theatres, but not in film stores or trade viewing theatres. Possibly it was the success of the Cinematograph Act which made dissatisfied sections of the trade turn to the law for help in the question of unqualified projectionists. Certainly it must have been the reason the L.C.C. sought Parliamentary action in the new agitation over trade premises.

In 1912 they proposed that film stores should be included in the General Powers Bill for the registration and licensing of dangerous businesses in the administrative county of London. The trade, remembering the unexpected uses to which safety regulations could be put when wielded by an opinionated local authority, was relieved when the Parliamentary Committee appointed to consider the proposal pronounced it unnecessary. But the L.C.C. continued to press for action. There had, it seemed, been several fires on film dealers' premises recently, and in December 1912 the Parliamentary Committee compromised and suggested a modified form of licensing. This was rejected by Parliament itself,¹ largely as a result of lobbying by the manufacturers' and renters' organizations. Undeterred, the L.C.C. renewed the attack. At the same time the regulation of trade theatres, first brought into the limelight by the Leeds test case in the autumn of 1912, was receiving fresh attention. The decision in Leeds had been that trade theatres had to comply with the Cinematograph Act. The magistrate himself expressed some doubt as to whether this had been intended by the authors of the Act, and the decision had not been followed by the expected outbreak of prosecutions. Then in November 1913 the Birmingham branch of the Gaumont Company was involved in a similar case, the decision of which was exactly the opposite. Instead of obtaining a final ruling on the matter the trade associations let things slide

¹ June 1913.

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so that when in 1913 the L.C.C. turned its storm-provoking attention to the matter, no one was quite certain what the legal position of the trade theatres actually was. During the following year the L.C.C. announced its intention of providing the badly-needed test case, and instituted proceedings against Vitagraph's London branch. But before these were over the whole position was further confused by the suggestion of the Parliamentary Committee that all difficulties would be solved by the universal adoption of non-flam. The unanimous opinion of makers, exhibitors and renters that this was commercially impracticable was firmly expressed.

While all this was going on the question of Sunday opening, which had recently seemed to have reached a satisfactory solution, started all over again. During 1912 opposition to Sunday pictures had been hardening among London theatrical and music-hall people, evasion of the charity clause had been causing trouble, and the trinity of unfair competition, Sunday labour and Sunday money-making worked on members of the Middlesex County Council to such an extent that towards the end of the year they took the final step of announcing that in future no Sunday shows, even if devoting their profits to charity, would be permitted. By this time the Cinematograph Defence League had passed away, and Middlesex exhibitors relied on their own Defence League¹ and on the recently formed Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association, and preparations were made for a new battle. Trade organization had now reached a fair stage of maturity, largely as a result of similar battles. But the trouble centres remained what they had been at the beginning of the period—fire and Sunday opening.

(2) SELF-ORGANIZATION

While outside interference was building up a body of rules which regulated the relations between the film industry on the one hand, and the public and the State on the other, a parallel process was formalizing the relations between various groups within the trade. The second process was, indeed, partly dependent on the first. Public interference which pressed more harshly on one branch than on another brought to light differences of interest which caused sectional organization and frequently also struggles within the trade itself.

¹ Incorporated in the C.F.A. during 1914.

The appearance of a labour union was the first clear sign of this movement towards a more complex industrial system. Labour problems at this early stage, it should be remembered, were concerned almost exclusively with the work of the projectionists. Of the rapidly growing labour force in the industry as a whole¹ only that part employed in exhibition possessed the qualifications—a large number of workers, engaged in very similar work, and with a sense of grievance—leading to combination.

The sense of grievance was clear enough. Wages were low, and tended to be depressed further or at least kept down by the intrusion of cheap unqualified labour. The operator was no mere automaton and often his skill in handling faulty projectors and tattered films could make all the difference to a performance, for even the most dainty of bijou palaces had difficulty in surviving too frequent a use of the "One Moment Please!" slide. And yet as little as 25s. a week for an operator-cum-odd-job man was mentioned even as late as the autumn of 1911, and something like 30s. seems to have been considered a very fair wage. Since even the *Bioscope* maintained that this was just in comparison with the 35s. to 42s. said to be earned by the average electrician or plumber, it was not to be expected that managers would be anxious to pay more or raise the level of the profession. On the contrary, there were still all too many exhibitors who were in the business for short-run profits only, and cared little if their projectionists were inefficient as long as they were cheap; while this in turn compelled many of their more far-sighted competitors reluctantly to follow the same course.

The only hope for the better type of operator, therefore, backed by many who had the interests of the film at heart, was to combine in a union strong enough to impose a system whereby only those who had been duly trained and certified as projectionists would be employed as such. As early as 1905 the idea of an Operators' Guild had circulated among the readers of the *Optical Lantern and Kinematograph Journal*, and occasional agitation continued until one was formed two years later. It had at one

¹ Contemporary estimates of the labour in the film industry—i.e. in exhibition, renting, and manufacture of apparatus and films, but not the construction of theatres:

Ellis Griffith (<i>Kinematograph Year Book</i> 1915, p. 55).	F. W. Ogden Smith (<i>Bioscope</i> , March 27, 1913, p. 94; June 4, 1914, p. 1008).
1907 .. 900	1907 .. 1,000
1913 ..	1913 .. 125,000
1914 .. 120,000	1914 .. 130,000

time been suggested that projectionists should be allowed to join the Variety Artists' Federation, but their application had been refused on the grounds that their work was not comparable, and their interests not identical. It was the example of a successful V.A.F. strike early in 1907 that finally induced the rebuffed projectionists to form, in April, their own Bioscope Operators' Association (later known as the National Association of Cinematograph Operators). This was a branch of the National Association of Theatrical Employees, and owed its existence largely to the efforts of William Johnson, General Secretary of that union, and E. S. Catlin. The *Bioscope* described its aims as:

The Protection and promotion of the interests of qualified operators, the encouragement of a knowledge of the science and of new inventions, and the securing of a minimum wage for each class of work . . .¹

But the mere existence of a labour union, and that still a weak one, was not enough to secure a minimum wage and standard of proficiency by agreement with the exhibitors until the latter themselves had a combination with power to sign such an agreement. Consequently some other means were sought. Encouraged by the exhibitors' co-operative attitude towards the Cinematograph Bill, the N.A.C.O. leaders felt that a more promising alternative was to enforce registration by law, and for several years it was hoped by many that they would be able to secure the backing of Parliament for some such scheme.²

Support for this scheme spread towards the end of 1908 and throughout the next year while the Cinematograph Bill was under discussion. At the same time organization of labour in the new union was proving no easy matter. Conditions were not ideal for a trade union, for the operators were scattered all over the country, working in isolation from each other, and with little time to spare for meetings. Thus four years after N.A.C.O. had been formed its membership still included only a small fraction of the total number of operators in the country.³

The union leaders, of course, were doing everything possible to consoli-

¹ *Bioscope*, February 25, 1909, p. 18.

² See Chapter II, Section 1.

³ The following estimate is necessarily somewhat hypothetical: 200 operators were said to have joined N.A.C.O. in 1911, which was considered a good year in this respect. It is thus reasonable to suppose that during the years 1907-11 something well under 1,000 operators had joined. The number of existing picture theatres alone, excluding theatres and music-halls—in 1914 some 4,000 at least, probably more—is sufficient indication that this represented but a small section of the operators.

date their position. Legal assistance, benefit and the usual friendly society functions were building up a solid reputation for the organization. It was necessary to combat suspicion of the London headquarters, and the accusation that N.A.C.O. was dependent for finance and therefore policy on the parent body, N.A.T.E., was hotly denied. Qualifications for membership had to be made less restrictive as technical conditions altered and Emil Lauste's original unspecialized definition of an "operator" became out of date:

A man who can photograph, develop, print and project, with an exceptional experience of electricity and oxy-hydrogen work, and able to repair or make his own machines.¹

The most potent factors in the development and consolidation of N.A.C.O.'s influence, however, were the related questions of Sunday opening and the rival unions. Efforts to slip registration of operators into the Cinematograph Act had failed, as did later attempts to secure special legislation. But in the meanwhile one indirect outcome of this Act which had pleased labour leaders, unlike the rest of the trade, was the L.C.C. effort to enforce Sunday closing. The previous antagonism between exhibitors and labour over registration was completely dwarfed by the intensity of the Sunday opening fight. The mere fact that operators' interests in this were opposed to those of the rest of the trade gave them a strong motive for combination, and sympathy and encouragement came from the labour movement in the country as a whole. Exhibitors' support for a seven-day week, even hedged around with conditions to ensure that no one need work more than six hours unless he expressly chose to, aroused the hostility of other branches of the labour movement and, as already suggested, it was labour interests rather than morality which formed the fighting core of the opposition to Sunday opening.

The position of N.A.C.O. was helped rather than hindered by the appearance of rival unions formed especially to fight it on this issue. First the National Union of Kinematograph and Skating Rink Employees² and then the Cinematograph Employees' League³ were formed, their avowed reason for existence being to uphold the efforts of the rest of the

¹ *Optical Lantern and Kinematograph Journal*, February 1906, p. 81.

² Formed 1910.

³ Formed 1911.

trade to restore Sunday opening. The explanation given by both these unions was that Sunday closing would throw many operators out of work by pressing harshly on the large number of exhibitors who relied on Sunday profits, and they made much of the view that Sunday opening should only be allowed on condition that no operator worked more than six days a week. "Trade union wages and conditions" were spoken of with glib assurance. But N.A.C.O. hinted, none too gently, that such protestations were a blind, and that so-called "unions" were backed or even formed by the exhibitors to bring labour into line with the rest of the trade in support of their sole object, Sunday profits. N.U.K.S.R. was repudiated by the London Trades Council and neither it nor the Cinematograph Employees' League lasted long or received much support from labour. But whatever their real origin, their bitter and well-publicized controversies with N.A.C.O. undoubtedly contributed to the development of the latter by giving it not only publicity but also a cause to arouse a sense of common interest among operators. Once more, Sunday opening seemed destined to play the historical role of catalyst in the combination of unco-operative elements in the film industry.

Although by 1912 there was a firmly established labour union, it was making little progress towards its original goal. Registration of operators, still persistently urged, met with no success and attempts to raise the standard of projection were having anything but the desired effect. Correspondence courses with postal examinations in how to operate a projector, advertising amazing results, were numerous. But *bona fide* courses were less frequent¹ and the men who took them by no means sure of finding jobs. It was the old tail-chasing problem carried to excess, of how to get experience without a job or a job without experience. After trying a few operators certified by one of the less reputable schools, managers tended to dismiss all "paper qualifications" with contempt, and the "schoolmen" were reduced to undercutting other labour in order to obtain work at all. Complaints of bad projection were as frequent as they had been earlier in the century. It seemed as if the work of those who

¹ One of the first signs of interest in other types of labour in the industry was shown by the Regent Street Polytechnic. In April 1912 it announced that cinematography, from the manufacture of films to projection, was to take a prominent place in the curriculum of evening classes. This proved so successful that by early 1914 day courses were being planned.

wished to see projection in the hands of well-trained and well-paid labour had achieved exactly the opposite result.

N.A.C.O. was not the only body interested in the proper qualification of operators. As indicated above, the manufacturers were vitally concerned in the skill with which their production was presented to the public, and the Kinematograph Manufacturers' Association had this on its original agenda along with other such questions as standardization of the film gauge. The K.M.A., which was formed in the summer of 1906, was the first of the three big trade associations of manufacturers, exhibitors and renters. It is perhaps not surprising that the manufacturers, who were fewest in number, were the first to combine.

More controversial problems than operators' qualifications faced the K.M.A. and its Secretary, J. Brooke Wilkinson. The basic problem around which revolved the struggles of the three trade factions throughout the period 1906-14 was that of the relative market positions of those who made, and those who used, the films. The fundamental market antagonism of makers and exhibitors was the basis of several years of manœuvring and bargaining.

The essence of the problem was that renters and exhibitors, having bought films from the manufacturers, kept them in circulation too long. It has been suggested before¹ that this both over-loaded the market, thus depressing prices, and brought discredit on the films by showing them at a disadvantage. The result was a continued effort on the part of the manufacturers to limit the length of a film's life. They tried to achieve this several times by combination of part of the trade, with the boycott as their weapon. At first it was thought that a combination of manufacturers alone could impose it on an unwilling industry. When this proved impossible largely because of the hostility of the renters, and when the renters had themselves formed an association, the manufacturers tried to secure their aim by persuading the latter to join the combination. This in turn aroused the furious resistance of the exhibitors and failed, and when the latter also formed a strong association it was sought to include them in the agreement as well. This, again, failed. By this time the conditions of the industry had changed to such an extent that the problem had already shown signs of dissolving or at least of changing its character so completely that it may

¹ See Chapter I, Section 3.

almost be treated as a different question, belonging to a later era. In the period under review, however, it was fundamentally this quest for control by the manufacturers which formed the pivot around which the trade bodies grew and fought.

That, in its simplest terms, was the pattern of the next few years. The first phase, during which the manufacturers¹ tried to impose their conditions on the rest of the trade singlehanded, was that of the Paris Convention of 1909. After months of discussion the European Convention of Film Makers and Publishers of February 1909 was held in Paris and was attended by the representatives of thirty firms and seven countries. The ten chief British firms (Urban, Hepworth, Cricks and Martin, Wrench, Warwick, Clarendon, Williamson, Gaumont, Walturdaw and Paul) were committed by the agreement which resulted, a fact for which the leaders of the K.M.A. were later criticized sharply when its contentious nature became known.

The agreement made it necessary for a renter or showman to sign a contract before he could buy films from any of the signatories of the Convention. Under this contract he undertook not to hire or sell the film at less than the prescribed rates (which differed according to whether the film was (a) six weeks old or less, (b) coloured or plain); to preserve the trade mark carefully; to return the film to the maker within four months for destruction or cancellation and not to obtain other films from any but the signatories of the Convention. Agreement was reached on a minimum price of 4d. a foot for European films. The plans to limit the life of films and raise the price were to be implemented first in France and Italy, and extended later to Great Britain and Germany.

Antagonism to the Convention appeared immediately. Violently abusive, it set the keynote for future opposition with the cry of "Monopoly and Interference." The *Bioscope* editorials surpassed themselves in scorn and sarcasm. The opponents of the Convention were described in contrast as "manly and outspoken,"² and praised for their business-like superiority to the "shilly-shally and wobbling policy of the would-be monopolists." They were "prepared to fight relentlessly against monopoly or any form

¹ In this chapter the term "manufacturers" may be taken to include film publishers (i.e. those firms putting new films on the market) as well as the actual producers, who did not in every case distribute their own films.

² *Bioscope*, February 2, 1909.

of grandmotherly dictation.”¹ Interference continued to be the chief crime of which the manufacturers were accused, and resistance to them must be seen as part of the liberal tradition common to industry as a whole. The financial reason for disliking interference, the loss of profits on old films, was mentioned only in passing, while much was made of the general principle: “. . . we, the undersigned members of the Trade Protection Society, are of the opinion that when we purchase a film it becomes our property to do as we think fit with, and we hereby promise to stand by each other to the utmost to effect this purpose.” It was quite obvious, however, that the general ideological disapproval of interference was firmly based on the more concrete financial motive rather than vice versa.

It was hoped to beat the Trust by an agreement between all renters and exhibitors to refuse to take films from makers subscribing to the Convention. An opposition boycott was to be formed. This took shape almost as soon as the official pronouncement of the Convention, and, in February, the Cinematograph Trade Protection Society was formed. It was confidently predicted that small independent producing companies would soon spring up to supply exhibitors' needs, and in the meantime they were urged to keep their shows going with locals, topicals and so on. Both exhibitors and renters were encouraged to join the C.T.P.S., and some exhibitors were certainly to be found in its ranks. Since a number of them still bought films independently it would have been useless to form the society without them. But it was chiefly the renters who needed, and supported, the C.T.P.S.

The trade, however, was still too unruly for any one group to enforce a rigid boycott. The Convention failed. Its failure, however, was due to a conflict of interests among the manufacturers rather than to the intervention of the C.T.P.S. and it seems doubtful whether the latter would have had any greater success than the Trust itself if it had been put to the test. The historical importance of both combines lies rather in their position as the first serious attempts to solve the industrial problems of the film industry by sectional agreement. The Convention was the first of a series of attempts by makers to control the market; its opposite number the C.T.P.S. had a similar interest as the first step in the long and difficult battle to induce the exhibitors to join an association.

¹ *Bioscope*, March 11, 1909.

The collapse of the Convention may be attributed to three things. Firstly, the renters' resistance was fierce, and because it was fierce the Convention could only have been forced on them by a strong and single-minded K.M.A., whereas in fact the second and third factors—the growing number of American films, and the presence of renter-manufacturers in the K.M.A.—combined to weaken the latter's position. It was the renters who really defeated the trust. It was the big renter-exhibitors like Jury and Ruffell who gave weight to the C.T.P.S., and it was the renters who stood to lose most by the imposition of trust conditions. Simple resentment of the suggestion that anyone should sell them something and then tell them what to do with it was reinforced by the feeling that the interference was stupid and unworkable. Even if limitation of the currency of a film were desirable, four months seemed an unreasonably short period. If films were to be priced strictly according to age, how could one hope to dispose of a new film at a higher rate than an old one in cases where the latter happened to be the better? This difficult point was related to the whole problem of film values (see elsewhere) and would have been hard to solve under any system. But interference became even less tolerable when it was realized that it meant cutting off the profits from keeping films in circulation too long, or even the more legitimate profits from selling old stock to a second-hand dealer. Why should a purchaser pay as much for a film that he had to return as for one that he had previously kept or sold?

Such a plan could only have been imposed by successful defiance of the most obstinate resistance from film dealers, and the manufacturers were by no means strong enough to achieve this. For one thing, although all British makers of any size were originally bound by the Convention, the use of foreign makes was increasing all the time, and new film publishers with agencies for new brands were already appearing. Moreover, the largest producer in the world, Pathé, had not agreed to the Convention. More serious still was the fact that the Convention itself contained the seeds of dissolution. A number of the signatories felt that they had been rushed into a false position, and it began to disintegrate even before it was put into practice. For the K.M.A. had members who, in common with the current tendency of the British market, were expanding their film-dealing business at the expense of production, and it is significant that it was two such firms, Walturdaw and Williamson, who were the first to withdraw

from the Trust. James Williamson's letter of resignation was frank, and must have echoed the feelings of many others. Not only were the conditions unworkable, but: "I desire to be freed from the horrible nightmare of having my business directed by outsiders."

Even before withdrawals began, general uneasiness had led to considerable modifications in the conditions. Hiring charges were to be allowed to vary according to individual agreement; purchasers were no longer required to deal only with the combine; the four-month period was extended to six, with the all-important amendment that if the purchaser chose to sacrifice a rebate he need not return the films at all. The Convention was, in fact, only a shadow of its former bold self. But even then the dealers would have none of it, and, as the manufacturers were compelled to admit, the dealers were the real masters of the situation. The Convention had been due in any case to cease on April 1, 1910, but months before this happy release the *Bioscope* spoke of it as "late," though not lamented.

Thus the manufacturers' first attempt to control their product after it had left their hands had failed because the renters had proved too strong. It left three trade parties in the field, the K.M.A., the C.T.P.S. and the London Committee of the Convention, the last two dying on their feet. The C.T.P.S., which claimed to represent the showmen's interests as well as the renters', had been formed to meet a specific challenge and had little motive for living once the fate of the Convention was settled. In any case it had never received much support from the showmen, who were more numerous, more scattered and less co-operative than any other group in the trade. The manufacturers' next attempt was to be more subtle, and waited a couple of years for a higher degree of industrial articulation. In the meantime the stage was occupied by the first successful attempt to break down the isolation of the exhibitors. For there now appeared a new, limited, but urgent incentive to combine. This was Sunday Closing.

Throughout the long discussions which preceded the Cinematograph Act, there had been a growing consciousness that the showmen whom it affected did not speak with a single voice. An exhibitors' association had been urged from time to time ever since 1907 but their disunity seemed incurable. When the Bill became law and the L.C.C. started to use it as a lever for Sunday closing, a small section of exhibitors were at last driven

to decisive action and, as related elsewhere,¹ an informal protest meeting at the Holborn Restaurant on January 5, 1910, resulted in the formation of the Cinematograph Defence League. At last, it was felt, a body existed which could fairly claim to represent the exhibitors, and the C.D.L. began its short career with the enthusiastic backing of that very partisan organ, the *Bioscope*. It started well, and had considerable success at first in securing alterations to both the Home Office and the L.C.C. regulations. For nearly two years it tried to assert itself as the showman's intermediary with the local authorities, but its membership failed to grow as had been hoped, and even the *Bioscope* could not conceal the fact that the vast majority of showmen were not behind it.² Various reasons were found for this—the “domineering chairmanship” of W. H. Broughton, the high entrance fee of £5, and other reasons which, although contributory, were probably not fundamental. At bottom, the immediate aim of the League was not sufficiently compelling, for although the result of the struggle in London would indirectly affect exhibitors all over the country, for the moment it seemed to concern London showmen only, and the actual geographical dispersal continued to obscure their real identity of interests. Consequently when the League met an unexpected set-back in its Sunday Opening fight, it was not strong enough to recover. The final Tower Bridge decision cut legal grounds for its case from under its feet, and as a result the League was doomed. Several of the leaders themselves gradually became discouraged, including F. W. Ogden Smith. Attempts were made to form new associations, and finally in 1912 the C.D.L. quietly collapsed.

Just as it had replaced and improved upon the C.T.P.S., the C.D.L. was replaced and improved upon by the next, and more lasting, body—the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association. But in the meantime an association of renters had been achieved, in some secrecy, and conditions were ripe for the second phase of the makers' struggle for control. It was clearly felt that the makers had failed the first time because of the renters' attitude, and their co-operation had to be secured. Once centralized, it

¹ See Chapter II, Section 1.

² It was stated in a letter from the C.D.L. to the L.C.C. quoted in the *Bioscope* for June 4, 1911 (page 3), that there were at that time 145 member companies, representing some 700 halls.

was easier to negotiate with them, and the first public appearance of the new association was the outcome of such negotiations. The trade was set for a new bout of the struggle. According to F. S. Ogden Smith, a most penetrating commentator, the industry was marshalled as follows: firstly, the makers, desiring ostensibly only to eliminate "rainy" films but in reality also to create a monopoly which would force up prices and expand the market, particularly abroad, by abolishing second-hand sale; the renters, trying to keep the business in their own hands but alternating uneasily between the incompatible interests of the large and small renters; and the showmen, seeking desperately without organization or bargaining power, to maintain an open market containing a large number of small competitive middlemen, as a safeguard against the monopolistic tendencies of makers and large renters.

The Incorporated Association of Film Renters was formed during 1910 under the guidance of such important renters as William Jury. Its formation was shrouded in secrecy and little was heard of it until December, when it was said to have reached an agreement with the K.M.A. During the next few months alarm reached fever pitch over this agreement, the aim of which was once more to control the market, fix prices and limit the circulation of the films, along the same lines as the ill-fated Paris Convention. Despite the difficulty of finding out exactly what was happening—or perhaps because of it—the rest of the trade, with the C.D.L. as its spokesman, set up the usual wail against Monopoly and Interference.

Nearly a year later¹ the problem became acute and in December 1911 the K.M.A. and I.A.F.R. were definitely known to have signed, and be implementing, an agreement. This was designed to check illegal duping and the sale of films before official release dates, and took the usual form of the two organizations combining to boycott all who would not agree to their conditions. These included the return of films to the manufacturer, and restricted sale to "approved buyers"—which, in practice, threatened the small and second-hand renters as well as the exhibitors. On the other hand, the system favoured the large renters and film publishers, an increasing number of whom were concerned with American films. The strangulation of the open market in films and the introduction of the "American system of trusts" led to a state of war in the trade with the

¹ September 1911.

old naïve stress on Interference replaced by more sophisticated arguments against Monopoly.

The agreement of December 1911 was due for revision in December 1912. During the year there was discussion not merely of renewing the present agreement but of taking a further step. It was proposed to abolish sale completely and substitute hire, by the maker, for a period of a year. This menacing situation had two results, alarm among small renters and frenzied efforts on their part to reverse the wheel they had helped to set in motion, and the consolidation, at last, of a film exhibitors' association.

Resentment and fear of the united (or more or less united) front of renters and makers had for several years aroused the envy of those petulant individualists, the exhibitors, but had not hitherto been a strong enough inducement to them to form a strong organization of their own. But the new massing of forces happened to form part of a threatening combination of circumstances which at last compelled them to unite with each other, for the C.D.L. was proving itself unable to deal with the deteriorating Sunday situation. This, combined with the climax of the demand for closed shop conditions for operators and the new, though still obscure, plans of the K.M.A. and Renters enabled leaders like Ogden Smith, R. T. Jupp and Fowler Pettie, all of whom had long advocated combination, to form the C.E.A.

An exhibitors' meeting was called by Ogden Smith at the Holborn Restaurant, where so many developments in the trade politics had taken place, on January 24, 1912. There was "a small attendance." Ogden Smith himself admitted some years later¹ that there were not ten actual exhibitors present, nor were all these by any means the most important. Nevertheless it was decided to form a Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association of Great Britain,² and almost the whole meeting was enrolled on the Committee—with the exception of one unfortunate showman from Folkestone whose sole desire seems to have been to get the Association on its feet in time to fight his forthcoming lawsuit over non-flam. This Provisional Committee found its pioneering work hard, but a large meeting a month later disproved the insinuation that the Association had been still-born, and before long it represented 250 halls and had some influential members. It was not without difficulties. Scottish exhibitors showed

¹ *Bioscope*, April 9, 1914, p. 179.

² Registered as a company May 1912.

separatist tendencies. Frequent attacks were made on the grounds that membership was not restricted to exhibitors (in actual fact, although renter-exhibitors were allowed membership they were unable to occupy positions of responsibility). But the usual work was put into legal aid and negotiations with local authorities, functions which were after all of the greatest importance to members, and the Secretary, W. Gavazzi King, and a handful of the enthusiasts were inveterate letter-writers in the Association's defence and explanation. Decentralization was encouraged and the indifference of provincial exhibitors broken down, and by the end of this period the Association had a firm base in its 965 members and 1,468 theatres.¹ However, it was an uphill task, and a note of despair crept into Ogden Smith's many letters:

Unfortunately, it is useless to ask the exhibitors to combine; this has been done to death, and the showman of the provinces refuses to centralize his business protection, and prefers to have a number of small associations more or less without power.²

The immediate problem of the Association was the interminable fight within the trade. Throughout 1912 the trade was humming with alarm on the one hand and expectation on the other as to whether the 1911 Agreement would be renewed, and whether sale would be abolished. In their angry opposition to both possibilities the exhibitors found themselves allied to the small renters. Alarmed at the increasing power of the large renters and the rising price level—which was in actual fact as much due to the evolution of the feature film and individual contract as to any sectional agreements—they listened readily to warnings that there was a great plot on foot to exterminate every small firm in the country. The atmosphere of suspicion was naturally intensified by the fact that the trade Press was not allowed into the deliberations of makers and large renters.

By October 1912 the majority of small renters were firmly decided that it was not to their advantage to work with the manufacturers. The logical end of the latter's policy, the abolition of sale, would have left all but the large renters completely at the makers' mercy. At the meeting of the Renters' Association it was accordingly voted not only that all attempts

¹ April 1914.

² *Bioscope*, July 11, 1912, p. 129.

to substitute hire for sale should be resisted, but even that the agreement of December 1911 should be allowed to lapse when it came up for renewal.

Events then took an unexpected turn. Faced with the renters' recalcitrance, confidently aware of its own size and importance, the firm of Pathé upset the appletart by one of its special brand of single-handed actions. It will be remembered that it was Pathé, back in 1906, who had taken the first decisive step in the price war and reduced films to 4d. a foot. Now, at the beginning of 1913, Charles Pathé himself announced with *éclat* that in future Pathé films would not be sold to renters, but would be rented directly to exhibitors by the firm itself. He admitted that British renters were putting up more resistance to this plan than those in other countries, but remarked that even so their days were numbered, as in his opinion no mere dealer could survive the increase of the feature and expensive exclusive.

The result of this somewhat arrogant policy was a decision by all parties in the trade, in February, to use their favourite weapon of the boycott against firms refusing to sell in the open market—that is, against Pathé. Such unusual unanimity could not last long. Unity against the common enemy fled when the C.E.A. perceived that their allies the renters had thus been flung back into the arms of the manufacturers, who were profiting from the occasion by appearing as the least of two evils. By the end of March the renters had signed a new agreement with the K.M.A. to license films and issue them on such conditions as the combine might decide. These conditions included return at the end of a year, and films would only be issued to renters on the usual restrictive basis; that is, renters were not to supply exhibitors who took other than combine films.

The C.E.A. promptly stood on its head and saw Pathé as the Showman's Friend. A fight to the death was announced, and certainly the exhibitors now, for the first time, seemed capable of fighting in earnest. In actual fact, this third stage of the makers' battle gave a considerable stimulus to the C.E.A., and membership grew by leaps and bounds.

Agitation and negotiation continued at high pressure for a couple of weeks, and in the middle of April, to everyone's relief, it was announced that general agreement had at last been reached. It was a happy day for the trade. The *Bioscope* announced in bigger type than usual:

THE TRADE UNANIMOUS

We have much pleasure in announcing that the members of three Associations have mutually agreed their differences; a scheme has been prepared, the main outlines of which have been agreed to, and this will come into force at an early date. A Board is to be created, representing the three Associations, who will establish a clearing house. We understand the main principle to be that films, exclusive of topicals of course, will be licensed for a period of three years. They will have to be returned to the Clearing House, however, at the end of the first and second years (when they will be reissued if required on payment of a small fee), as well as at the end of the third year. Further, that the agreement will be binding all parties thereto for a period of five years.¹

Thus it followed the familiar lines of replacing sale by hire, imposing a year's limitation on circulation, and a boycott of non-co-operators.

This was, indeed, no great victory for the C.E.A., and Ogden Smith, on reflection, was unfavourable to it. It was widely held that the C.E.A.'s assent had only been obtained because of the influence of the big exhibitor-renters whose admission had been so unpopular in the first place. The great virtue that could be claimed for the agreement by its supporters, who included Jupp, was that it would give the trade a welcome five years' relief from the problem which had exercised it ceaselessly during recent years. The new agreement, like most of the others, fell through almost before it began to operate. But now at least it was clear that in deliberations on the future of the trade the exhibitors, too, were to take a part. And gradually the character of the problem changed as the many short films gave way to a smaller number of longer films on exclusive or feature basis, bringing with them the inevitable transition from free sale to restricted hiring. The existence of the exclusive feature changed market practices to an extent which years of deliberate effort had been unable to achieve. One thing, however, those years had achieved—a relatively highly articulated system of industrial relations.

A different form of self-regulation, and one which must be of unusual interest to the sociologist, was the film industry's imposition upon itself of its own censorship.

The British have traditionally been opposed to censorship, preferring legal action after the event to administrative action before it. But the film industry had strong motives for desiring to be protected by a universally

¹ *Bioscope*, April 17, 1913, p. 163.

RATIONALIZATION OF THE INDUSTRY

recognized censor, if possible with official backing. The result of this desire has been an extraordinarily illogical system: censorship by a completely unofficial body, enforced by the local authorities by means of an Act of Parliament which was originally intended to secure the public's safety, with the additional anomaly that in this way censorship does not apply to films printed on non-flam stock.

The readiness, or rather the anxiety of the trade to submit to this is understandable. There was, first of all, the reasonable desire for uniform regulations all over the country, and secondly, the constant search for a good reputation: the same two reasons, in fact, which had led the trade to support the Cinematograph Bill. The desire for uniformity and freedom from the often irrational, incomprehensible, and always unpredictable regulations imposed by different municipal and police authorities was the more powerful motive for the manufacturers, whereas exhibitors were obsessed primarily with the need for respectability. But both reasons appealed to all sections of the industry and the fact that the Board of Censorship which was finally established was the creation of the K.M.A., the only organization capable of taking such action at the time, does not imply that it was the manufacturers alone who were behind it. In point of fact, the success of the system depended equally on the co-operation of the exhibitors and censorship was perhaps the only issue in all these years over which there was wholehearted agreement.

The film industry's bread was buttered on the side of a good reputation. Quite apart from the constant murmurs about "improper pictures"—too shocking to be described—the trade was inordinately sensitive to accusations of bad taste. Good taste, then as now, was spoken of as an objective and definable criterion. It was never forgotten for a moment that "the success of the cinematograph had been obtained by the fact that it was a clean and healthy entertainment, to which ladies and children could go with perfect safety," and the attempts to attract the *ton patrons* made care additionally necessary, for their tastes were believed to be excessively refined.

The very subjects which drew outraged letters from "disgusted" and "Paterfamilias" undermined their own assumption that Good Taste is an unchanging standard. Big game hunts, newsreels of the Messina earthquake, all boxing matches, and particularly those in which the negro

champion was shown, and even a film showing a cowboy lassoing steers (mistakenly described as a "Cruel Sport") were held by many to be revolting in the extreme.

Sir, Where will animated photography stop? A few nights ago I was at a kinematograph entertainment when a film was shown depicting the body of a fisherman being cast up by the tide. Surely this is too revolting to be popular with the crowd, and too morbid to be termed "entertaining." If it served any good purpose none would object, but the tragedy of the sea is too well known to need any reminder in this way. A few months ago I saw a kinematograph picture, which, if anything, was even more morbid than the one I have just mentioned—a scene in a lunatic asylum. Yet another—that of a suicide by hanging. A considerable sensation was created a short time ago by a series on "The Birth of Christ." To say the least it was indelicate, and from a religious standpoint blasphemous. At the time I expected some protest, but none came. Personally I feel there is a need for a strong expression of public opinion on the subject.

I am, etc.,

G. S. B.¹

Films touching "the moral, or the rather immoral, side of married life," murder or drink were apt to be classed as questionable and suggestive, and "where the plots deal with modern social questions and the general doings of modern society" the film was almost certain to offend. According to one writer,² there were three categories of film which should be rejected out of hand: (1) the gruesome and ghastly, (2) the suggestive, and (3) those touching religious subjects.

Spicy articles on Filth in the Film and Flirting with Vice could be trusted to make a dull paper attractive. Such attacks became more frequent both within the trade and outside it as the social importance of the picture theatre became more conspicuous. By 1910 fear of a hostile censorship was open and exasperation with local interference acute. The remedy, it had continually been suggested since a Board of Censorship had been set up in 1909 in U.S.A., was in the hands of the industry itself.

"Nobody but a town councillor could possibly see any harm in the cinematograph,"³ said one critic of all restrictions, and it does seem to have been interference from local authorities which precipitated the trade into action. Arbitrary bans imposed by Chief Constables and Licensing

¹ *The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, July 4, 1907, p. 119.

² *Bioscope*, April 18, 1912, p. 175.

³ *Ibid.*, November 23, 1911, p. 579.

RATIONALIZATION OF THE INDUSTRY

Benches drove manufacturers, renters and exhibitors to desperation, and by 1911 they were asking, "What qualifications have such people to exercise censorship, and how can we possibly deal with such variations?" Settled censorship seemed more and more desirable.

In early 1912 the Home Office expressed a desire to learn the views of the trade on the best way to supervise the character of the films placed on the market. In February of that year a deputation representing the three divisions of the trade, the K.M.A., Renters' Association and C.E.A., waited upon the Home Secretary. They said they would welcome a censorship and would be prepared to establish one if the Home Office would agree to arbitrate in cases of difficulty. Mr. McKenna, the Home Secretary, replied that although the Government would welcome the setting up of a censorship the participation of the central Government was impossible without special legislation, and he suggested that the trade should seek instead the co-operation of the L.C.C. But although some half-dozen Metropolitan boroughs were already advocating official censorship, the L.C.C. was still of the opinion that this was unnecessary and consequently refused to help.

The trade continued to play with the idea, and at a big C.E.A. meeting at Birmingham in the summer¹ it was suggested that if the Government would appoint a board of censors a joint committee of the trade would take steps to ensure that only films approved by this board would be issued to exhibitors. But it was not until November that anything definite was announced.

In this month the news appeared in the trade Press that a British Board of Film Censors was being set up by the K.M.A. with G. A. Redford as President. His particular claim to the post was twenty years' experience as Reader of Plays under the Lord Chamberlain, and it was stressed that he was financially independent of the trade, as were the four examiners who were to assist him on the Board. Films were to be submitted voluntarily for censorship by the manufacturers at an examination fee of first 30s. and later 40s. a reel.

The initial plan of issuing special Board certificates to those theatres which showed only films passed by the Board proved inadequate. The local licensing authorities under the Cinematograph Act of 1909 were

¹ July 3, 1912.

then approached, and a number agreed to make it one of their conditions that only films passed by the Board were to be exhibited in halls under their jurisdiction. This, it should be pointed out, could be enforced as a result of the lawsuit which had established that conditions other than those relating to safety could be imposed under the Cinematograph Act. It only required the appearance of the practice of issuing two categories of certificate, those for either Adult or Universal exhibition, for the modern system of censorship to be born. The story may be told in the words of the two men who had most to do with its successful inception:

Sir, As there appears to be some misunderstanding in certain quarters in respect to the censorship of films, we would like to put the facts of the case before your readers, in order to eliminate any further doubts on this matter.

From the time that a deputation from the Trade waited upon the Home Secretary, at the Home Office, the scheme, which was then roughly outlined, has, at different times, received the consideration of the three Trade Associations. As formulated by the Manufacturers' Association, it was submitted to the Renters' and Exhibitors' Associations. The Renters' Association came to the conclusion that censorship was purely a matter which interested the manufacturers, and that body left it to be dealt with by the manufacturers, as they thought best in the general interests of the Trade. The Exhibitors' Association continued its support, and submitted the scheme as then outlined to a meeting in Birmingham, to which all the exhibitors in the kingdom were invited. That meeting ratified the action of the Exhibitors' Association, and intimation of the same was made to the Manufacturers' Association. Owing to a sudden movement by various licensing authorities, the need for immediate action resulted in another joint meeting. At that meeting several names were suggested for the position of Censor, but Mr. G. A. Redford's name has all along been in the greatest favour, and it is satisfactory to be able to report, as is now well known, that he has accepted the position. He will be assisted by four examiners of films, whom he will appoint. The British Board of Film Censors, therefore, will be a purely independent and impartial body, whose duty it will be to induce confidence in the minds of the licensing authorities, and of those who have in their charge the moral welfare of the community generally.

A committee of three manufacturers, who will retire respectively at one, two and three months, will control the financial side of the organization, and this committee will be strengthened and supported by an equal number of representatives from the Exhibitors' Association. It will readily be seen that a scheme of the magnitude of the British Board of Film Censors, where several thousands of pounds will be spent annually, requires some provision to be made to watch over its finances, but, so far as the Censorship is concerned, that matter is

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entirely under the direct control of the President of the Board, Mr. G. A. Redford, whose decision in all cases will be final.

It remains for exhibitors throughout the country to co-operate cordially and energetically, to the end that the Board may attain a high place in the estimation of all classes, and promote that confidence in cinematography without which the industry cannot maintain the prestige it has secured, nor move on to the greater height of achievement which lies before it.

Yours, etc.,

J. BROOKE WILKINSON,

*Secretary, Incorporated Association of Kinematograph
Manufacturers Ltd.*

W. GAVAZZI KING,

*Secretary, Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association of Great
Britain and Ireland Ltd.*

November 20, 1912.¹

The Board began to function on New Year's Day, 1913, amid much favourable comment. Harry Furniss's strident voice could be heard complaining that theatrical censorship was a curious training for the President of the new Board. But in point of fact the Board seemed well adapted to its own particular purpose and credit was lavished on Redford for the broadminded spirit in which he administered the censorship—a broadmindedness which on occasion caused some concern among the more timid. The personal influence of both President and Examiners was very great. The only canon they had to guide them was the broad principle that nothing should be passed which they honestly felt would be calculated to demoralize an audience or any section of it, and the only two firm, if incongruous, rules laid down by Redford were that the living figure of Christ should never be permitted, and that nudity should in no circumstances be passed.²

The Board had everything in its favour. The Home Office was well disposed towards it, and happy to believe that it could and would protect the public's moral welfare. Exhibitors saw it as their deliverance from local authorities, and some local authorities gradually came to rely on it to perform the responsible task of examining and certifying films. And as for the manufacturers, in its first annual report the Board could say that "sixty-six publishers of films have entered into agreement with the Board

¹ *Bioscope*, November 21, 1912, p. 557.

² 1917 Report, p. lxxxI.

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to submit their films for censorship, thus involving the whole of the world's output."¹ The following figures from the Reports indicate the Board's work in its first two years of existence.

Year	Amount of Film Examined (ft.)	Number of Subjects Passed	Passed U Certificate	Passed A Certificate	Exception Taken*	Finally Rejected*
1913	7,628,931	7,488	6,861	627	166	22
1914	6,881,614	6,282	5,866	416	148	13

* See Appendix to this chapter for the reasons given.

¹ *Bioscope*, February 19, 1914, p. 729.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER II

Of the 7,488 films examined by the British Board of Film Censors in its first year of existence, 1913, exception was taken to 166, on the following grounds:

- Cruelty to animals.
- Indecorous dancing.
- Vulgarity and impropriety in conduct and dress.
- Indelicate sexual situations.
- Scenes suggestive of immorality.
- Situations accentuating delicate marital relations.
- Gruesome murders.
- Excessive gruesome details in crime or warfare.
- Indecently morbid death scenes.
- Scenes tending to disparage public characters and institutions.
- Medical operations.
- Executions.
- Painful scenes in connection with insanity.
- Cruelty to women.
- Confinements.
- Drunken scenes carried to excess.
- Scenes calculated to act as incentive to crime.
- Indecorous sub-titles.
- Indelicate accessories in the staging.
- Native customs in foreign lands abhorrent to British ideas.
- The irreverent treatment of sacred or solemn subjects.
- The materialization of Christ or the Almighty.

Twenty-two films were rejected entirely, on the following grounds:

- Indelicate or suggestive sexual situations.
- Indecent dancing.
- Holding up a Minister of Religion to ridicule.
- Cruelty to animals.
- Indelicate accessories in the staging.
- Judicial executions.
- Excessive drunkenness.
- Subjects depicting procurations, abduction and seduction.
- Native customs in foreign lands abhorrent to British ideas.
- Impropriety in conduct and dress.
- Materialism of Christ or the Almighty.

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(I) INTRODUCTORY

British film pioneering reached a summit of achievement at such an early age that its subsequent decline must form the embarrassing theme of this second period, although it is still the story of a very young industry. The infant prodigy's promise had led not to a glorious maturity but to a state of arrested development, and the years 1906 to 1914 show two phases, first a humiliating period of stagnation, and after 1911 a noticeable but only partly successful effort, broken by the coming of war, to re-establish the former status of British production. During the first phase the pioneer producing companies generally failed to meet the increasing needs of the new art with either breadth of vision or commercial and artistic elasticity, and new activity in the industry tended more towards middleman functions than to production. The absolute number of films on the market increased, but the proportion of these which were of British make fell. New British firms sprang up, but their large weekly releases were of Italian and American origin. Countless dealers were putting out under their own names large releases which were at least 90 per cent of foreign make, the 10 per cent contributed by themselves being usually nothing more ambitious than simple actuality, interest or topical films. The great British pioneer, R. W. Paul, was turning back to his original business of instrument manufacture and abandoning his film interests.¹ The brilliant Brighton inventor, G. A. Smith, was concentrating entirely on his experimental work in colour cinematography. The other producers—Williamson, the Sheffield Photo Company, even the Hepworth Manufacturing Company itself—sank into the doldrums of an unambitious obscurity, and dully followed the old routines. Film producers in America, Italy and France, chasing the future with all the zest the British had previously shown, put this country to shame, and by 1911 British production was

¹ Formal retirement from film production in 1910.

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oppressed by a feeling of inferiority which subsequent efforts had not succeeded in removing when they were interrupted by the war.

This second phase of delayed effort may be said to date from a Hepworth drama of 1911, *Rachel's Sin*.¹ This was the beginning of a deliberate policy of producing and boosting "top-liners" which soon made Hepworth the patriotic pride of the trade. With this example of the success of businesslike determination to spur them on, it was not long before there was something approaching a revival among British producers. Cricks and Martin, a small firm which had carried the torch for British pictures during the difficult last few years, made gallant efforts to retain their modest pre-eminence, but soon the field was full of more daring competitors. Barker, B. & C., and the important London Film Company were flourishing, and several other less important brands appeared; the old firm of Clarendon made its presence felt once more, and Pathé began a series of important British films. All the time, this revival was being both helped and threatened by the penetration of the developing British production by American companies. Which would in the end have proved the stronger element, or whether both would have worked in perfect harmony, it is hard to say. As it fell out, the gathering momentum of both British production and of American production in Britain was sharply checked in 1914 by the First World War.

By the end of the pre-war period there were something like thirty brands of film made in England, coming from roughly the same number of studios.² The main geographical distribution of production had been determined for many years to come, and the studios at Twickenham, Ealing, Elstree and Merton Park, among other places, were already in existence. The industry, moreover, was strongly centralized. Gone were the days when isolated provincial producers like the Sheffield Photo Company could compete on equal terms with London firms. The main producers were all in or around London, especially in its outlying districts, and the few provincial companies which managed to exist were relatively unimportant. But within the framework of this centralization there was constant movement. Studios changed hands, companies came and went, and personnel moved ceaselessly from one firm to another improving their position and clarifying their status as they went. Through all this activity

¹ Released December 1911.

² For list of studios, see Appendix to this chapter.

emerged the specialization of technicians, for gone also were the days of the one-man show, when a "cinematographer" did everything from making the camera to projecting the film. No longer was production, or "manufacture," only one of the elements in a cinematographer's business, for the element which emerged almost as a sideline grew and grew and in some cases swallowed the rest of the business and by 1911, when British film production got its second wind, new producing companies were founded *per se*. Lingering remnants of the earlier system were the many renters who, with diminishing ardour, photographed their occasional topical or special industrial film. Throughout the first ten years a film manufacturer's business was so small that almost always the personality and creative character of one man stamped itself clearly on everything produced by any one firm. But as numbers and specialization within the studio increased, the character of this domination changed. One or two strong personalities of the old school retained their creative dominance, but leadership, both in business administration and in its more personal aspects, became of greater importance in the head of the firm than more technical flairs.

(2) PRODUCTION COMPANIES

There were seven major producing firms during these years: Hepworth's, Cricks and Martin, Clarendon and the Urban Trading Company dated from the previous period, Barker's and B. and C. from early in this, and the London Film Company from 1913 only. Greatest all-round importance undoubtedly belonged to the Hepworth Manufacturing Company, but the London Film Company, in the brief part of its career which fell in this period, showed itself a formidable rival. R. W. Paul's producing activities, so important in the earlier period, dwindled rapidly and disappeared entirely in 1910, when he decided to confine himself to instrument manufacture.

One of the most interesting, if not the most important, of these major producers was Barker Motion Photography Ltd. W. G. Barker, once a commercial traveller, had for some time been one of the most colourful personalities in the film industry, vigorous, always full of large ideas, always a trouble centre. One of the original pioneers, he had been attracted to cinematography by the topical and, on becoming Managing Director

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of the Warwick Trading Company,¹ led it to further fame and fortune principally on the strength of the news film. In August 1909 he abruptly left this firm and in December formed one of his own. The trade held its breath. What was the incorrigible Barker going to do next? His new offices at 1 Soho Square—"Topical House"—opened in March of next year and a studio was built at Ealing, and the second tempestuous stage of his career in films began.

The immense force of his personality and the scale and daring of his conceptions formed the core of a company which seemed always to be hurling itself against new and impossible obstacles. Here was a temperament which revelled in the grandiose, and although his most important films were those made during the war years, those produced in this period show the same characteristics. He retained his fame as a maker of topical, but of greater significance to the development of the film was his work in feature production. His first important film was *Henry VIII*² complete with Sir Herbert Tree and his London company, a distinguished company which included Violet Vanbrugh and Arthur Bouchier. Apart from the Gaumont Company's early version of Godfrey Tearle's *Romeo and Juliet* two or three years before³ this was the first British film adaptation of an important stage production, and as such anticipated a movement which was to be of paramount significance to the British cinema. It could with justification be described as the first really important British film, important not merely in historical retrospect as the almost unintended exponent of some new development, but important at the time of its production as the centre of an interest similar to that aroused by a new novel or play, The production of *East Lynne*⁴ which preceded it by some three months. Tearle's *Romeo and Juliet* of 1908, and Crick's *Pirates of 1920* released about the same time as *Henry VIII*, were hitherto the only British productions to rank as major films, and in comparison with that of *Henry VIII* their appearance had created little interest.

For at once Barker had raised a hornet's nest. Not content with filming the great Tree, he conceived what was greeted as the preposterous idea of publicly burning all twenty circulation copies of the film after a release of only six weeks.

¹ January 1, 1906.

³ Released 1908.

² Released February 1911.

⁴ Precision Company, released November 1910.

There was reason in this madness. The ideal system of film distribution was the question of the hour, and Barker was not the only producer who anxiously sought an answer to it. Controversy centred on the two related problems of the principles on which film prices should be fixed and how to stop films circulating so long that they became a tattered disgrace to the trade. Barker's original solution certainly limited the film's life and, by so doing, sent up its price. But after the much publicized announcement that he was "preserving the actor's art for posterity" (a record, incidentally, of which Tree himself was said to be not particularly proud) Barker's conflagration enraged and confused his contemporaries.

This drastic remedy was not repeated. The precedent of paying big prices for stage personalities, however, was taken up with enthusiasm by small English producers who found first-class film actors scarce. But Barker himself had by 1913 built up a stock company at his Ealing studio similar to Hepworth's and was working hard to establish his "all British" players with a public by now accustomed to Mary Pickford, John Bunny and to a lesser extent the Hepworth favourites. The names of Blanche Forsythe, the plump demure English girl, Fred Paul, Dora de Winton, Fred Morgan and others¹ were hopefully publicized as they appeared in film after film and began to mean something, if not very much, to English audiences. But the significance of Barker films during the next few years did not lie in the quality of the acting, or indeed in any technical perfection or development. That would be an optimistic claim. Their place is rather that of the bold, if inelegant, champions of British production, the aggressive portrayers moreover of British life and history. The pageantry of British History, like crowd work, appealed to Barker's sense of the dramatic. His fondness for the topical, on the other hand, had accustomed him to the idea of the roving camera and his companies set forth for the downs or the docks with equal alacrity. Even though vitiated by melodramatic stories and acting which was criticized for its lack of refinement, his films had the great merit of using subject material thoroughly suited to the medium. Films of London life, whit locations from the Embankment to the races, had the seeds of a realism probably more fruitful for the cinema than the stage plays and Victorian novels so popular among other producers.

¹ T. H. Macdonald, Rachel de Solla, J. H. Batson, etc.

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Another of the foremost companies, and one which excelled in the spectacular only by Barker himself, was the British and Colonial Kinetograph Company. "B. and C.," as it was always called, was founded at approximately the same time as Barker Motion Photography¹ by A. H. Bloomfield and J. B. McDowell,² but it was some time before B. and C. impressed any corporate personality on the trade in the way the other company had done. A couple of years were spent in building up a steady reputation with a flow of films from the studio at Newstead House, East Finchley, and particularly with several well-known adventure series—*Dick Turpin*,³ *Three-Fingered Kate*,⁴ *Don Q*,⁵ produced by Charles Raymond, and above all the widely popular adventures of *Lt. Daring*, played every time by Percy Moran.⁶ Yet another group of players was formed whose faces, if not their names, gradually became known to the British public.⁷ Efforts to turn Dorothy Foster and Elizabeth Risdon into stars on the American model failed, and probably only Percy Moran as Lt. Daring was at all widely identified. But more important, perhaps, was the fact that both players and their producers—or "directors"⁸ as the men with the megaphones were beginning to be called—were learning their trade.

With *Tragedy off the Cornish Coast*⁹ B. and C. films moved into the feature class. Soon the studio was too small for the company's growing ambitions, and they took the lead in what was then the unusual adventure of foreign location work. In early 1913 a company went to the West Indies and, to judge by the number of West Indies dramas that were forthcoming in the next few months, made extensive use of their trip. Even Lt. Daring was found to be entangled with a dancing girl in Jamaica.¹⁰ The venturesome B. and C. photographer F. Burlingham scaled the Alps, descended the crater of Vesuvius in his search for "different" settings, and *Tragedy in the Alps*¹¹ followed in the footsteps of *Tragedy off the Cornish Coast*—in itself something of an innovation, for in early 1912 the idea of going even

¹ 1909.

² Previously with Walturdaw.

³ First release in May 1912.

⁴ First release in October 1909.

⁵ First release in November 1912. From a serial by Hesketh Pritchard in *Pearson's Magazine*.

⁶ First release in September 1911.

⁷ Ivy Martinek, Elizabeth Risdon, Dorothy Foster, Walleth Waller, Fred Groves, the Batleys, Arthur Finn, Henry Lorraine.

⁸ Charles Raymond, Charles Weston, Maurice Elvey.

⁹ Released February 1912.

¹⁰ *Lt. Daring and the Dancing Girl*, released August 1913.

¹¹ Released late 1913.

as far as Cornwall had been new and daring. By the end of 1913 the company was ripe for changes. It had outgrown its old studio and moved¹ to a large new one, a former skating rink at Hoe Street, Walthamstow, which was said to be 280 by 130 feet and have room for no less than twenty sets at a time.

B. and C. were almost unique in that they produced hardly any film versions of stage successes, but apart from this fact and their location work they followed rather than set the fashions. They had their crime and underworld films and their historical spectacles. But their innovations, though few, were important, for besides being the first to go on foreign locations they made what was probably the first expensive British spectacle employing thousands of extras, *The Battle of Waterloo*²—for the production of which a squadron of lancers from the nearby barracks was actually hired.

Frederick Burlingham, a cinematographer who had done several films for B. and C., left the company early in 1914³ to issue his own films, as “Burlingham Specials” or “Wanderer” films. Burlingham was one of a small number of individual photographers whose fairly independent work⁴ was usually in the sphere of the factual film, made them almost as widely-known⁵ as the rising stars. Joe Rosenthal with his war films and, later, his globe-trotting was the first and most romantic figure; Oliver Pike and Martin-Duncan with their many years of nature and scientific films were others. Both Rosenthal and Martin-Duncan had in the first place been attached to the Charles Urban Trading Company, a firm which continued unchallenged as the specialist in the factual film at a time when more and more attention was being paid to drama and comedy.

Rosenthal settled in Croydon about 1906, after several years of travelling for the Charles Urban Trading Company. A couple of years later⁴ he set up a company of his own, called the Rosie Film Company, which with greatly daring emphasis advertised⁵ “*English Art Films*,” made in his own studio (or back garden). But if the Charles Urban Trading Company’s star cameraman had deserted them their public had not. Profits rose sharply:

1904	£1,514
1905	£3,757
1906	£6,209 ⁶

¹ October 1913.

² Produced by Charles Weston, trade shown July 1913.

³ In May.

⁴ September 1908.

⁵ July 1909.

⁶ *Optical Lantern and Kinematograph Journal*, April 1907, p. 155.

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Much of their trade was, of course, in equipment and the films of other makers—the important Vitagraph agency from America was theirs. As a producing company, they drew more and more on the resources of the French firm Eclipse, which had also been founded by Charles Urban and with which the English company was amalgamated at the beginning of 1907. Most of the large output of the combined companies, particularly the dramatic films, were obviously French in origin, but in Britain Urban retained his reputation as the sponsor of the travel, educational and topical films which were the characteristic products of his particular interests, and although from early 1909 onwards these became more the concern of the subsidiary company “Kineto” they continued to be produced in great numbers. In this year the parent company claimed that it had a stock of some 3,000 subjects and an annual output of 750.¹ The new and impressive building in Wardour Street, Urbanora House, contained printing works capable of turning out from 70,000 to 100,000 feet of film a day and on the top floor there was even a small studio. This was seldom used, but after 1910 the proportion of Urban drama films which were of English origin increased once more and by 1913 Kineto also were publishing English-made feature films.

Urban was an organizer rather than a creative worker, and owed much to the men who worked for him. The role he chose to play was above all that of the sponsor of the serious record film, and everything connected with his business was in keeping with this character—educational demonstrations, dignified surroundings, even the tone and quality of his publicity and catalogues. Not for Urban were the sensational eccentricities which endeared the terrifying Barker to his colleagues. At the same time it was as an astute business man rather than as a lover of the academic that he managed to build one of the largest constellations of interests in British film manufacture. An American himself, Urban retained a special interest in the American market for his own films and at the same time drew on American films for distribution here. With his close American and French connections he was more of an internationalist than any of the other British manufacturers of the time. As a result, it is not possible to find in the history of the Charles Urban Trading Company that deliberate effort to foster British pro-

¹ *Home of Kinematography*, p. 20.

duction which is so noticeable in connection with the other companies from 1911 onwards.

Another branch of Urban's enterprises was the Natural Colour Kinematograph Company. This was the company founded to exploit Kinemacolor, the colour process patented in 1906 by Urban and the Brighton inventor G. A. Smith. This was a true colour process using two instead of three colours. Alternate red and green shutters rotated in front of the lens and the film ran at 32 frames a second. It was Smith who, at first independently and later for Urban, had produced some of the most interesting of the earliest British films, and from the point of view of film technique it may be considered as one of the many blows struck at the British film production of this period that he devoted his inventive brilliance to scientific experiment and colour work after 1905.

At the beginning of this period Smith, under the aegis of the Urban Trading Company, was nearing the completion of his years of experiment, and the opening of Urbanora House, on May 5, 1908, was made the occasion of a demonstration of the new commercially practical colour process. The audience was both astounded and charmed. But their compliments were dwarfed in the estimation of Smith and Urban when in December yet another demonstration was given, this time to the Royal Society of Arts, and Mr. Smith received a medal which he was to cherish all his life.¹

Thus auspiciously launched (Mr. Urban always did things properly), Kinemacolor moved a few days later to the Palace Theatre, London. The few months since the first demonstration had been occupied in collecting a stock of short colour films, mostly simple actualities—military bands, flower shows—for which colour alone was sufficient justification. The process was soon admitted to be a complete practical and commercial success. There were a few critical voices to be heard, of course—one observer tartly denied that the makers' lyrical acclamation of "the veritable hues and tints of Nature" was a faithful description of a lady with arms of leaden blue. Most enchanted audiences were pleased to overlook such little irregularities, but the possible expense of projection equipment was at first widely feared. The American correspondent of the *Bioscope*, moreover, wrote² at length to state (if not to prove) both that the process was com-

¹ Inscribed "G. A. Smith, for his paper on kinematography in natural colours, Session 1908-9."

² *Bioscope*, October 21, 1909, p. 19.

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pletely unworkable, and, more prophetically, that the patent was worthless and "would not stand the test of a contest in the courts." There was even one over-punctilious critic who demanded querulously "but is it scientifically correct?"

But such critics could not affect the popularity of the new colour films and in general the outlook was a happy one. Colour films became the rage and the reward of years of expensive experiment seemed waiting to be collected. The Natural Colour Kinematograph Company was registered¹ to produce and distribute films made by the new process, and new wonders in the way of nature study, simple actualities and above all news films of the pageantry of Coronation year in 1910 were presented to the public. As the sheer novelty of colours wore thin the company perforce became more ambitious and in September 1910 it was announced that the first drama in Kinemacolor was being filmed.²

Earlier the same year the old Williamson studios in Brighton had been taken over, another studio established in the sun of the south of France, and the Scala Theatre in London taken as a permanent show-case for the company's films.

But hidden behind this cheerful aspect was the threat of disaster. With a patent to grant him a monopoly, Urban followed a restrictive policy of exploitation which was almost bound to lead to trouble. The controversial nature of so many cinematograph patents had already made it very clear that the tough young cinema industry was not a docile subject for restrictions like these.

The method of exploitation adopted by Urban was to grant a licence for exclusive rights to one showman only in any particular area, usually a town. A projector and films were then supplied to him and he had a monopoly of the process for that area. The assumption was that the licensing company would make more profits from the high charge for a complete monopoly than it could by supplying several showmen at a necessarily lower rate.³ It is easy to be wise after the event, and suggest that a less restrictive policy would have avoided the misfortunes which befell the company. Possibly the few years which this system was able to survive did in fact yield

¹ March 16, 1909; Capital £30,000.

² *The Story of Napoleon*, released November 1910.

³ Charges in 1913: A Kinemacolor programme of 3,000 feet, changed twice a week and including projector and operator, cost £20 a week in London or £25 outside.

sufficient profit to prove the risk of failure worth while, for patent rights were disposed of in various countries for many thousands of pounds. But the risk was undoubtedly great. The large unsatisfied demand for colour films created by this policy was an inherent encouragement to patent infringement and, as it proved, the patents were indeed unable to "stand the test of a contest in the courts."

Legitimate competitors like Pathé, Lumière and Gaumont who had other colour "processes" based on quite different principles (not in fact true photographic processes at all) basked in the glory of Kinemacolor pictures and enjoyed a certain reflected popularity. But more sinister competition was soon forthcoming from the less reputable small firms which began to spring up under Urban's feet. Their unscrupulous promoters came as near to patent infringement as they safely could and before long the Natural Colour Kinematograph Company found itself constantly in and out of the law courts.

In the autumn of 1911, nearly three years after the first Palace Theatre show, the *Bioscope* published an advertisement for "Biocolour" which contained the following significant boast:

No attention whatever need be paid to idle threats of legal proceedings. We have been advised by eminent counsel that such threats cannot possibly be enforced.¹

"Biocolour" was a process invented by William Friese-Greene, which formed the basis of a company run by W. H. Speer² and backed by the financier S. F. Edge. The Natural Colour Kinematograph Company, already engaged in a similar lawsuit with a firm called "Polycolor," immediately³ issued a writ against Biocolour for alleged patent infringement. The latter instituted counter-infringement proceedings against the Natural Colour Kinematograph Company, and the *Bioscope* became the weekly battlefield for declarations and counter-declarations, warnings and threats. The tangled situation became farcical when Biocolour, swash-buckling and sure of their ground, claimed that their adversary had libelled them by suggesting that their action had been intended to intimidate the Natural Colour Kinematograph Company and that therefore they, Biocolour, were going to sue the latter not merely for patent infringement but for libel as well.

¹ *Bioscope*, October 5, 1911, p. ii.

² Later the head of a production firm called "Brightonia."

³ October 6, 1911.

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This sort of thing was repeated next year and the year after,¹ but all the while Kinemacolor itself was steadily gaining in popularity, not in this country alone but also in the United States and France. Kinemacolor de France was founded under Urban's chairmanship in August 1912, and the next year the Natural Colour Kinematograph Company itself bought a theatre in Paris solely for the exhibition of Kinemacolor films. At about the same time, the American Trust removed the bars which had obstructed the diffusion of Kinemacolor in the United States. In April 1913 Urban announced that he had taken studios at Bushy Park for the use of the company, and some time later an estate at Teddington was acquired. Subjects had been piling up and the company now had a very large repertoire—including a periodical fashion gazette—and in March a wonderful new catalogue was published. The summer of 1913 saw a considerable increase in the number and importance of the fiction films which were being made in Kinemacolor. Moreover, recent technical improvements were expected to be the sign for a less restrictive policy of release.

But in actual fact 1913 was the beginning of the end for Urban's monopoly, although not for the colour system as such. Late in the year² Bioschemes, a company owned by S. F. Edge, brought all these forays on the validity of the patent to their logical conclusion and petitioned for its revocation. Long and complicated technical discussions, accompanied by much personal bitterness, took place in the courts on the following comprehensive grounds:

That the grantee was not the first and true inventor: and the complete specification did not particularly describe and ascertain the nature of the alleged invention, nor the manner in which it was to be performed; and it was not new at the date of the patent; that the invention had been publicly used prior to the patent; that the alleged invention was not proper subject-matter for letters patent; and that the alleged patent was not useful.⁴

The petition, which accused Smith of having got the material parts of his invention from William Friese-Greene, also of Brighton, and Dr. E. F. Grune of Southwick, Sussex, was dismissed.⁵ But the Natural Colour

¹ Summer 1912—N.C.K. Co. v. Speer & Rodger, February 1913, v. Somerald & Co.

² December 1913.

³ Capital £31.

⁴ Report of proceedings in the Chancery Division given in the *Bioscope*, December 25, 1913, p. 1302.

⁵ Friese-Greene appeared in the witness box and raised his usual plea of priority. A few years earlier, in July 1909, his threat to sue everyone—about 4,000 people—using machines infringing his patents had left the film world unmoved.

Kinematograph Company had hardly time to sigh with relief when in April 1914 the case was brought up again in the Court of Appeal. This time they lost, the wording of the patent being found inadequate and as a result the company as such immediately went into voluntary liquidation. It continued to function at the same address as "Color Films Ltd.," but a final appeal by them to the House of Lords failed, and Urban's five years' monopoly was dead.

W. H. Speer, the chief thorn in Smith's flesh throughout these years of acrimonious struggle, was himself the managing director of a small producing company. Originally the proprietor of the Queen's Theatre in Brighton, he founded the Brighton and County Film Company, whose first production¹ was released sometime after the beginning of Kinemacolor's troubles. By spring of next year the company, now called "Brightonia," was making capital out of the vogue for stage productions with a string of adaptations of melodramas. But its producing career was somewhat shortlived. It must be remembered that there were at this time quite a number of small, ephemeral companies producing films of no distinctive quality. The older companies progressed with less speed but more effect.

One of the latter was the Clarendon Company, a firm founded in the previous period, which survived throughout this one, helping to keep the industry alive in the bad times and making its contribution to general development in the good. The Clarendon studio was situated at Limes Road, Croydon. The company was originally a partnership between H. V. Lawley and P. E. Stow, but on January 31, 1908, the former left it. Under Stow's management it weathered the bleak years until 1911 with a fairly steady output, normally of one film a week. Its Lt. Rose series began in 1909-10—that is, actually before B. and C.'s Lt. Daring made his dashing appearance. At about the same time as Hepworth's revival in late 1911 Clarendon seemed to be making a similar effort to rise above mediocrity and by 1913, with its Speaking Pictures designed for synchronization with a gramophone, and its special line of historical dramas, it was occupying a satisfactory if not a glorious place among the mighty.

The series of films² written for Clarendon by the Marchioness of Town-

¹ *A Nurse's Devotion*, released April 1912.

² *A Strong Man's Love, Convent Gate, House of Mystery, Story of an Actress*, 1913-14.

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shend were the pride and joy of the trade. This may have been less because of their intrinsic merit than because they had been written by a Marchioness, for this happy fact seems to have been the occasion of as much congratulation as were the few, somewhat unsuccessful, films of Sir Hubert von Herkomer. But whether or not Clarendon publicized the Marchioness solely because of a strong feeling that due credit should be given to screen writers, the fact remains that it was one of the earliest companies consistently to acknowledge its writers. Low Warren was given similar prominence for the historical dramas he wrote or adapted. It is worth mentioning, also, that their sensational *Saved by Fire!*¹ was the first British three-reel drama, being some months in advance of Hepworth's famous *Oliver Twist*.² In general, Clarendon was a solid firm with its occasional flights of achievement, but lacking the dash of a Barker, the gentlemanly perfection of a Hepworth, or the high-powered business drive of a London Film Company.

But Sir Hubert von Herkomer had something that none of them had. Not only had he a title, but he was a Royal Academician, a real artist with an established reputation in one of the older and more dignified arts. And whereas Tree and other famous actors were prepared to submit their art to the recording camera, Herkomer was anxious to take an active part in the creation of a film art. Here at last was an enthusiast from outside the group of practising film makers, a convert from more distinguished circles, to confirm their hitherto lonely faith in the film's potential dignity. It was apparent that the gospel was spreading.

Herkomer was over sixty when he turned the little amateur theatre built in the garden of his Bushey home, "Lululand," into a studio. In March 1913 he registered a company with himself and his son Siegfried as directors, his son having first acquired some film experience with the firm of Pathé. With tremendous enthusiasm and very little assistance they plunged into film production. The results were not altogether happy, and the trade, continuing doggedly to lavish its appreciation on the artist, was guarded in its reception of his works. To the deep disappointment of the many who regarded his presence as a feather in the cap of the industry, he died less than a year after the company was formed. The fact that his three or four films had failed to realize his large ambitions may, as Low Warren

¹ Released early in 1912.

² Released October 1912.

maintains in his book *The Film Game*, have been because in the first rush of amateurish activity he had tried to take too many duties upon himself. The historical significance of his film activities lies not in artistic or commercial achievement, but rather in his position as a link between socially accepted culture and the still vulgar "art of the people." The attractions offered by the film to pictorial and dramatic artists were being explicitly realized by many, but few serious artists were willing to yield to them as did Herkomer. It was as one of the last of the Victorian school of narrative painters that Herkomer was especially fitted to make the transition.

Another of the pioneer companies which survived the testing time was the other Croydon firm, Cricks and Martin. This was the old company of Cricks and Sharp, reconstructed in February 1908, when H. M. Sharp was replaced by J. H. Martin. The latter had worked for ten years with R. W. Paul, and brought with him both his skill and his love for trick films, and until the partnership dissolved in January 1913, a large output of trick films poured steadily from Cricks and Martin on to an increasingly sophisticated market, whose consumption capacity for all kinds of magic was dwindling exasperatingly.

The previous output of roughly one a week was greatly enlarged with the new partnership, most of the films being either the "industrials," then in vogue, or short comics. With a steady level of quality and quantity they helped to keep British production afloat during the deplorable years immediately preceding 1911. By the end of that year G. H. Cricks claimed that they had the largest producing staff of any firm in Britain, with "three producing companies always at work" in the Waddon New Road studio, a modern affair, lit partly by electricity, which had replaced the old. It was Cricks, moreover, who first produced a British film of feature rank—*Pirates of 1920*.¹ He now wished to embark on the large-scale production suited to the times, and to keep his lead with a number of longer and more expensive films. Capital was hard to find, however, and moreover his partner, J. H. Martin, was opposed to the idea of abandoning the short comic. But in 1913 Martin left the firm² and set up a studio of his own at Quentin Avenue, Merton Park. Here he was assisted by a young photographer from Clarendon, Theodore R. Thumwood. Martin films began to appear in the summer and, needless to say, contained a high proportion

¹ Released February 1911.

² January 1913.

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of trick films. By 1914, although still one of the seven major companies, Cricks was no longer of comparable importance to the Hepworth Manufacturing Company, the London Film Company or Barker Motion Photography.

One of the earliest and more lasting companies, and one which throughout its quarter-century of existence gave the British film industry its greatest and sometimes its only cause for pride was the Hepworth Manufacturing Company. The founder's personality was the dominating factor here as with Barker Motion Photography, but it is hard to imagine two personalities in sharper contrast than Hepworth and Barker. Where the latter sought new ways of surprising people, Hepworth sought perfection in established usages. Where Barker's company would recklessly sally forth to the Sussex downs with cameras and an army of extras, Hepworth's would labour in the large Walton studios to achieve technical excellence in less amazing productions. To Barker, the sweeping gesture of drama was the essential; to Hepworth, the delicate interplay of more homely situations was equally fascinating.

But this is anticipating later developments. The earlier part of the period was the time of stagnation in the British film industry, when production failed to keep pace with the other branches of the industry and originality seemed to have flickered its last, and Hepworth was no exception to this state of affairs. Throughout this period of minor comics, industrials and unimportant sentiment it was Cricks rather than Hepworth who was the persevering prop of the British reputation. The Hepworth Manufacturing Company even sank to the fashion prevailing among the smaller fry, and started to act as agents for foreign brands of film.¹

It was in November 1911 that it first became apparent that the company was to make a spectacular recovery by a deliberate concentration on longer films and greater publicity which in a few months made it indisputably the only English firm in the same class as the now flourishing Italian and American companies. This increased prestige was partly attributable to the company's publicity—how largely it is difficult to say. For the two major characteristics of "top-liners," which were soon being released in large numbers, were that they should be fairly long² and that they should receive special publicity, and of the two it seems that the second was decidedly the more important. For once the new regime was in full

¹ E.g. Rossi films, December 1907.

² At least a reel, that is.

swing, many top-liners, enthusiastically greeted by the trade, were little longer than the old split-reel¹ films. Players, in many cases the same players that had been with the company for several years without comment, were forced before the public on every possible occasion, on hoardings, in newspapers, on the walls of the Underground. The Hepworth stock company, indeed, was the oldest in England, and several of its members had by 1912 already been with the firm some five years. Chrissie White, who with Alma Taylor and Gladys Sylvani was one of the most publicized of the Hepworth leading ladies, had joined in 1907 at the age of eleven and travelled through tomboy teamwork with Alma Taylor to heroine roles. Madge Campbell, Flora Morris, Marie de Solla, Alice de Winton and Violet Hopson were other women players, and Stewart Rome, Alec Worcester, and Warwick Buckland early heart-throbs among the men, with Hay Plumb, Jamie Darling and Henry Vibart. Chrissie White, the first British film actress to receive a special interview with the *Bioscope*,² was followed closely by Gladys Sylvani. The latter retired after a few years of film acting, but most Hepworth players remained with the firm for years and disdained the chopping and changing so prevalent among other companies, some achieving lasting fame.

In addition to the films of his own company Hepworth published a number made by small independent groups. Ivy Close Films, Fitz Films, and Turner Films were all published by the Hepworth Manufacturing Company, the producers working in collaboration with the main studio. By 1914 Hepworth was in a position to have a controlling interest in a big new company, Hepworth Animated Film Corporation,³ formed to market these brands of film and his own in the United States.

It is probably safe to say that for all-round excellence Hepworth films were better than those of any other English firm. Contemporary reactions, at least, would indicate that was so. If they scarcely startled people into the fulsome admiration sometimes lavished on an exciting Barker film or a drama in glorious Kinemacolor their technical competence and irreproachable content rarely failed to arouse guarded appreciation. Judgment of whether Hepworth or Barker showed more of the elements of greatness probably depends on one's personal predilection for either the painstaking

¹ A term used to describe films of less than a reel in length.

² *Bioscope*, December 28, 1911, p. 941.

³ January 1914. Capital: £25,000.

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or the bold. Certainly neither "careful" nor "daring" seem high enough praise for the two outstanding figures of British production and it might appear more fitting to ascribe to Hepworth the greatness of dignity, and to Barker the greatness of the preposterous, the larger-than-life. But for this period at least the more moderate terms are probably justified. Nor should the epithet careful applied to Hepworth's films be confused with mediocre. They showed both a consistent care for technical perfection, if not for innovation, which was too often overlooked in a business which as yet had no long tradition of craftsmanship, and a good taste disastrously lacking in the output of more ebullient contemporaries.

Fitz Films were made by Lewin Fitzhamon who had early been associated with the Hepworth Company. Already well known for his work in films, particularly for his handling of children and animals, he set up an independent company at Whipp's Cross, Walthamstow, in the middle of 1912. Turner Films were made by the American star Florence Turner and her manager and producer Larry Trimble. The company was a British one, founded when the two Americans left Vitagraph in 1913, and used Hepworth's Walton studio. Starting in September with *Rose of Surrey* they produced roughly one a month, many starring the former Vitagraph dog, Jean. The American actor Tom Powers, whom they also sublet to Hepworth, was appearing in Turner Films towards the end of the period.

The third subsidiary brand, Ivy Close Films, were made by a former photographer, Elwin Neame, and his beautiful wife who, a couple of years before, had won a *Daily Mirror* beauty competition. Their first film, *Dream Paintings*,¹ was admitted by a reviewer to be "quite slight," but it "is prettily conceived and prettily executed. Its fanciful story allows Miss Close to pose becomingly in various costumes and attitudes."² Neame was not the same type of photographer as the pioneers—amateur photographers, small shopkeepers, etc. He had a studio in South Kensington and, like, Herkomer, a strong conviction that films were Art. The first results of this were a concentration on beauty, in the person of Miss Close, and "the more serious forms of comedy and classical subjects."³ Miss Close accordingly posed prettily in a number of classical subjects whose reception seems to have been discouraging. They were released by Hepworth,⁴ who also

¹ Released April 1912.

² *Bioscope*, April 11, 1912, p. 131.

³ The same.

⁴ First release *The Lady of Shalott*, November 1912.

secured Ivy Close's services as a member of his own stock company. By 1914 Neame's serious artistic purpose as a producer was bearing fruit in a series of successful comedies and adventure stories.

The last and in many ways the most interesting of the seven major companies was the London Film Company, formed late in the period but immediately taking its place as one of the largest and most important undertakings in British production. Its special significance is fourfold. Firstly, it was one of the most conspicuous results of the conscious effort to lift the standard of British production. At the same time it illustrated the now deeply rooted dependence of the British producers on American leadership. It showed, perhaps, more clearly than any other company the extent to which the British were drawing on the stage for personnel. And lastly, it was the first clear sign of the growing importance of finance.

The London Film Company was the direct creation of Dr. R. T. Jupp, who was Managing Director of one of the largest exhibition circuits, Provincial Cinematograph Theatres Ltd. Contemporaries are generous in their admiration of Jupp, a far-sighted man who gave leadership to the trade in several fields. As an exhibitor, he was one of the first to build special picture theatres instead of using converted shops and halls, and played an important part in the formation of the C.E.A. Revolutionary as was his influence here, it was not limited to exhibition, for it was to his enterprise that this country owed some of its best films and best technicians.

As early as December 1912 Jupp was advertising for "plots" to be sent to the Studio, St. Margaret's, Twickenham—a former skating rink. By the following summer rumours were circulating that W. A. Northam, Provincial Cinematograph Theatre's young advertising manager, was suspiciously busy in the U.S.A. Here he met the American producer Harold M. Shaw, and engaged him as one of the chief producers of the new British company which was being formed by Jupp. It was under the same auspices and management as Provincial Cinematograph Theatres, and started with a capital of £40,000. This was a relatively large capital, but even so the company was ready to expand it enormously by the beginning of the war.

There was no question of the new company's films trickling hopefully on to the market in the usual tentative way. The London Film Company

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was equipped for success before it started. Much publicity heralded its first release, *The House of Temperley*,¹ Harold Shaw's production of the novel *Rodney Stone* by Conan Doyle. An immediate success, in acting, story and photography it was as good as anything on the market, English or foreign. Subsequent productions lived up to this standard, and it seemed at last that British pictures had recovered from their inferiority.

At the same time, a trace of uneasiness showed through the congratulations. How could a film be accurately described as English when many, if not most, of those engaged in its production were American? How far was it a healthy sign that an English company had proved its wisdom by turning to U.S.A. for key actors, producers, photographers and even writers? Of the London Film Company's producers, Harold Shaw and George Loane Tucker were both Americans, trained in U.S. studios. Shaw had been acting and directing films for Edison and later for Imp since 1909, and Tucker, an Imp producer, had made his name with a notorious American film about the white slave traffic.² Their chief woman star—who later married Shaw—was Edna Flugrath, another American and former Edison player. Their scenarios were by Anne and Bannister Merwin,³ both previously with Edison. Bannister Merwin, the studio "editor," as the head of the script department was now called, had been in American films for two years after many years in American journalism.

The influence of America was noticed and deplored by many. Another influence, and one which was accepted without question and even welcomed, was that of the stage. Even Shaw had been in the legitimate theatre for twenty years before joining Edison, while the stage manager, until he left to found the Neptune Company, was Percy Nash, previously a stage manager in the legitimate theatre. Among the actors appearing in London Film Company films Henry Ainley, Charles Rock, Cyril Maude, Ben Webster and Charles Vernon were all primarily stage players.⁴

The company was a success. With a secure financial background it planned production as a large-scale business undertaking in which, moreover, the absolute necessity of experienced and highly-paid talent was

¹ Released September 1913.

² *Traffic in Souls*, 1913.

³ It appears that although Anne Merwin was on the staff she took little part in production.

⁴ Others: actors Arthur Holmes-Gore, Edward O'Neill, George Bellamy, Gerald Ames, Vincent Clive, Frank Stanmore; actresses Lillian Logan, Mary Brough.

clearly recognized. The only comparable enterprise had been the short-lived London Cinematograph Company formed five years before¹ by another exhibiting concern, Electric Theatres. The shareholders of the latter company had foiled their directors' attempt to build up a film combine and as a result the London Cinematograph Company shortly disappeared. Apart from these two exhibitor-sponsored firms, so alike in name but so unlike in fate, new British producers had crept on to the market as individuals rather than as financial organizations. The few that even attempted to take the world by storm hoped to do so by building up from small beginnings, and consequently were lucky if they survived at all. The older firms, on the other hand, were too often unwilling to grow with the times. Starting as small craftsmen in an easy market, many of them failed to adapt themselves to changing standards. Longer films, the importance of the actors and the need for good script writers were values which some of the pioneer one-man companies were slow to accept, and which some, to their cost, never did accept. Both because it started late in the period and because it had adequate backing, the London Film Company was hampered neither by an initial inability to pay for first-class talent, nor by the one-man-and-a-camera habit of production.

It is not implied, of course, that all the new companies which formed part of the revival of production showed the same recognition as did the London Film Company of the advantages of large-scale operations. Mention has already been made of the formation of the Neptune Company by Percy Nash, for a while stage manager for the London Film Company. He and Bowler Reed, former film selector of the London Film Company's parent company Provincial Cinematograph Theatres Ltd., built a studio at Boreham Wood, near Elstree, early in 1914. Of their actors, Gregory Scott came with Nash from the Lond Film Company, Douglas Payne from Motograph, and Fred Morgan from B. and C.

Starting a company was in some ways a much easier matter now, for although more specialized technicians were needed, they were there for the hiring. No longer did each man have to learn his job by trial and error, and whereas earlier companies had made film actors—however indifferent—out of raw material, a company starting in 1913 could without difficulty acquire a nucleus of people already familiar with the new techniques. The

¹ August 1908.

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constant movement in the industry, the perpetual splintering off of groups or individuals who left the established companies to join or form new ones, is evidence of the extent to which this happened. Neptune was by no means the only one formed in this way. The London Film Company itself was a case in point, differing from the others in that its nucleus had been attracted from American instead of from British studios. The Regent Company, known at first as the Weston-Finn Company, was another. At the beginning of 1914 Charles Weston and Arthur Finn broke away from B. and C. to found a company with a studio off Queen's Road, Bayswater. They were financed by M.P. Sales Agency, one of the largest renters, who controlled distribution of their three brands of Regent, Piccadilly—a comedy line featuring Fred Evans—and Pussyfoot films. A parallel may be drawn between the Provincial Cinematograph Theatres Ltd. and M.P. Sales, both fathering production companies, but the results were on a vastly different scale. For one thing, Regent was started in a fairly small way. For another, Weston and Finn were hardly comparable to established producers like Tucker and Shaw, although it is true that Weston had been responsible for B. and C.'s spectacular *Battle of Waterloo*—an achievement which was reflected in Regent's first production, a socio-religious drama called *The Seventh Day* for which no less than 3,000 extras were engaged.

Mention has already been made of Brightonia, Herkomer, Martin and the companies connected with Hepworth—all medium-sized firms of about the same standing as Regent and Neptune. Phoenix, Ec-ko, and Motograph bring the number in this category up to a round dozen. Phoenix Film Agency was the producer of Folly Films, comedies made at a studio at Eel Pie Island, Twickenham, by the popular music-hall comedian Fred Evans in his character of "Pimple." Near the beginning of 1914 his short unassuming comics gave way to ambitious skits on whatever happened to be the film, book, or play of the moment, from *Lt. Daring* to Brenon's *Ivanhoe*. The Ec-ko Company was comparatively old, having been formed in 1910 with W. P. Kellino as producer and studios at High Street, Teddington. It seems possible that these were subsequently acquired by Kinemacolor in 1914 or '15, when the former company changed its name to "Homeland" and moved to a studio at the Boat House Inn, Kew Bridge, to make a series of comedies with Billy Merson and Lupino Lane.

Motograph had a shorter, less distinguished but much more conspicuous

career which recalls that of Brightonia. Its beginnings were curious. The success of the Carnegie Museum Expedition films at the New Gallery in March 1913, preceded the hurried appearance of *Big-Game Hunting in the North Pole Icefields*, handled by a new firm called "Motograph Film Company." This rush to take advantage of another film's fame apparently formed a habit, for the Italian giant *The Last Days of Pompeii* was followed almost immediately by Motograph's *The Fall of Pompeii*, and W. G. Barker's *Great Bullion Robbery* had only been released two months when Motograph published their *Great Gold Robbery*. Such dramas as Motograph produced at their Crystal Palace studio were as sensational as they could possibly be, but at the same time its work in the factual and instructional field made it, in its way, a forerunner of Gaumont-British Instructional. Charles Raymond and Maurice Elvey worked for the company as producers, the latter, like so many others, coming to films from the stage. Actors included Douglas Payne and Babs Nevill as well as Elizabeth Risdon and Frederick Groves, both of whom, like Elvey and Raymond, later worked for B. and C.

With the firm of Zenith we come to a different type of company, that specializing almost exclusively in the publication of film versions of current or recent stage successes. There were a number of such companies in the later part of the period and almost all were more like sponsors than acting producers. Zenith was one with studios of its own (at Woodlands, Whetstone), where in the summer of 1913 Seymour Hicks and Ellaline Terriss made a series of films¹ and the Melvilles adapted not only a number of transpontine dramas but also a big Lyceum production of *Ivanhoe*. It is interesting that the Whetstone studio was built to accommodate scenery from His Majesty's Theatre, with which a regular liaison was planned. But most of such companies had no studios of their own. Usually renters or firms existing solely for the purpose, they commissioned the larger producers to film stage shows for them. These they published under their own names. As often as not the filming company would prefer to remain anonymous, for the shows chosen were frequently the most lurid of melodramas and little credit was to be derived from association with them. At the same time members of the studio's stock company sometimes took parts in the film along with those members of the stage company who had

¹ Including *David Garrick* and *Scrooge*, both trade shown in September 1913.

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travelled down from the theatre complete with scenery, and were even advertised by name, a naïve admission of authorship. The filming of Forbes-Robertson's *Hamlet* in 1913 by Hepworth, commissioned by Gaumont, was a very significant exception to this desire for anonymity. More typical was Big Ben's film of George Gray's famous melodrama *The Road to Ruin* in 1913. W. G. Barker filmed John Lawson's *Humanity* for the Magnet Film Company in the summer of 1913, Urban filmed Charles Hawtry in *A Message from Mars* for United Kingdom Films in mid-1913 and Lawrence Cowen's *The World, the Flesh and the Devil* in Kinemacolor for Union Jack in 1914. Hepworth's famous studio at Walton was repeatedly used. Here in 1913 Sir Charles Wyndham's *David Garrick* was made, Kirschbarker's *Eleventh Commandment* with James Welch and Gladys Cooper, Co-operative's *Lure of London* and the Kinematograph Trading Company's *Importance of Being Another Man's Wife* in 1914. The Kinematograph Trading Company had first appeared in 1913, with a film of dances by George Grossmith and Phyllis Dare from a Gaiety Show. The Co-operative Cinematograph Company was the firm that had taken over the producing and hiring interests of the London Cinematograph Company when the latter had failed, and opened its career in style with the Benson Shakespearean productions of 1911. G. W. Jones, who had managed the original company, left the new one in 1912 and announced his intention of making film versions of popular magazine stories. Apparently nothing had had come of this, but his declared reason for doing so, the fact that such films would have an audience assured even before they were made, is of interest as a frank statement of one of the most powerful motives underlying the wave of stage and literary adaptations.

It must be remembered that these pre-war years were a period of great fluidity in all parts of the industry. In production as in exhibiting and renting, continual efforts were being made to search out new and better forms of organization and methods of business, and in the process many strange and unsuccessful experiments were tried. Such an instance is the firm in 1908¹ which advertised itself as "producers for the wholesale trade only," with equipment and staff of its own to make films to order. Another case was that of British Cinema Productions founded in 1913² to act as a

¹ "Alpha"—Managing Director: A. Melbourne-Cooper; studios at St. Albans.

² By Lacon Threlford.

middleman, securing the agency for copyright work and stage stars, to dispose of production rights to film producers. And in the same way the commissioning of films by renters, or by small companies formed especially for the purpose, was a form of business which flourished while the predilection for films of stage successes was at its height.

With the exception of Brightonia, every name so far mentioned has been that of a London company. The days when a small provincial firm or even a travelling fairground showman could successfully compete with firms like Gaumont, Urban or Paul were gone. "Captain Kettle" films came from Towers Hall studio, Bradford, where they were made after April 1913, by Cutcliffe Hyne. Mitchell and Kenyon of Blackburn and the Sheffield Photo Company survived for some time, but finally gave up production. There was a certain amount of production in Manchester, chiefly by Walter Stott, and round about 1908 West's naval films were being made at Southsea. "Large new studios" in Buckinghamshire were rashly promised for Sun and John Bull films, two brands which were combined in May 1913, under the management of E. G. Batley of B. and C., and in 1914, after a silence of some years, Bamforth of Yorkshire released a series of comedies featuring "Winky."

On the whole, however, regional production showed a sad decline. One of the most important of the early companies outside London had been the Williamson Kinematograph Company of Brighton. It was in the forefront in many minor but interesting innovations in the days when importance depended on individual talents of a comparatively modest order, and its decline as a producer illustrated the British failure to supply either the qualities or the inclination to keep pace with the industry's expansion.

Production gave way more and more to the company's other interests as competition became stiffer and in particular as the American market became more difficult. Williamson films, previously sold mainly through agencies, were distributed by a London office of their own after 1907, but by early next year this office was itself acquiring agencies for other brands, chiefly of Italian make, and expanding its dealing at the expense of production. The original motive for making films had been purely a business one, and now that production was losing its amateur status it offered more risk than handling the increasing volume of foreign films. Thus more and more energy was spent on film dealing and equipment manufacture. By 1910

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the little Brighton studio which had been the occasion of so much pride was being rented by Kinemacolor and by September was up for sale.

The last branch of production to which Williamson clung was that of the factual film. Topicals, interest films of natural history or travel, or the type of "industrials" so popular for a few years, required no studio, lighting or sets and little staff even after those things had become expensive and elaborate in feature production. Hence a type of part-time producers of which the old provincial companies of Bamforth and Williamson were for a time members. The large Gaumont Company itself belonged to this class during the period. Starting with a large and very important production business as well as its hiring and equipment interests, it concentrated more and more on the latter, and as in the case of the Urban Trading Company an increasing proportion of Gaumont films were obviously made by the French branch of the company. Like Williamson, the Gaumont Company contributed to the supply of news and factual films, and their "Gaumont Graphic," like "Williamson's Animated News," was one of the earliest regular newsreels. But their only significant contribution to British feature production was during the earlier part of the period. Their film version of Godfrey Tearle's *Romeo and Juliet* in 1908 was the first English film of a famous stage player and was in fact several months before the similar work of the French Film d'Art. Later the same year they foreshadowed the craze for more melodramatic adaptations with one of George R. Sim's plays *Lady Letmere's Jewellery*,¹ a film similar to the series which this famous writer of transpontine drama was to make in a few years' time. Most of the firms² carrying on this part-time production were primarily renters or equipment people, and most dated from the previous period, with an output which declined steadily and finally disappeared.

The list of producers already mentioned is long, but let it not be imagined that it is therefore complete. The unhealthy state of British production is illustrated, rather than disproved, by the multiplicity of insignificant producing companies which continued to appear and disappear, as ineffectual as they were unambitious. There was Climax, with studios at Thames Ditton where in early 1914 Harry Lorraine—late of B. and C.,

¹ *Kinematograph Weekly*, November 26, 1908, p. 713.

² Butcher & Sons, Graphic Kinematograph Company, Kinematograph Syndicate, Tyler Film Co.; Walturdaw Co. Ltd., Warwick Trading Co.; Wrench Film Co.

home of the famous Lt. Daring—made a series of “Detective Daring” films; Anglo-American, who, during their brief career in 1912–13 at Wanstead, tried to make a “star” on the new model out of a Miss Hamilton, whose most notable achievement had been a pageant performance as Lady Godiva; Dart, with “Ponkey” comedies in 1913; Dreadnought, who in July 1914 announced dramas to be made by Frank Newman of Hatton Road, Hounslow, already famous for his natural history cinematography; Planet, the firm which in 1914 published a set of films made by the character actor Bransby Williams; Precision, a fairly long-lived firm which from 1910 onwards had studios at Whipp’s Cross, Walthamstow. The Precision studios, built by the Gobbett brothers, was in fact the first of the specially designed studios to be built with glass-covered stages on the first floor and workshops underneath. Selsior Dancing Films, who in 1913 hit on a new way to “synchronize” sound and picture—the ingenious device of including on the film a conductor’s silhouette to keep local accompanists in order; and many other firms which have left little trace—Diamond, Safety Bioscope, Topical Film Company, Vampire Manufacturing Company. Two producers insignificant so far as this period is concerned but soon to occupy an important place of their own were I. B. Davidson, who started making films in 1914 in an old tram shed at Lea Bridge Road, Leytonstone, and G. B. Samuelson. The latter, despite his youth, had already spent some years in film hiring in Birmingham. Early in 1914 he acquired an estate at Isleworth, Worton Hall. A big new studio was built, with room for three or four sets, and on July 1st was opened with pomp and ceremony by Vesta Tilley. George Pearson¹ of Big Ben was engaged as producer, and the foundations were laid for important work in the period about to commence.

(3) PRODUCTION IN GENERAL

Whilst the number of production companies was increasing, their costs of production were rising steeply. Even by 1906 production costs were beginning to be thought of on an altogether different level and, although £500 was still considered an “astounding” sum for a dramatic film, Hepworth could no longer turn out a world best-seller for £7 13s. 9d.²

¹ Born 1875.

² *Rescued by Rover*, 1905.

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By 1912 F. A. Talbot wrote that while a "simple conventional modern comedy" might cost some £50 to make, a "gorgeous production runs well into £6,000."¹ More sensational accounts mention £15,000 for first-class exclusives and Hepworth's *David Copperfield* sold for £5,000

Many things conspired to force costs up, principally overheads, as studios became bigger and more elaborate, and artistes' salaries rose. Exhibitors and renters became conditioned to the higher standards by series of jumps rather than by a gradual process, and the influence of outstanding topicals or the occasional film appearances of stage celebrities in dragging films up to a different economic plane must not be overlooked. The heavy expenditure, for example, necessary to secure adequate artificial lighting and the exclusive right² to film important fights could force costs up to £700 or even £1,000 with a correspondingly high selling price. Much of the rising cost was undoubtedly due to the use of professional actors. The *Bioscope* reported that W. G. Barker spent £7,982 on artistes' salaries alone in the production of *Sixty Years a Queen* in 1913. The family nature of much early production had long since disappeared. The producers' sons and daughters had been replaced not merely by professional actors but often by very important ones, and members of the growing stock companies benefited by the standards of pay set by actors of the standing of Tree or Forbes-Robertson or other favourites such as Harry Lauder, for not only Sir Herbert Tree got his £1,000 for one day's work when Barker filmed *Henry VIII* in 1911. Even in 1907 rumour reported that Gaumont had paid Lauder well into four figures for making a few short song films.

As a result the "fabulous sums" spent on production already staggered the imagination of a fascinated public, and the mysteries of production were already the subject of romantic—and romanticized—paragraphs in the daily Press and cheap little paper-covered books full of quite impossible anecdotes. More and more interest was taken in the extraordinary things that were supposed to happen daily in the well-publicized American studios, although comparatively little was known of the thirty odd studios in this country. Not more than half a dozen of these were of any

¹ *Moving Pictures, How they are Made and Worked*, by F. A. Talbot, 1912 edition, p. 114.

² Exclusive rights to film important events such as Royal processions, racing, and championship fights were frequently obtained by the highest bidder. The practice lingered on despite protests.

considerable size.¹ Many of them were makeshift affairs, skating rinks, garages, large halls—easily converted into “studios” and as easily converted back again. The most significant advance was, of course, the development of artificial lighting, but even the bigger and more advanced studios were elementary in comparison with the vast and highly organized structures they were destined to become. They were growing, however. The old single stage was no longer enough, and three or four or even more “companies” were often at work side by side on as many sets. And with the growth in mere size more complicated arrangements were appearing such as wardrobe departments, carpenters’ and painters’ workshops.

Location work, on the other hand, had actually retrogressed. In the improvement and complication of studio facilities the early readiness to take the camera abroad was largely forgotten. B. & C.’s expedition to Cornwall and Wales in late 1911 and early 1912 was seen as a daring novelty rather than as a natural extension of a common practice. For some time the principal field for work far from the studio continued, as before, to be that of topical work, and the usual colourful stories were told of incredible feats of speed. But locations on an important scale were comparatively rare until they were demanded by that particular type of feature film which by 1913 became the British equivalent of the Italian spectacle film—the historical battle, with its seething sea of extras. Such instances as Hepworth’s *Hamlet* in 1913 were rare, when “on the cliffs of Lulworth Cove is being built a magnificent castle, which is to be an exact replica of the famous old pile still standing in Denmark. This is being erected absolutely regardless of expense, the only condition laid down for the builders being that it shall be an exact copy of the original.”²

A general picture of procedure in a studio before the First World War has frequently been given by others. Perhaps it would be appropriate here to let contemporary authorities describe it in their own words. Harry Furniss, himself engaged in production, gives a brief summary:

Well, first of all the scenario, or what is understood by the man in the street as the “plot,” is written. It is then submitted for the consideration of the chief director of the studio, and if he approves of it, it is handed to the “director” (stage manager) whom he considers most in sympathy with the subject.

¹ Alexandra Palace; Ealing; St. Margarets, Twickenham; Hoe Street, Walthamstow; Walton-on-Thames; Worton Hall, Isleworth.

² *Bioscope*, June 12, 1913, p. 773.

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The latter gentleman "touches it up" or "cuts it down," according to his idea of the fitness of so doing, and then he divides it into sections. Supposing one thousand feet be the length considered commensurate to the subject to be dealt with—and it may here be remarked that a thousand feet¹ is the ordinary length for a good "story"—the director proportions these thousand feet out into scenes which vary in length, but which taken collectively must not exceed the thousand feet limit.

Then the company of players is selected and the various characters allotted. Rehearsals begin at once, and in about five days' time the picture is taken. In the case, however, of a great spectacular play, hundreds of actors are engaged and rehearsed, properties which may cost anything up to fabulous amounts are made, costumes are specially designed, scenery has to be provided, and altogether it means an investment of thousands of pounds. There is absolutely no limit to the expense it is possible to incur in the turning out of a really magnificent film.²

F. A. Talbot marvelled at the extent of the plant of a "studio-stage," the wardrobe with its varied costumes in their thousands, the properties and dressing-rooms and workshops. He described the large staff of stage carpenters and scene painters, busy painting backcloths in careful black and white of anything from the interior of a shack to "a sylvan valley with a river winding like a ribbon of silver among the trees . . ."—so far had artificial lighting enticed producers indoors. But the

scene itself occupies but a small space, generally about 12 or 16 ft. in width. As a rule the camera is brought within a few feet of the picture, in order that the actors may be photographed as large as possible. On the floor on either side battens are laid to indicate the limits within which actors and actresses must move. Beyond these confines is to vanish from the scene, and the stage manager may be heard over the whirr of the camera shouting peremptorily to one or other of the company to keep in the picture.³

The shouts of the stage manager or director are described in a fan paper:

The two operators kneel behind their cameras; the producer notes in hand takes his place; and the actor who is discovered gets ready. There is a few seconds' silence. "Turn!" says the director; and instantly there is a curious buzzing sound, as the camera handles fly round.

Good cinema acting is very leisurely. "Slowly—quietly!" says the producer. "Enter now, please, Miss Jones. . . . Good—good; a little longer. Enough. . . . Don't hurry. Keep as near the centre as possible, and turn your face towards

¹ I.e. about 15 minutes.

² *Our Lady Cinema*, by Harry Furniss, 1914, p. 162.

³ *Moving Pictures, How they are Made and Worked*, by F. A. Talbot, 1912 edition, p. 114.

me, Mr. Brown. . . . That's right—excellent . . . Now go, Miss Jones. Fine, fine! Are you ready, Mr. Smith. Your entrance is coming. . . . Stop!"

The buzzing ceases abruptly; the players remain in their positions—for the film has run out. There is a brief pause while fresh lengths are fitted on each camera; then the scene is resumed.

Apparently the first thing to learn in cinema work is never to look at the camera, and not to turn at the sound of the producer's voice. Players have to listen to his orders, and obey them without conveying to subsequent audiences the fact that they were being directed by somebody not in the picture. This is not as easy as it seems.

In a few minutes—astonishingly few—the scene is over. Once more the electricians are busy; and as they extinguish most of the lights the purple hue on the actors' faces becomes less purple.¹

And as for the lighting,

When the play is cinematographed indoors, a battery of powerful electric lights is placed overhead in front of the stage, corresponding to theatrical top-lights, and throwing a powerful glare upon the scene. They are controlled by switches, so that the light can be concentrated as desired. When the lights are in full blast, more than 80,000 candle-power may be thrown upon the stage. In addition, other lights are disposed for the purpose of producing different effects, so that upon a large studio-stage a body of well-trained electricians is indispensable.²

But it was not only a body of well-trained electricians which was indispensable. More and more specialized functions were splitting up the work of the old type of film manufacturer. The "maker" who invented a rough outline of a story, enlisted friends and relations as actors and wielded the camera himself, had first given way to a producer who bought plots and gave orders to professional actors as an assistant turned the handle. Throughout this period this general term of "producer" was further giving way to the more specific "director" (Furniss' "stage manager") though the terms were still largely interchangeable. The increasing crowd work necessitated director's assistants. The more complicated and elastic methods of production, different parts of the increasingly long films being made at different times and places, necessitated "detailed and accurate note-taking" to avoid discrepancies in continuity, and a popular writer in 1913 referred to "a man . . . employed solely to watch the costumes of the

¹ *The Pictures*, May 11, 1912, p. 23.

² *Moving Pictures, How they are Made and Worked*, by F. A. Talbot, 1912 edition, p. 114.

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artistes.”¹ Trained cameramen, still frequently called “photographers,” were in great demand. Set construction and scene painting for films were becoming techniques of their own.

Most of the early makers who remained in production, including Hepworth, Barker and Cricks, became producers in the modern sense rather than directors. The validity of attributing characteristics of the output of the various companies to any one man becomes increasingly doubtful, especially as some free-lance work was accepted. But at the same time the more important companies, the companies that made the grade, were those whose founder or moving spirit was willing and able to adjust himself to the changing conditions and become an organizer rather than an artist, craftsman or technician. And such personalities did give the companies characteristics recognizable in the bulk of their output. The pioneers with insufficient of this organizing talent, or with talents and interests which lay in a different direction, failed to keep pace with a company such as Hepworth’s or turned their attention to other things, abandoning the increasingly specialized business of film production.

But among the few who were left, as among the many new entrants to the industry, two related processes were at work. The first, the constant movement within the industry, was in fact a part of the second, that of specialization. The restlessness of the industry at this time was vitally necessary to its development. Many who had learnt their job with established companies broke away to form new ones. Usually it was a producer or director who formed the nucleus of the new company, but frequently he took a group of other technicians and actors with him. The Neptune, Regent and Kearton companies, Thomas Bentley, Lewin Fitzhamon, J. H. Martin and Harry Furniss were all examples from the latter end of the period, but all the time companies were starting up or dying, moving offices and studios as they outgrew them, combining and recombining. And specialization of function was both motivating and resulting from this mobility, for formal recognition and definition of a man’s special aptitude could frequently only be made explicit by a change of employment and many a reputation was made at the cost of such a move.

The most conspicuous development of this specialization was, of course, the place of the actor. Film acting, like plot writing, was soon to

¹ *The Romance of the Cinema*, 1913, by Valentin Steer, p. 22.

become a popular ambition. But whereas in the absence of either credit or good pay for screen writing its tireless aspirants could have little hope of anything but artistic fulfilment, would-be actors had the rising star system to dangle money and exhibitionist satisfaction before them. This it did with great success, despite warnings. But the clamour of applications, ranging from the wistful to the bombastic, aroused a return clamour of admonitions from producers, all of whom were in a position to state that even in 1913 not more than some fifty actors in this country subsisted entirely on their earnings from film acting.¹ All that most could expect was an occasional 5s. for a day's work as a super, in the few large-scale productions² which began to follow the fashion set by the Italian spectacle films. But no amount of discouragement to job seekers could outweigh the magic enchantment already surrounding work in a film studio—an enchantment which with unconscious hypocrisy the film trade simultaneously encouraged for publicity purposes as the Star System.

The star system did not appear until 1910. The stock companies and looser groupings—first Hepworth's from the beginning of this period, and later Barker's, B. & C.'s and others—were in themselves merely a logical corollary of large studios in constant use. But, formed simply to ensure a constant source of experienced film actors, they found themselves after a while in possession of a monopoly similar to that of a trademark, with all the goodwill attached to such an identification. The audience's familiarity with the players' faces gave a film in which they appeared a relative popularity not necessarily dependent on its quality. The interesting point is, however, that producers were slow to use the publicity value of such a monopoly and for several years the original function of the stock companies remained predominant. Drawn very largely, although not entirely, from the legitimate stage, by virtue of their concentration on films, they inevitably developed a certain technique of their own. But films continued to be advertised on a basis of their content alone, or at most as an example of a well-known make, and it was not until after 1910 that the single factor of a player's name replaced the brief synopsis as the film's claim to attention.

By "star system" is meant much more than the mere individualization

¹ *Bioscope*, March 20, 1913, p. 88.

² E.g. B. & C.'s *Battle of Waterloo* and Clarendon's *King Charles*, both in 1913, and Regent's *Seventh Day* in 1914.

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of players. The famous film comedians Prince, Linder, Foolshead and many others were known by name, if by assumed name, from 1909 onwards and were in fact a link between the old system and the new. Very occasional references to their real identities foreshadowed the death of the early anonymity. But the star system proper meant the deliberate exploitation of not merely a player's name but his—or more often her—personality and private life. By stimulating interest in this, interest in her future films were assured—though always, of course, with the surface implication that the interest was the other way round. And this was true enough, in so far as interest in the players did spring spontaneously from the public. But the fact remains that the response to this interest was a deliberate and sometimes cynically untruthful exploitation of it.

Publicity based on an actor's name and personality was in accordance with legitimate stage practice, but the reluctance with which film people adopted it affords us ample opportunity to see where the impetus came from. As early as 1908 such experiences as the following were not uncommon:

The hero of the Williamson military films *Still Worthy of the Name* and *Raised from the Ranks* should be a proud man. The leading character in each of these films was taken by Sergeant-Major Chart, lately Army Gymnasium Instructor at Brighton, and I am given to understand that his picture on the screen made so profound an impression on certain fair members of the audience at a picture hall in London that a general desire was evinced for his photograph. Mr. Alan Williamson is seriously considering whether it might not be worth while to issue postcards bearing the features of the gallant soldier for disposal amongst the audience at a penny each.

There is a good deal to be said for such a proceeding—which could be adopted in connection with many subjects besides those mentioned. Pretty heroines are even commoner than handsome heroes in film subjects, and there is no reason why their portraits should be prized any less than those of actresses whom one has seen in the flesh. Has a new method of drawing audiences, and incidentally a remunerative side line for manufacturers, been discovered?

But several years of such interest, and of letters from members of the audience demanding who was the pretty girl in such and such a film, where could she be written to, and if it were possible to obtain a photograph of her, were necessary before its commercial possibilities were fully realized.

¹ *Kinematograph Weekly*, November 26, 1908, p. 711.

The impetus had to travel back from public to exhibitor, through the renter to the producer. At first it seemed almost as if producers had a positive aversion to such a possible source of disillusionment and wished to preserve their companies in dignified incognito. But the establishment of permanent companies was inevitably accompanied in time by the emergence of the more powerful personalities as it was by the perfection of technique, and the closer approximation to stage companies made the conclusion inescapable.

It is an indication of the state of the British film that when the star system eventually appeared it was in connection with American actresses, and that even when British producers began to cultivate this type of publicity American stars remained both more numerous and individually more important. The significant date is the publication on August 18, 1910, of the first *Bioscope* personal article about a player, the American "Imp girl"—"*An Ideal Picture Actress—A Few Details about Miss Lawrence, of the Imp Company.*" At the same time a fair-haired Biograph actress, soon to be known as Mary Pickford, was the centre of such interest that the renters handling her films in this country¹ christened her Miss Dorothy Nicholson to gratify her admirers. In the following year the popularization of his players formed an integral part of Hepworth's renaissance, if not its basis. The already established Tilly Girls, Chrissie White and Alma Taylor, graduated to heroic roles under their own names and Gladys Sylvani, the first English film star to receive treatment similar to that given the Americans, was pasted on hoardings, hung in picture palace vestibules and subjected to the usual write-ups.

The monotonous repetition of athletic prowess and bravery in the face of the most bizarre dangers began to build up a myth of superwomen. Unlikely interviews were reported, telling of high ideals and homely details. This sort of thing was mere routine work:

"How does picture work appeal to you."

"Immense," responded Miss Foster.² "I love the outdoor life, am a good swimmer and rider, qualities which you know are in demand in picture work". . .

"I never had any accidents," said Miss Foster, "I have been very lucky in that respect." . . . Jumping from a boat into the sea and fighting in the water with the villain of the cast; climbing perilous heights, are mere incidents in the

¹ M.P. Sales Agency.

² Dorothy Foster of B. & C.

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life of Miss Foster. What would send most young ladies into a graceful faint merely adds to Miss Foster's *joie de vivre*.¹

Or this:

. . . Miss Lawrence's chief delight is to play in a riding picture. She has said that when riding on horse-back before the camera she forgets the picture, the play, the other actors, in the joy of riding. In fact, to use a peculiar metaphor, she acts better in such scenes, because there is no acting at all.

Miss Lawrence, who is but twenty-one years of age, acts equally well in all her parts, but her many admirers prefer her in simple, homely dramas. It is in these parts that she excels; the pathos of a love tragedy, the quiet, careful tenderness of the "old folks," and the happy girlish life. . . . Miss Lawrence, in addition to being the highest salaried moving picture artist, can also claim to be the most photographed. It is estimated that she is "taken" nearly four million times a year.²

Fan mail became the film actors' substitute for applause, and a new phenomenon, the personal appearance, titivated the public's interest in these wonderful people. For in reputation at least they became more and more wonderful. Stories of fabulous salaries and incredible adventures encouraged just that envy of a star's life which job-seekers were simultaneously told to forget:

Miss Gauntier is a perfect physical specimen of womanhood, a splendid rider, swimmer, and general all-round athlete. Nevertheless, she has had many narrow escapes from death or serious injury in the pursuit of her profession.

Once, for instance, she got caught in a quick-sand, and had sunk nearly to her armpits before she was rescued. This was in the Everglades of Florida, while rehearsing a Southern Plantation drama.

In a battle scene in *The Girl Spy* she was nearly kicked to death by a horse. In another war drama the premature explosion of a mine hurled her into the air, and she fell to the ground unconscious. "Did it make a good Picture?" were the first words she uttered on recovering. Here spoke the true artiste.³

Another specialized function which received an increasing share of attention was that of scenario or plot writing. Here the same story can be told. In the early days anybody could suggest a story, just as anybody could dress up and appear before a camera. But here again more and more of the film public thought they had found either a source of easy money or an outlet for their artistic souls, and spare-time geniuses began

¹ *The Pictures*, May 25, 1912, p. 19.

² *Bioscope*, August 18, 1910, p. 55.

³ *The Romance of the Cinema*, by Valentia Steer, 1913, p. 53.

to besiege the production companies with ideas varying from the possible to the deplorable, from typewritten volumes to illegible postcards. As in the case of film acting, helpful hints on the writing of plots were hardly more frequent than stern warnings that the profession was overcrowded and free-lance writers had little chance. In actual fact, good free-lance work was welcomed as far as original suggestions were concerned, although staff writers were usually engaged to knock them into shape. But little of the mass of stuff which reached the studios was worthy of the name of plot or capable of translation to the screen, and the staff-writer, tried and tested, became a regular member of the studio.

He did not, however, become an honoured member. Names such as Low Warren and the Marchioness of Townshend,¹ or Bannister Merwin,² became known to the trade and even to a certain extent to the public after 1913, but in general the writer was as anonymous as the carpenter or electrician. To Cricks and Martin belongs the honour of being the first English firm to advertise their writer by name,³ although they were later in this respect than the Edison company of America. But the practice was not adopted by others and low status, combined with low pay, continued to prevent script writing from attracting first-class talent in any quantity. Cricks, Clarendon and the London Film Company seem to have been the only firms openly to acknowledge their writers, the general feeling being that if credits began to be given in this way, the process would never stop.

The result was that until the wholesale adaptation of books and plays swept the British film industry, British films were conspicuous for the poor quality of their plots. Many comics, indeed, had no suggestion of a plot, and the string of more or less funny incidents which constituted the average English comic could not compete with the carefully worked out denouement of an American comedy of the time. Occasional protests from more enlightened minds were heard. A correspondent (a writer, needless to say) wrote to the *Bioscope* that "the writer will, in time, become the important person of the cinematograph world, as now the dramatist of of the legitimate stage."⁴ And Harry Furniss, although his originality had the superficial appearance of a pose, had the elements of an entirely revolutionary conception of the artistic significance of film production, and

¹ Both of Clarendon.

² Of the London Film Company, late of Edison.

³ Frank Dilnotte for *The Scapegrace* in June 1913; Joseph Caldwell for *The Girl Who Dared* in 1913.

⁴ *Bioscope*, July 4, 1912, p. 33.

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was almost alone in his stress on the importance of the visual in story planning.

But such advanced theories, or even moderately competent story writing, was hardly to be expected for a standard payment of 10s. 6d. a plot. And this, in 1910,¹ was said to be normal for the same sort of plot which, written up as a magazine story, would command three or four times as much. In 1912 the *Bioscope* warned enthusiastic novices that "even amongst really successful scenario writers, not one in a hundred makes £50 a year at the game."² This state of affairs had given way by the beginning of the war to the slightly better rate of two or three guineas for a good plot, but however low the pay the enthusiasm of amateur plot writers had never subsided. Creative satisfaction rather than big money was the reward of this horde of inexperienced artists, whose ambition was fanned by "schools" and booklets purporting to make perfect plot writing easy for all. Nevertheless, the *Bioscope*, which coldly criticized any plots sent to its picture playwrights' section, maintained that "70 per cent of the people who try to write plays are absolutely devoid of any talent for doing so."³

In general it may be said that if the first ten years of the film industry were the years of formation, this second period was that of consolidation. The nucleus of a body of film makers was formed from 1896 to 1906, but from 1906 to the beginning of the First World War it grew from hundreds to thousands⁴ and lost its character of an amateur free-for-all to become a large, and ever larger, number of different professions. Particularly in the last three or four years of this period there was being assembled that body of technicians who were to constitute the British film industry until the end of the silent era. To give only one illustration, some 70 per cent of the cameramen of the early 'twenties were men who had received their training in this period.⁵

The character of the industry was changing in another way also. In the early days it was the amateur photographer, the engineer, the small travelling showman and the middle-class adventurer with little or no capital who saw in animated photography an exciting and probably sure

¹ *Bioscope*, July 21, p. 15, and August 11, p. 54, 1910.

² *Ibid.*, November 7, 1912, p. 413.

³ *Ibid.*, November 7, 1912, p. 413.

⁴ Precise figures are not obtainable.

⁵ I.e. 70 per cent of the 67 cameramen listed in *Kinematograph Year Book* for 1921.

way of making a bit of money. But now production was becoming expensive. Ideas about Art were finding expression, and moreover a new generation was reaching its majority for whom a world without films was left behind in their babyhood. Consequently we find, to take a few random pointers, a capitalist of the type of Sir William Bass—"Soldier and Sportsman"—behind the London Film Company; an enterprising cameraman, Theodore Thumwood, who, born in 1891, had been in films since the age of fifteen; production by a serious artist like Herkomer—even if it was not a very successful production; and scenarios written by the Marchioness of Townshend, of whom it was said (how truly is irrelevant) that the habit of thinking of stories in visual form had been natural to her since seeing films as a child.¹ There was, moreover, the increasing influence of the legitimate stage, the crescendo with which the period came to an end. This was probably more important to Britain than to any of the other countries which went through the same phase of development. Not only did most of the film actors come originally from the stage, some drawn to the new medium by the love of experiment or the hope of greater freedom or fame in a new field, some forced into it by lack of work in the old. But many producers likewise had stage experience, many of the stories were adaptations of stage plays and, most important of all, many films were nothing more nor less than celluloid records of very varying adequacy of whole stage productions, with stage directions little changed by the film director. The revival of British films from late 1911 did not spring from this new-found dependence. The Hepworth production which set it in motion was quite free of it. But the revival was concurrent with it; many of the better British films of the period were film adaptations of important stage productions and many of the less creditable but financially very important films were melodramas of the most theatrical kind. The talent which could find no backing for production on an American or Italian scale or was not sufficiently wholehearted to carry on production from the ground up, had found a way of securing a marketable film without much difficulty or risk. Enterprise, possibly not the most desirable but still enterprise, at last began to flow into the British film industry on the production side. It is possible to doubt whether the British film industry would have been able to present even such a healthy appearance

¹ *Bioscope*, July 30, 1914, p. 429.

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as it did by 1914 had it not been for the strong influence of the stage, whatever the ultimate harm resulting from this unnatural dependence.

No account of British production before the First World War would be honest if it did not make it very clear that the recognized artistic poverty of the 'twenties actually antedated the war by some years and was not solely the result of it. Before discussing this, however, it is necessary to touch on the very important and even sinister phenomenon of American penetration. The way in which individual American technicians were engaged as key men by one of the most important British companies has already been described. But this was only part of the story. Round about 1912 it became fashionable for American companies to send production units on location to Britain. More and more companies did this, and at the end of the pre-war period a new and significant feature of the invasion was seen, a project to build an American studio in this country. Naturally enough, both American and French companies making films in England were anxious to make them as obviously British in character as possible, and in their search for typically English scenery, and their use of English history and classics, were even more acutely sensitive to English atmosphere than many of the native companies.

The movement seems to have started when Kalem, a company which early realized the advantages of location work, sent a group of their staff to the Middle East in 1912 to make a film of the life of Christ.¹ This was only a beginning. In June 1912 the famous American comedian John Bunny came to England amid the Scenes of Unexampled Enthusiasm soon to be so frequent, to make a series of Vitagraph comedies, of which *Bunny at the Derby*² was the first. His *Pickwick Papers*³ was one of this series, and it is interesting that the Vitagraph producer who came over to make it, Larry Trimble, was later to form a British company with Florence Turner and remain here several years.

Another visitor who remained in England was Harry Furniss, the well-known *Punch* cartoonist and for some time a scenario writer with the Edison company. Though English himself, Furniss had lived some years in America and came back to this country as a member of an Edison company which included Marc McDermott and Miriam Nesbitt as stars,

¹ *From Manger to Cross*, released October 1912.

² Released January 1913.

³ Released May 1913.

and Charles J. Brabin as producer. Using Hepworth's studio and locations in Wales and Devon, this company released their first British film¹ in October 1913. If Bunny's *Derby* and *Pickwick* were ostentatiously British in theme, the Edison company was no less determined to captivate the British with local colour. Furniss left Edison early in 1913. No firm could be strong enough to incorporate his ideas and energy, and he went into business on his own, turning East Cliff House at Hastings into a studio.

The Independent Moving Pictures Company of America was another which followed the trend towards Britain. In May 1913, the stars King Baggot and Leah Baird and the actor-producer Herbert Brenon came to make the film *Ivanhoe* at Chepstow Castle, which in scale and splendour was the forerunner of W. G. Barker's famous British spectacle *Jane Shore*. The photographer was the same E. G. Palmer who joined the London Film Company.

Nor was it only the Americans who were invading British film production, for that matter. The French company Eclair, which had opened a British office in January 1913, made a series of nine Sherlock Holmes films at Bexhill with a British cast and with the help of Conan Doyle himself. A rather different case was that of Pathé, which set up a genuinely British production company. Until late in 1911 the English staff of Pathé Frères had entered into the production field only in the contribution of news items, as part of the staff of 300 photographers the company claimed to have scattered over the world for the compilation of the Animated Gazette. But in the autumn of 1911 it was announced that Frank Powell would produce entirely British films for this firm. The first of these "Britannia" films was *David Copperfield*²—once again an English classic was chosen. Britannia films were soon coming on the market regularly and a more important brand was started, "Big Ben" films, the first of which was also George Pearson's first production, being a film of his own story, *The Fool*.³ Pearson, later one of Britain's best producers, made further original films (e.g. *Sentence of Death*) in the converted basement in Great-Portland Street, and then took charge of Pathé's subsidiary Union Films at Alexandra Palace. But Pathé production differed from that of the Americans in that it was genuinely a British company which used, and trained, British

¹ *The Coastguard's Sister*.

³ Released May 1913.

² Released January 1912.

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technicians and had a studio of its own at Alexandra Palace. Another rather different case was that of Turner Films, already mentioned as the British company founded by two Americans.

But perhaps the most significant of all indications of increasing American influence was the arrival in May 1914 of Edwin S. Porter and Hugh Ford of Famous Players. "These two wonderful American gentlemen" gave an interview to the *Bioscope* in which they announced their intention of establishing permanent studios in England and France for Famous Players.

American activity in this country was the culminating proof of the feebleness of the British production. It coincided, it is true, with what looked like a British revival. But it is an indication of how far British firms had fallen behind that even their much lauded—prematurely lauded—efforts were not sufficiently promising to discourage an American invasion.

Whether American companies in England would have got a stranglehold on production had there been no war, or whether the renewed creative activity on the part of the British would in time have lifted British films out of the depths of their inferiority, is difficult to tell. But British inferiority, both commercial and artistic, was openly recognized some years before the war, and the myth that the British led the world until 1914 and lost their lead through no fault of their own must be recognized as a convenient excuse.

The initiative in those developments which led the world at this stage—the long film, the exclusive feature, the star system, the "Art Film"—plainly did not belong to this country. The story is too well known to need much illustration. It was a French firm which in 1908 deliberately featured "art" in the film, and Rosenthal's despairing advertisement in July 1909 for "*English Art films*" was a belated recognition of English tardiness. It was France, again, which carried the length of films to its greatest excesses in 1912, with the 5,000-ft. *Mysteries of Paris*¹ and later the 12,000-ft. mammoth *Les Miserables*²—lengths which continued to be exceptional in British films for years. Exclusive features came from a Chicago firm, not an English one. Even the weekly newsreel, in the topical field which British producers had felt so particularly their own, was first regularized by a French firm, if only by a narrow margin. The great comedians were

¹ Released June 1912.

² Released October 1912.

Linder and Prince of France and Foolshead of Italy and later Bunny—not Mugwump and P.C. Hawkeye, or even Pimple. And local pride in Chrissie White, however loyal, could hardly put her on an equal footing with the World's Sweetheart. England for years had no characteristic speciality to compare with the American Westerns or the social dramas from Scandinavia. And towards the end of the period even the biggest efforts of Barker, the London Film Company and Hepworth were dwarfed by the towering stature of Italian films like *Quo Vadis* or *The Last Days of Pompeii*.¹

Such developments abroad made English films seem tame and unexciting, and in the extent of distribution at least, there is no room for doubt of their inferiority. We have already seen² that around 1910 not more than 15 per cent of the films published in this country were English, and this probably implied a much lower percentage of footage, since far less of the English releases were long features. At this time some 30 per cent of films published here were American. By 1914 it was reliably stated that of 180,000,000 feet of film imported a year (worth £1,800,000) some 60 per cent was American, and this took no account of the greater number sold. The number of copies sold of any of these releases inclined to be lower for the English ones, and as early as 1910 one worried observer claimed that some 75 per cent of the films showing in the London suburbs were of American production. At the very end of the period³ *The Times* contained the statement that out of roughly a million feet of film sold in London every week not much more than 2 per cent was produced in this country.

So much for the market superiority of foreign films, particularly those of American make. Worse still, the inferior quality, also, of British production was the subject of general agreement. Repeated examination of the cause, exhortations to remedy it and general lamentation showed only too clearly that the fact itself needed no proof. By 1912 the situation was such that the *Bioscope* arranged a special show of British films to "demonstrate the high qualities of the English film" with a programme which, if it did nothing else, showed that the qualities of the English film were anything but striking. Even occasional "defences" of the British film show a morbid

¹ Chapter I.

² *Kinematograph Year Book*, 1915, p. 57.

³ September 19, 1914.

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preoccupation and a lack of confidence which are a measure of their hidden acceptance of defeat.

What was wrong? Of course, the weather was blamed, and certainly by discouraging outdoor settings and the location work which gave American films their flavour, deprived the film of one of its most important advantages. But the fact that the wide-open spaces were not essential to the development of a distinctive and successful school of cinematography was shown by the Scandinavian social dramas, the European and American comedies and many others, and some more fundamental explanation must be sought.

An American opinion of the Williamson best-seller of 1908, *Still Worthy of the Name*, is very illuminating. In this film news of a battle is conveyed to the audience by the simple, cheap and thoroughly stage-like device of a newspaper report. The editor of the United States *Moving Picture News* states:

We saw the film and commented very favourably upon it, until we came to the scene in the drawing room with the *Illustrated London News*. This, the most vital point, the most dramatic episode of the whole film story, fell flat as a pancake. This is also the point where America would have made a bold hit and shown the troops in action. It would be an easy matter for Williamson & Co. to have gone out to Aldershot or to any of the large military centres and got a troop of Hussars to perform a mimic battle full of fire and vigour and detail. Instead of that the whole drama was lost.

I am not cavilling, nor finding fault; I am merely criticising for the good of the Old Country. England was the pioneer of good work and to keep up its prestige it ought to spend a few thousand pounds in perfecting its work. There is no doubt whatever in my mind but that larger numbers of film subjects could be sold if properly prepared by an expert stage manager. The limited field for films in England has a great deal to do with the fear of expending beyond a certain sum, but the trade in America is great and must be supplied with films, indeed, two-thirds of the English productions would not have a chance of being exhibited at all if the demand were not so much beyond the supply.¹

But English producers would not spend that few thousand pounds. The last comment, also, was significant. The American public was vast and as long as its demand for films was not satisfied from other sources, English firms could find a ready market without exerting themselves. But in time American production grew, and then the modest English product was

¹ *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, August 20, 1908, p. 315.

frozen out. The result was that the makers, forced back on their own small market, were all the less inclined to put any considerable capital into their undertakings.

In the earliest days English producers, with one of the smallest home markets in the world, were said to put out a weekly total of new films which was the largest in the world. This complete dependence on their foreign trade was justified when foreign producers were unable to supply their devouring markets unaided. But this ceased to be so after 1907, and, in the case of America at least, tariffs and the Patents Trust made things increasingly difficult. The diminution of the American market, indeed, was the chief cause of the abandonment of production by one of the most important early producers, James Williamson, who had concentrated on United States distribution to the practical exclusion of home demand. And his was only the extreme case in a process which hit them all.

F. A. Talbot, writing in 1912, described the effects of the Trust:

The triumph of the British and subsequently of the French film producers reached the United States. Like a huge wave the European films overwhelmed the country. In comparison, the American productions were trash. The native firms were confronted with extinction unless they made a bold and united stand, which was hardly to be expected, for at that time the American cinematograph world was in a state of chaos. Litigation was raging on all sides. Edison was engaged in a deadly struggle to maintain his position according to his original, or kinetoscope, patent. As a result of the turmoil, the industry became unsettled, and the money which should have been expended in the furtherance of the craft, simply went to fill the pockets of hungry lawyers. Edison triumphed at last; his claim was sustained by the Supreme Court. The establishment of this contested point cleared the air, and one outcome was the formation of a Cinematograph Trust or community of interests to resist foreign invasion. Several firms enlisted under the banner of the Edison patent—other interests which still disputed his claim combined to form a second trust.

The first move of the combination was to eliminate the foreign competition from which it was suffering so disastrously. Special terms were drawn up which European firms were compelled to observe under threat of their films being forbidden to the country. The European producers, foreseeing the loss of a valuable market, tried desperately to mitigate this drastic policy, but in vain. The American terms were: either limited sale, as stipulated by the trust, or else complete boycott. The British producers saw their most remunerative market eliminated at a stroke. Williamson suffered particularly from the decision, for all standing contracts were cancelled. As he never had made strenuous attempts

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to cultivate the British market, which was open to producers in all parts of the world without the slightest restraint, but had concentrated his efforts upon pleasing his United States clients, he concluded that retirement from play production was the wisest course, especially as the mechanical side of the industry was so full of attractive promise.¹

The International Projecting and Producing Company was formed in Chicago in February 1909 to fight the Trust, and represented most of the English producers.² But neither this nor other efforts succeeded in securing adequate distribution for English films in America. It is true that by 1913 the struggles were over and the "open door" policy was prevailing, but by this time the damage was done.

If in conclusion some explanation of the disappointing state of the British film at this time should be attempted, it can be said that the central commercial defect seems to have been the insufficiency of capital. From this, it can be argued, stemmed the attendant defect in the artistic sphere of paucity of first-class talent, or original and creative vitality. Certainly the shrinking foreign market must have been a most powerful reason for the unwillingness with which capital entered the industry. But this in itself hardly seems a sufficient explanation. More capital could quite well have been put into the business before the American market began to close, and the British could as well have enlarged their conception of film finance as did the Americans, the Italians and the French. They were content, however, to retain their position through lack of opposition rather than by any effort on their own part, and when opposition appeared there was little attempt to meet it. It is legitimate to wonder whether there was not a certain innate snobbery, which hampered the British film's development as an industry. The adventurer with more dash than money could no longer take the lead unless he had the backing of the solid respectable investor with more money than dash. But in England the film as a commercial proposition was still looked at askance. The solid respectable investor was still being assiduously wooed by the earnest exhibitor.

In the same way, can the absence of outstanding artistic achievement be attributed to lack of capital? For one thing, the lack of enterprise often

¹ *Moving Pictures, How they are Made and Worked*, by F. A. Talbot, 1912 edition, p. 110.

² Clarendon, Cricks and Martin, Hepworth, Paul, Walturdaw, Warwick Trading Company, Williamson and Wrench.

shown by British producers and their inability to find and adapt a truly appropriate use of the new medium, cannot be ascribed in every case to lack of funds. Why, for example, did British producers so often ignore that early feather in the British cap, the outdoors film? And to carry this doubt a step further, can the relative scarcity of talent of a high order really be ascribed to inadequate financial attraction? Creative energy does not always require high pay to sting it into action. If films had been socially accepted as an outlet for imaginative impulses as readily as they were, for example, in America more talent might well have been attracted by the new medium of expression for its own sake. One is left with the impression that in Britain the film had to overcome the resistance of a particularly inelastic social and intellectual pattern. In France and Italy the film might be a younger sister of the arts, in America art itself. In England it was a poor relation, and, moreover, not a very respectable one.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER III

Studios known to have been used between 1906 and 1914.¹

<i>Make of film</i>	<i>Studios at²</i>
Alpha	St. Albans
Bamforth	Holmfirth, Yorkshire
B. & C. (early)	Newstead House, E. Finchley (1 A)
B. & C. (later)	Hoe Street, Walthamstow
Barker, W. G.	Ealing (1 A, 1 C, 2 D)
Big Ben	Alexandra Palace (1 A, 1 D)
Brightonia	Brighton
British Empire	(<i>See under "Zenith"</i>)
British Oak	Ebury Street, Victoria (1 D)
Captain Kettle	Towers Hall, Bradford
Clarendon	Limes Road, Croydon (1 C, 1 D)
Climax	Thames Ditton (1 A)
Cricks and Martin	Waddon New Road, Croydon (1 C)
Cunard	245 Wood Street, Walthamstow (1 C)
Davidson, I. B.	Lea Bridge Road, Leytonstone (1 C)
Dreadnought	(<i>See under "Newman"</i>)
Ec-ko (later "Homeland")	Teddington (1 A)
Fitz	Walthamstow (1 C)
Folly	Eel Pie Island, Twickenham (1 C)
Furniss, Harry	Hastings
Hepworth	Walton-on-Thames (2 C)
Herkomer	"Lululand," Bushey (1 C)
	Kew Bridge (1 C)
	(<i>See under "Sun"</i>)
John Bull	Cranmer Court, Clapham (1 D)
Kearton	Brighton (Williamson's old studio)
Kinmacolor (early)	Teddington (acquired June 1913—Ec-ko's?)
Kinmacolor (later)	Manchester (1 C)
Lama	St. Margaret's, Twickenham (1 D)
London Film Company	Merton Park (1 C)
Martin, J. H.	Esher (1 C)
M.L.B.	Crystal Palace
Motograph	

¹ Thanks are due to Mr. Baynham Honri of Ealing Studios for his valuable assistance in the compiling of this list.

² In brackets are the numbers and types of stages:—(A) open air, (B) glass, daylight stage, (C) the same with supplementary lighting, (D) dark studio; principal lighting—electricity with little or no daylight assistance.

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<i>Make of film</i>	<i>Studios at</i>
Neptune	Elstree (I D)
Newman, F.	Cedar Labs, Hounslow
Paul, R. W.	New Southgate (I A)
Phoenix	(<i>See under "Folly"</i>)
Precision	Whipp's Cross, Walthamstow (I C)
Regent	Queen's Road, Bayswater (I D)
Rosie	High Street, Croydon (I A)
Samuelson, G. B.	Worton Hall, Isleworth (I C, I D added later)
St. George and Dragon	(<i>See under "Stott"</i>)
Stott	Manchester
Sun	Bucks—"to be erected" 1913
Union Jack	Hackney (I D)
Urban Trading Company	Urbanora House, Wardour Street (I C)
Windsor	Catford (I C)
Zenith	Woodlands, Whetstone (I C)

Two experiments with lighting may be of interest although, for reasons stated elsewhere, studio equipment has not been studied. One of these is described by Mr. Ralph Dewsbury in a letter to the author—the construction by the London Film Company in 1913 of “an over-head gantry to carry the lighting from one solidly-constructed set to another—an expensive project (which included the laying of a special cable from the power station, some miles away) and probably the only studio equipment of its kind in existence.” The second was an experiment in incandescent lighting made in the Pathé studio in Great Portland Street in 1912 “in the hope that it might supersede mercury vapour lighting which gave many a headache to facial make-up. The experiment was not satisfactory, however, and mercury vapour lighting continued for many years as the main source of studio illumination.” (Notes supplied by Mr. George Pearson.)

PART TWO

THE FILMS

INTRODUCTION TO PART II

The treatment of the films in the following chapters has been dictated by the nature of the material available. A history must be based on something more than personal reminiscences, and as all but a very few of the films in question have long since disappeared the historian is driven back to contemporary accounts of them, whether publicity synopses or reviews. A general knowledge of the film technique of the time, together with occasional references to such aspects of it as happened to catch the reviewer's eye, make possible a fragmentary account of development in this respect. But in actual fact such development was less impressive during the period 1906-14 than it had been during the previous ten years, when it had also been easier to distinguish because of the fuller synopses given by manufacturers (see Volume I).

Probably the most significant feature of film development at this time, however, was the elaboration of story structure. This it has been possible to describe and analyse from the trade synopses. It is easier to follow it in the case of humorous films than dramatic because in the former it was not influenced by the literary adaptations which played so important a part in the development of film drama. Because of the special importance attached at the time to scenario writing, more was written and spoken about this than about camerawork, and the incidental discussion of continuity and types of shot (in so far as there was any variety here), supplemented by the fragmentary knowledge of changes in film technique which has already been mentioned, have been used in Chapter VIII for an analysis of the specifically cinematic aspect of the developing plot structure. This account of film technique as realized at the time is illustrated in Chapter VII by the detailed analysis of the three important British film dramas of the time which still survive in the National Film Library: F. R. Benson's *Richard III*, Cecil Hepworth's *David Copperfield*, and W. G. Barker's *East Lynne*, unfortunately all adaptations.

For the rest, Part II is necessarily descriptive of film content rather than of film technique. For this reason the first three chapters are not restricted to an account of only the most important films, factual, humorous and dramatic,¹ or those which were admired at the time. Dramatic

¹ See Appendix to this Introduction for figures of film releases classified by content.

themes are of sociological interest because they are widespread rather than because they have been used successfully by one individual. An account of film content based only on films which were artistically outstanding would only give a distorted picture of the whole. But even in the following account it must be remembered that, much though it tells us of the tastes prevailing among the audiences of the day, it tells us most about the film makers themselves.

APPENDIX TO INTRODUCTION TO PART II

Classification of the content of films in 1910 and 1913*

(1)

Category of film	Number		Percentage	
	1910	1913	1910	1913
Dramatic†	1,698	3,296	41·0	43·6
Comic‡	1,381	2,878	33·3	38·1
Interest and Travel§ ..	650	983	15·7	13·0
Topical	133	260	3·2	3·4
Vaudeville 	119	45	2·9	0·6
Religious	29	2	0·7	0·02
Not classified	134	90	3·2	1·28
	4,144	7,554	100·0	100·0

(2)

Type of film	Number		Percentage	
	1910	1913	1910	1913
Factual films	783	1,243	18·9	16·4
Made-up films** ..	3,227	6,221	77·9	82·32
Not classified	134	90	3·2	1·28
	4,144	7,554	100·0	100·0

* The figures are computed from the *Bioscope* monthly lists of all film releases. The years 1910 and 1913 are selected as the first and last complete years in the period for which records are available. Films referred to are of all nationalities.

† Drama, Melodrama, History, Pathetic, Romantic.

‡ Comic, Comedy.

§ Descriptive, Educational, Interest, Sporting, Travel.

|| Fantastic, Gymnastic, Trick, Tableau.

** "Made-up" is used to describe all films which are not actualities (interest, travel and topical), and in this case consequently includes dramatic, comic, vaudeville and religious films.

Factual Films

Mr. Balfour Browne: You have taken a special interest in what I may call the natural side of cinematography.

Mr. W. G. Barker: Yes, events and Nature.

Mr. Balfour Browne: You do not go in for drama and comic things?

Mr. W. G. Barker: I am doing a little now because I find I have been forced into it, but I consider that all that is a prostitution of cinematography.¹

Nevertheless W. G. Barker, like all the more important of his contemporaries, had been diverting more and more of his attention to the production of comedies and dramas for at least three or four years before this damning utterance. During the period of stagnation in British production previous to 1911, the factual film had been the small and ever-shrinking island on which British makers took their unconfident stand. Requiring relatively little of either productive plant or creative inspiration, it was the standby of the older firms like Hepworth, Cricks and Martin and R. W. Paul in the declining years of his film activity, and the sole reason for the existence of some of the new manufacturing firms. The large class of part-time producers, moreover, has already been mentioned—renters and equipment dealers who from time to time sent an operator out to film some especially important topical or standard “scenic” film. But all this was stop-gap production, to become less important after 1911. It implied little or no development of technique and, contrary to the expectations of many early prophets, the film’s development as a popular form of education-entertainment along the lines of the once-fashionable lantern lecture was not commensurate with its advance as a form of story-telling.

For during the hiatus between the early leadership of British producers and their later attempt to regain this position it was as a dramatic medium rather than as a mechanical record that foreign films had progressed, and

¹ Evidence before a Select Committee of the London County Council reported in the *Bioscope*, July 16, 1914, p. 217.

the pretence that the instructional and escapist functions of the cinema were twins of exactly equal popular importance could no longer be reasonably maintained. Consequently it was towards the made-up film that the energies of the British revival were directed. The production of factual films, too well established in Britain to disappear, was yet not sufficiently vital to form the natural centre of the new British ambitions. Uninspired, they had previously possessed at least a numerical importance. Even this they tended to lose after 1911.

It is thus not surprising that the technique employed in their production developed little either before or after 1911. The use of the camera became imperceptibly more elastic, with a close-up here and there, a more skilful photographic treatment of scientific subjects, a greater fluidity of editing; length sometimes became greater, the regular newsreel replaced the old occasional topical and a few long features such as the films of the Scott Polar expedition reminded the public of the attractions of reality. But in general development was limited to the growth of differentiation. The largely unspecialized actuality film split into a number of conventional types which were rigidly standardized and were used more and more as routine make-weights to melodrama.

One major subdivision of the factual film is that of news. The early enthusiasm for the topical as a means firstly of enabling a larger public to witness spectacles of general interest, and secondly of preserving them for posterity,¹ became a watchword to film enthusiasts and induced many traditionalist followers of the older means of expression to take a kinder view of the cinema.

The favourite topics remained what they had been in the previous period: Royalty and State occasions, wars, boxing and other sporting events and any sort of disaster. The public's attitude towards such films still showed a certain lack of sophistication, a certain indifference to whether what they saw on the screen was real or merely a reconstruction, or even a topical allusion. Interest in contemporary events could still be exploited by films only remotely connected with them, and Bromhead's views of Vesuvius and its surrounding towns taken by chance two days before its eruption in early 1906 constituted a scoop for Gaumont, who made much of its topical interest although the eruption itself had not

¹ See Appendix to this chapter for contemporary demands for a Film Museum.

been filmed. A production of the famous Tottenham shooting affray of early 1909 was faked by Precision and advertised quite openly as a "reproduction," apparently without losing any of its attraction thereby. George V's Coronation, moreover, called forth not only a spate of genuine news films but also symbolical patriotic pieces reminiscent of earlier days:

BARKER. *The Pageant of Empire*. (560 ft.) The opening is of John Bull, Scotland, Wales and Ireland welding together our tight little island and Ireland. The next scene shows Britannia on her throne, supported by John Bull, his bull-dog and sisters, and before whom the Colonies pay obedience. There follows a tableau of King George, with all his subjects paying obeisance to their King, sovereign and lord. The final picture is of the Union Jack at top mast, fluttering in the breeze.¹

But whenever possible real shots of the event were preferred and anything like a colliery disaster, a fire, or the Sidney Street Battle,² when "Peter the Painter" was besieged by police in a London house, would attract a hastily assembled army of cameramen. The last word in scoops was obtained when the Gaumont Graphic operator present at the Derby of 1913 secured a picture of the suffragette Emily Davidson who cast herself in front of the King's horse and was killed.³

Royal or State occasions also were marked by gatherings of the more important topical producers, and when the German Kaiser visited England in 1907⁴ his arrival at Southampton was filmed by representatives of the Urban, Gaumont, Warwick and Walturdaw companies, and shown the same evening at the Empire, Alhambra, Hippodrome and Palace Theatres in London. Throughout the visit his public appearances, like those of the French President some six months later,⁵ were dogged by cameramen. The English Royal family were followed around with even greater devotion, and major events such as the funeral of Edward VII,⁶ the proclamation and coronation of George V, the Investiture of the Prince of Wales at Carnarvon⁷ and the Delhi Durbar at the end of 1911 were marked by prodigious feats in rapid printing and the delivery of finished films almost, it seemed, before the events were over. Films of both the Investiture of the Prince of Wales and the Delhi Durbar were early

¹ *Bioscope*, June 8, 1911, p. xxi.

² See *The Film Game*, by Low Warren, p. 146.

³ May 1908.

⁶ May 1910.

⁴ January 1911.

⁴ November 1907.

⁷ August 1911.

triumphs for Kinemacolor, well suited as this was to the portrayal of the rich colours of royal pageantry.

A branch of topical film making which had been of especial importance ever since the earliest days of the cinema was the recording of championship fights. There were five important films of this type made during the period: one was taken by the Urban Company when Gunner Moir was beaten by the American Tommy Burns in December 1907; another was of the Summers-Britt contest of February 1909, again filmed by the Urban Company; a film of the fight between Freddie Welsh and the American Packy MacFarland in July 1910 was handled by A. F. Bettinson of the National Sporting Club; one of the Monte Carlo contest between Jim Sullivan and Georges Carpentier in February 1912 was handled by the Warwick Trading Company; and a film of the famous fight at Ghent in June 1913 in which Carpentier beat Bombardier Wells of Britain in four rounds, was handled by a French distributor who tempered its sensational billing to British pride with a special reference to the first round "in which Carpentier was nearly beaten." Fight films were a gamble, and became more so as moral opposition to them became increasingly vocal and the possibilities of censorship increased. The heavy expenses of installing adequate indoor lighting and paying royalties, often to both participants as well as to the organizing body, were difficult to recover if the fight lasted only a few rounds and thus resulted in a short film. The cameras were kept running all the time, but even a complete record of the fight might prove to be only a few hundred feet long and the chances of selling it as a high-priced feature were highly speculative; while such overhead expenses were hardly justified for a single newsreel item.

The straight record films of fights are interesting as a survival from the previous period but they were, broadly speaking, a dying breed. The reverse is true of war reporting, and the series of film reports from the Balkans in 1912 and 1913 were the forerunners of the war films of 1914 to 1918. Troubles in Belfast¹ and Morocco² in 1907 received their share of notice, but it was the Balkan discontents which provided a happy hunting-ground for adventurous camera operators, and a number of companies, including Kinemacolor, sent representatives to South-Eastern Europe and

¹ August 1907.

² September 1907.

Asia Minor. The results were incorporated in the regular newsreels, and one issue of the Topical Budget included 360 feet of:

Train-loads of victims arriving from the front—Awe-inspiring scenes at the San Stefano Cholera Camp—The dead and the dying—Doctors helpless—Constantinople Harbour alive with Battleships—Turks defending the Railway at Hademkeui—BLUEJACKETS FROM H.M.S. WEYMOUTH GUARDING THE AMERICAN EMBASSY, etc. etc. etc.¹

Such scenes still suffered from the scarcity, so often lamented during the South African War, of actual shots of battle. Transport, the wounded in hospital, camp life—these were all very well. But more enterprise was demanded by the audiences which, safe in their cinemas, longed to be stormed at by shot and shell. Gradually the cameraman, wielding his awkward equipment with as much determination as the artilleryman his gun, became a more familiar sight up at the firing line. One English heroine was the twenty-two year old Miss Borthwick, who spent a year with the Bulgars and brought back two or three thousand feet of film. But "Mr. Robert," the representative of a French firm,² after a similar sojourn with the Greek army secured the most shattering action pictures yet seen.

It would be natural to expect that in the topical of all branches of film production, British producers would be unchallenged in the British market. And to a large extent it is true that British companies filming local events and covering their small country with a network which ensured the utmost speed in delivery, had unique opportunities of which they made good use. Several firms—Barker Motion Photography, Jeape's Graphic and the Warwick Trading Company, Gaumont, Urban—specialized in news and brought their work to a high standard of efficiency, for the peculiar nature of topical production demanded a special system of manufacture and distribution which was capable of operating at exaggerated peak periods. Nevertheless, many of the topicals of world importance were of foreign make, and the firms specializing in regular weekly newsreels from the summer of 1910 onwards were pre-eminently those large international firms—Pathé, Gaumont, Urban—whose scattered branches were in a position of particular advantage for covering world events. The foreign origin of many of the regular newsreels must be emphasized, for the transition from occasional topicals to the weekly edition was the most

¹ *Bioscope*, November 28, 1912, p. 620.

² Rayleigh and Robert?

significant change of the period in the topical sphere, and it is of particular importance that the British companies should have lagged behind in what had always been regarded as their particular field.

A by-product of the process by which newsfilms lost their episodic character was the way in which screen treatment of news became that of the illustrated paper rather than that of the leading article. Both the primitive actuality¹ and the earliest topicals were the merest statements of fact. In the case of the actuality some sort of interpretation, or at least the systematic presentation of related fact, emerged fairly early and continued its development as the so-called interest film. In the case of the topical a similar synthesis and co-ordination of related events could have led to an interpretative screen journalism dealing with problems of topical significance along similar lines. Abortive signs of this can actually be traced in 1908 and 1909. In June 1908 a big suffragette meeting in Hyde Park was the occasion of:

GRAPHIC COMPANY. *Suffragette Film*. From certain sources whispers had reached us anent Mr. Harrison Ward's secret conclaves with Mrs. Drummond and Miss Christabel Pankhurst, and as we surmised the plottings of the trio within the suffragette's fortress have taken definite shape in the form of a picture history of recent performances of the "great shouters" during their campaign. Mrs. Drummond is seen despatching her corps of lady newspaper sellers upon their rounds, views of Mrs. Drummond and other chalking the pavements, women street-organ players, and scenes at dinner-hour meetings outside Waterlow's, Crosse and Blackwell's, etc. etc., are amongst the features ending in the remarkable sights in Hyde Park on Sunday last. With exclusive right for kinematographing from the suffragists' conning tower Mr. W. Jeapes obtained some exceptionally interesting pictures, those showing Mr. R. G. Knowles discussing the burning question with some of the leaders at the base of the tower being particularly good, the same remark applying to the life-size portraits of Mrs. "General" Drummond, Miss Pankhurst and others. Mr. Jeapes and Mr. Ward probably never played to a bigger house than they did on Sunday, and the sight of the surging mass of humanity following the pantehnicon "conning tower" as it emerged from Hyde Park, what time the energetic pair on top recorded the scene was something to arouse the envy of any kinematographer with an eye for picture effects.²

¹ See Volume I.

² *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, June 25, 1908, p. 127.

And in January 1909 Pathé was induced by recent developments in aviation to produce:

PATHE. *The Different Aeroplanes*. Among the scenes shown on this interesting film are: The Voison Works at Billancourt, where most of the existing aeroplanes were built; Messrs. Santos Dumont, Kapferer and Archdeacon attend Mr. Delagrangé's experiments; the Henry Farman aeroplane in November 1907; Mr. Blériot meets with an accident at Bagatelle; the Bréguet gyroplane; the Esnault-Pelterie aeroplane; the Kapferer aeroplane; the Antoinette aeroplane; the monoplane with which Mr. Blériot tried to win the prize for height; and the Wright aeroplane piloted by Mr. Wilbur Wright at the Aubours Camp.¹

A natural development from this could have been a type of film showing greater interest in current social and political issues, varying the endless round of royal processions and sporting events. But it was in the following year, 1910, that the weekly newsreel made its appearance and the news item petrified into a formal disassociation from its context. No one came forward to use the news film for planned instruction, as naturalists, explorers and others were using the interest film. The routine weekly collections of news items retained the character of the primitive actuality and remained essentially illustrations of, rather than comments upon, the contemporary scene.

The second major category of factual film, the travel films, were for the most part similarly isolated from any contemporary significance without being of sufficiently deliberate geographical or ethnographical import to be considered true instructional films in the modern sense. It is obvious that even the most cursory representation of foreign countries had incidental educational value. But although much was talked of the educational uses of the film, productions were not yet being planned for educational use and, particularly in the first half of the period, many of the films in this broad classification were still of the most elementary nature and largely unsuitable for teaching purposes.

The earliest travel film was simply a Scenic, usually a "panorama" taken from one spot by a panning camera, or a "phantom ride" taken by a camera fixed on a moving train, tram or boat. In so far as the scenes were familiar ones, taken near home, such films had much in common with ordinary actualities. Very gradually this simple form of production died

¹ *Bioscope*, January 14, 1909, p. 22.

out, though it lingered into the second period in the output of the Hepworth and Cricks and Martin companies. But in general the travel film emerged as a more complicated record of foreign countries—mainly, moreover, of exotic foreign countries, for there was no systematic coverage of world geography. The once popular scenics of other countries with a Western type of civilization became less and less frequent and instead the emphasis fell almost exclusively on India, the South Seas, and tropical Africa. But despite the very marked shift of interest the technique of many of the new type of film remained essentially that of the scenic, although the word “travelogue” was already used in 1907¹ in connection with films which were in fact little more than a collection of lantern slides. At the same time, however, a more particularized form was emerging which may be distinguished as the interest-travel film. As people and customs in exotic lands came to occupy more of the roving cameraman’s attentions the essence of the modern travelogue appeared and only greater length and a facetious commentary were needed for it to bring its modern version into being. One subdivision of these travel-interest films was the travel-industrials, parallel to the ordinary industrials which formed an important branch of the interest films. This represented at the same time both an extension to foreign lands of the industrial, and a limitation of the travel-interest film to a specific feature of life abroad. B. & C.’s *Seal Hunting in Newfoundland*² and Butcher’s *Whaling Industry off Natal*,³ or the Rosie film *Life on a North Sea Trawler*,⁴ were some of the more important ones, but there were many less pretentious examples such as Hepworth’s *Date Industry in Egypt*:

HEPWORTH. *Date Industry in Egypt*. The Hepworth Company have produced in this film one of the most brilliant industrial subjects that has been put on the market for a long time. The film opens with a short panoramic scene along the rail to the date groves, and the scenery is enchanting and exceptional. The natives walk in and out amongst the tall palms, working on the soil to provide the proper nutriment to the all valuable trees. A man is at the foot of a tree with a band encircling him and the tree and by this means he easily manages to climb up. The camera follows him right to the top, and we see him amongst the cluster of pretty foliage at the top. Taking the pollen from one tree he passes it on to

¹ By Burton Holmes of America.

² Early 1912.

³ Early 1912.

⁴ October 1909.

another, and each palm is treated in similar fashion. In the summer pictures the trees are laden with fruit and the boughs hang down with the weight of the enormous clusters, as if they were ready to break. Up the trees the men mount again and tie up the bunches securely. The men and women take with them, to the plantation, large plaited straw baskets, which look like inverted parachutes as they are pulled to the top of the tree. Cutting the branches from the stem they drop them in these baskets and gradually lower them down by a rope sliding over one of the strongest boughs. The photographic quality of the film is superb; every first-class house will make a point of securing it for the programme at the earliest possible moment.¹

Throughout the period travel films of all kinds declined in number relative to interest films. Even more noticeable was the decline of British output relative to that of foreign companies. Pathé, in particular, flooded the British market with travel films throughout the period, many of them coloured, and Gaumont was not far behind. Some British firms, particularly Kineto, the Warwick Trading Company and Butcher's, were more inclined than others to specialize in this branch, but even these attempted little in the way of serious development. Even the average length of the travel film changed little from the few hundred feet with which it began the period, apart from the Kinemacolor *Round the World in Two Hours* with which it ended.

A most important development which should be mentioned in this category is the appearance of expedition films. These included films of both big game and Polar expeditions, and were in fact a link between the three major categories of news, travel and interest.

The fashion whereby explorers and big game hunters took cinematographers with them on their expeditions seems to have begun when Cherry Kearton left England in 1908 to accompany Theodore Roosevelt on his African hunting trip, and spent the next five years travelling in India, Africa, Borneo and America. His first series of films were shown in England in 1910 and in recognition of their exceptional nature were released under special price conditions² by the Warwick Trading Company, who handled Kearton's films for some years afterwards. In the summer of 1909 Lieutenant Shackleton showed some of the 4,000 ft. of film exposed during his recent expedition in the Antarctic.³ Probably the most impor-

¹ *Bioscope*, January 28, 1909, p. 15.

² See p. 42.

³ *Bioscope*, June 17, 1909, p. 25; July 1, 1909, p. 9.

tant of the big game films was the 6,000-ft. record of the Carnegie Museum Expedition in Alaska and Siberia, led by Captain F. E. Kleinschmidt. The expedition was organized in 1909, and during the two years it took to make the film some 10,000 feet were exposed. When the finished film finally reached the New Gallery Cinema in London in March 1913 it was such an outstanding success that it was followed immediately by imitations.¹ Soon a cinematographer was regarded as a normal part of an explorer's equipment, although his films were not always originally intended for commercial distribution. In early 1913 Fred J. Nottage brought back a film, the result of twelve months' work and an expenditure of £2,000, which illustrated the topography, anthropology and natural history of North-West Rhodesia; and in May and June of 1914 the big game hunter, Major Schomburgk, presented a series of films on the anthropology of West Africa, and Noel Macklin his *Kinemazoo* pictures, by-product of yet another expedition.

But of all these films incomparably the most important was that of the Scott Antarctic expedition, which may, in fact, be described as one of the really great achievements, if not the greatest, of British cinematography during this unhappy period.² It was not the first example of polar cinematography. The Warwick Trading Company had sent an operator³ with the Wellman Expedition, which tried to reach the North Pole by airship and motor sleigh in the summer of 1906, and had received 6,000 ft. of film by the autumn which, however, apparently proved unsatisfactory and were heard of no more. The Ziegler expedition of autumn, 1909, was accompanied by a Kineto operator, while in the summer of that year some of the 4,000 ft. of film exposed by the Shackleton Antarctic expedition was shown in London. By the beginning of 1911 the Warwick Trading Company was handling Rayleigh and Robert films of the *Arctic Voyage of H.R.H. Prince Imperial Henry of Prussia and Count Zeppelin*. Then in May 1911 the first 8,000 feet of film reached England from Herbert G. Ponting, the photographer and cinematographer who accompanied Captain R. F. Scott to the Antarctic, 8,000 ft. which covered the voyage from

¹ E.g. *Big-Game Hunting in the North Pole Icefields*, mentioned elsewhere—this may have been made largely of rejected material.

² Re-edited in the early 'thirties with a sound track and entitled *Ninety Degrees South*; a copy of this is preserved by the National Film Library, which also has the negative of the original version.

³ J. H. Avery, who had taken travel films for them as early as 1901.

New Zealand to the establishment of winter quarters at Victoria Land. The film had been taken back to New Zealand by the *Terra Nova* and thence to the Gaumont Company in England, which owned the film rights. An edited version of 3,000 ft. was ready by the autumn,¹ and in August 1912 (before the fate of the expedition was known, that is) was followed by a second instalment.

The sensation was immediate. The first satisfactory film of men living the fantastic life of the arctic explorer, in the midst of scenery of a lonely and dazzling immensity hitherto unrealized, possessed a power of fascination which subsequent films of the same type have scarcely exceeded. Enchantment was lent, of course, by the popularity of the expedition itself. But the re-edited version of this material which still exists in the National Film Library conveys as impressive a record of the vast stillness of the polar regions as any more developed documentary technique has since done, and much of its power undoubtedly lies in the original material itself.

It has already been pointed out that Ponting's films of the Antarctic fall into all three categories of factual film, since they were at the same time of news, travel and general interest. Throughout the period the number of interest films increased relative to that of travel films, largely because, as travel films developed, so many of them fell more properly in the former class. Their common root, the simple actuality, lingered in the sphere of interest as it had in that of travel. And here again remnants of the original style were to be found longest in the output of the Hepworth company, which continued throughout the first four years of the period to publish an occasional *Moonlight on the Thames*,² *Autumn in the Forest*,³ or *Frost-Bound Nature*:

HEPWORTH. *Frost-Bound Nature*. Of the three winter subjects that Messrs. Hepworth have recently published, this is by far the best. The scenes are taken from a motor-car in the lanes of Surrey, and the quality is splendid. Nature is wonderfully picturesque in her winter garb, and the scenes that the Hepworth operators have secured are among the most beautiful we have ever seen.⁴

For the most part, however, the simple actuality was left behind and

¹ Shown privately on October 19, 1911, and released to the trade in November.

² Released April 1909. ³ Released November 1909. ⁴ Released April 1, 1909.

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interest films became more deliberately instructional. Films with merely a light curiosity interest—the believe-it-or-not type—were few and far between:

CRICKS AND MARTIN. *Tame Animals at Work*. A remarkable subject taken at Ampthill House, Bedford, by kind permission of the proprietor, A. H. Wingfield, Esq. Pigs are harnessed to carts, and driven like horses. Dromedaries do the ploughing, and are also ridden. Two ostriches, ridden by two men, take part in a race. They are guided by the taps of a thin stick upon their long necks. Finally we see a procession of various wild animals, including zebras, yaks, and llamas, ridden by men, and two donkeys ridden by one man—he falls off.¹

Probably the most popular and widely shown of such casual films was W. G. Barker's famous *Who's Who in Doggieland* of 1912, a 780-ft. collection of shots of twenty-six breeds of dog. But apart from such miscellanies the interest films of these years fell into six well-marked categories: flower studies, zoological films, and especially bird studies, microcinematography, industrials, and a few of more sociological interest made up the bulk of such production.

The French firms Pathé and Gaumont had a standard line of "Floral Compositions," tinted pictures of flowers so static that they might have been a series of lantern slides. But the most important name in connection with flower studies, as with other nature films of the period, is that of F. Percy Smith (1880-1944). Percy Smith became interested in scientific cinematography as an amateur, while working at the Board of Education in the early years of the century. In May 1908 he met Charles Urban. Before the end of the month he had not only agreed to part-time work for the Charles Urban Trading Company, but had actually made his first films for them, one of a dragonfly on a twig, another of wood ants fighting, and a third showing ants milking aphides. By the end of 1909, when he was transferred to the related company Kineto, he had made thirteen zoological and trick films. He invented his own machine for the filming of plant life which was finished in January 1910, and his famous *Birth of a Flower*, the first film of its kind made in Britain, was ready by April of that year, although its release was delayed almost twelve months so that it could be issued as a Kinemacolor film. At the end of 1910 he became a

¹ *Bioscope*, June 10, 1909, p. 33.

professional cinematographer, leaving the Board of Education, which he had tried without success to interest in the educational use of the film. By the end of the pre-war period he had completed some fifty-four films, including the famous Kinemacolor *Gladioli* (this seems to have been the first film in connection with which his name was mentioned in a *Bioscope* review) and *The Story of the Wasp*:

KINEMACOLOR. *Gladioli*. (1,240 ft.) A wonderful selection of Gladioli blooms, showing every shade of colour in seventeen special varieties photographed by Mr. F. Percy Smith, from specimens supplied by Messrs. Barr and Sons, of London and Taplow.¹

The Story of the Wasp. In the opening scene is shown the most humane method of destroying a nest by pouring into the entrance a solution of cyanide of potassium. We see the comb crowded with life and movement, and the same day after the application of the poison—a veritable holocaust of slain insects! We are next shown a simpler form of extirpation. A greased glass of beer constitutes the trap, and the floating bodies of dead and dying victims testify to its efficacy. The ensuing scene introduces the sting. The weapon flashes in and out as the little wretch makes furious efforts to wound the forceps which grip it. We are next shown a magnified view of the interior of a subterranean nest, with the queen wasp inspecting the cells into which the combs are divided. In each cell, a tiny, white, pear-shaped egg is laid, and we see the birth of the repulsive-looking limbless grubs, which constitute the initial stage of the living insect. We watch the “nurses” feeding these “infants” and, later, the full-fed insects spinning coverings to their cells.²

The use of the camera in research into the growth of plants was nothing new. As early as October 1896 Michael Corday of France was reported³ to be devising a method of recording the growth of a rose-tree by taking photographs over a period of six months and combining them into a film. Results of similar work were actually projected at the Royal Horticultural Society some ten years later by a Mrs. D. H. Scott.⁴ In November 1911, Pathé released their *The Bird, the Flower and the Leaf*, a 528-ft. example of speed magnification, which was followed a month later by Kineto's *Wonders of Plant Life*:

¹ *Bioscope*, October 9, 1913, p. xiii.

² *Kinematograph Year Book*, 1915, p. 80.

³ *Amateur Photographer*, October 23, 1896, p. 326.

⁴ *Optical Lantern and Cinematograph Journal*, May 1906, p. 132.

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KINETO. *Wonders of Plant Life*. (485 ft.) An interesting example of the actual movements and growth of flowers. These surprising results are obtained by speed magnification, plants being photographed slowly for long periods and the resultant film being projected at the usual speed.¹

All types of zoological films had a wide circulation. Urban's companies were, of course, well to the fore (e.g. Urbanora's *Reptiles and their Greedy Ways* and *Rodents and their Habits* were released in May 1908 and Kineto's *The Story of the Mantis* in April 1911), whilst Hepworth's zoo pictures *Birds, Beasts and Reptiles*² and Frank Newman's *Nature Studies* of 1913 were also of considerable importance. Two otherwise average firms which achieved considerable success with zoological films were the Williamson Kinematograph Company and the Tyler Film Company. The Brighton Aquarium series of 1909 and *Life History of a Butterfly* were among the very few important films produced after 1906 by the pioneer Williamson company; and the Tyler Film Company, which released a *Life of a Butterfly*³ and later a *Life of the Honey Bee* (a series taken in the summer of 1911 under the supervision of the British authority on bees, J. "Bee" Mason), was one of the part-time producers which produced little else of note.

Important among zoological films were the very numerous bird studies. The terns, puffins, guillemots and kittiwakes which still exercise the skill and patience of cameramen to-day drew their attention no less some forty years ago. Hardly a year went by without the publication of some series by one of the well-known cinematographers who specialized in this branch of production. One of these was Oliver G. Pike, whose 1,000-ft. *In Birdland* was shown to the Press at the Palace Theatre on August 29, 1907, and of which over a hundred copies were sold. A couple of months later at the Alhambra Theatre the Urban Trading Company exhibited *Sea Bird Colonies*, a similar series of 800 ft. filmed by the Kearton brothers, Cherry and Richard, on the Farne Islands and the Bass Rock. At about this time the same company was distributing a series made by a cinematographer who had greatly enhanced Urban's reputation during the previous period, F. Martin Duncan. Next year Oliver G. Pike visited the island of St. Kilda and half of the fourteen "sections" of his *St. Kilda: Its People*

¹ *Bioscope*, December 16, 1911, p. xiii.

² First series released in November 1911; second series in June 1912.

³ In April 1911.

and *Birds*¹ were exclusively concerned with the latter. The catalogue description may be quoted in full:

7. Snaring Puffins (*Fratercula artica*). The natives snare large numbers of birds for food, and this film shows a climber stalking a puffin. A noose is placed at the end of a long rod, and is slipped over the neck of the unsuspecting bird.

8. The Fulmar Petrel (*Fulmarus glacialis*). This bird forms the chief food of the natives. The hen bird is seen with her single egg, pushing it underneath her, and settling herself comfortably upon it.

9. Young Fulmar Petrel. The bird is sitting on a narrow ledge, it rises repeatedly, flaps his wings and squirts an offensively smelling oil at the photographer.

10. Native descending cliff to snare petrels. The men of St. Kilda are remarkably fine climbers, and are seen going down a very steep precipice.

11. The return to the summit; and the petrel captured.

12. A ledge on the bird rock. A large crowd of squabbling guillemots pecking and pushing one another as they stand by their young.

13. The Gannets (*Sula bassana*) of St. Kilda. A vast flock of these large birds seen on the summit of Stac Lii. Upon the approach of the photographer they leave their nests and go tumbling and rolling down the steep slope, and then reaching the edge take to their wings and fly seawards.

It was Williamson, again, who published the three series of *Peeps into Nature's Realm*² which Pike made in 1908 and 1909 and which dealt almost entirely with the life and habits of wild birds. He paid a second visit to St. Kilda in 1910, and in April of this year Pathé was advertising his *Glimpses of Bird Life*. Bird studies continued to be an important part of the work of Urban's companies and further series were published by Kineto in both 1912 and 1913-14.

A further branch of scientific films was that of "microcinematography," which had first been commercially exploited by the Urban-Duncan Micro-Bioscope of 1903. Urban continued to sponsor such work and *Through the Microscope* of early 1907 was an Urban film, while the curious things to be seen in *Little Drops of Water* of July 1908 came as a rather horrifying surprise to many of the cinema public. Water and its unseen occupants was one of the most frequent subjects of such films, and one of the most famous factual films of the period was the Williamson Company's *Nature's Hidden Beauties: Pond Life*, a 1,000-ft. film which was made by

¹ Williamson Kinematograph Company, 1908—584 ft.

² Each between 500 and 600 ft. long.

Dr. Spitta and which preceded Kineto's almost equally famous *Microscopic Pond Dwellers* of 1912 by some three years. Here again, the catalogue description is interesting:

Naturalist collecting specimens. Preparing slide and placing in microscope. View of slide. The Water Flea, Cyclops, Cypris, Water Slugs and Vaulters. These are shown first in the cell of the microscope slide, which is about the size of a shilling; this gives some idea of the actual size of the little creatures. They are then shown in different degrees of magnification, until one of them fills the sheet, and the movements of the internal organs are plainly visible. Some lively water mites are next seen, and living cheese mites are shown for comparison. Beautiful living specimens of Rotifers, Vorticella—like a mass of living flowers—Volvox Globator with its graceful rolling motion, showing clearly the wonderful network containing the young inside, and a younger generation inside of those; a portion is shown tinted in natural colour. Then the Hydra, with its wonderfully organized tentacles for securing its prey. The Amoeba, the remarkable living protoplasm consisting of a single cell. Phantom larva with its extraordinary transparency and peculiar jerky movements. The tadpole, and then the circulation of the blood in the tadpole's tail, showing with perfect clearness the separate corpuscles. Lastly, the most wonderful of all, the moulting of the larva of a gnat. The larva is seen looking sickly and agitated, and was thought to be about to die, but behold, after some excited wriggling, off comes his head-piece, and with a few more wriggles his body shell comes off, and he skips out of the picture leaving his old clothes behind him.

Social phenomena, in comparison with scientific subjects, received relatively little attention. What social documentation there was appeared largely in the form of "industrials." The treatment, however, was more technical than social, and the countless films of this type which enjoyed a continuous vogue from 1906 to 1914 followed a simple raw-material-to-finished-product pattern which took little notice of the human factor in industry. Firms which produced this type of film in quantity were B. & C., Gaumont, Urban and above all Hepworth, and Cricks, the last two out of all proportion to the size of their total output. In fact, during the bad years of 1906 to 1911 industrials were among the only praiseworthy efforts both of the older British firms and of part-time producers such as the Tyler Film Company and Walturdaw.

The metallurgical industries with their impressive and somewhat mysterious machinery were a popular subject. In August 1907 Hepworth's film showing the manufacture of chains by Messrs. Sykes and Son, of

Cradley Heath was released, and in November 1911, Walturdaw's *Making of a Cycle*¹ and in late 1912 both Kineto's *Making of a Modern Railway Carriage*² and their *How a Motor Bicycle is Made*.³ Two notable films of this type were Cricks and Martin's *Birth of a Big Gun* and the Sheffield Photo Company's *A Dreadnought in the Making*:

CRICKS AND MARTIN. *A Dreadnought in the Making*. The pictures, include the charging of furnaces, gun manipulation, the rolling of an armour-plate, tapping of the Siemens steel furnaces, turning and cutting huge masses of steel, as well as general operations; the furnace effects being particularly good. The visit of the late King to the River Don Works is also shown. One special feature is the launch of the *Princess Alice* at Barrow, every detail associated with the ceremony being brought out clearly and vividly.⁴

CRICKS AND MARTIN. *The Birth of a Big Gun*. (950 ft.) Taken by courtesy of Sir W. G. Armstrong, Whitworth and Co. Ltd., Newcastle-on-Tyne. A striking and interesting industrial film, showing the various stages in the manufacture of a modern 12 in. 50 calibre gun, from the pig iron to actual firing of the finished monster.⁵

The complicated manufacture lying behind articles which were in common use and usually taken for granted, was a favourite theme, and formed the basis for such examples as Hepworth's *Staff of Life*,⁶ Cricks and Martin's *Matches—Made in England*,⁷ B. & C.'s *Bootmaking*,⁸ and their *Making Hats at Luton*.⁹ The advertising possibilities of such films were not overlooked and *Bootmaking* "by courtesy of Messrs. Manfield and Son of Northampton," *Matches—Made in England*, "by courtesy of Messrs. R. Bell and Sons," and Cricks and Martin's film about Josiah Wedgwood and Sons (*A Day in a Pottery Works*¹⁰) were all made with the willing co-operation of the firms in question. Other films of an equally high standard were made deliberately for advertising purposes—*Life on the Oxo Cattle Farms*,¹¹ which was distributed to showmen free of charge, or Gaumont's *A Day at Bournville*,¹² which was frank propaganda for both cocoa and the Rowntree brand of industrial welfare. Gaumont had in 1907 released a film illustrating the manufacture of the paper *Lloyd's*

¹ 525 ft.

² 560 ft.

³ 740 ft.

⁴ *Bioscope*, May 18, 1911, p. 291ix.

⁵ *Ibid.*, March 7, 1912, p. xxxix.

⁶ Released January 1908.

⁷ Released May 1910.

⁸ 450 ft., released June 1911.

⁹ 339 ft., released December 1913.

¹⁰ Released July 1909.

¹¹ 1,250 ft., released October 1911.

¹² Released January 1913.

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News. This received a normal commercial release, but four years later was also being distributed free by United Newspapers Ltd. It may be quoted as a good example of this type of production:

GAUMONT. *From Forest to Fireside*. (850 ft.) What is probably one of the most interesting educational subjects produced is this week issued by the Gaumont Co., who for some time have, they inform us, been working quietly towards the compiling of a select collection of educational matter. The title is *From Forest to Fireside*, and illustrates the making of *Lloyd's News*. The subject deals with the making of a newspaper from its very earliest and primitive form to the time it is placed on the breakfast-table. In part one we see the felling of trees in the Norwegian forest. In the second, the tree trunks, shorn of their crown of foliage, are being carried down to the river preparatory to being floated down to the mills. Scenes 3, 4 and 5 give various views of the river congested with floating timber. The logmen are seen leaping about with the nimbleness of cats directing the course of the timber and keeping it from jamming. It eventually reaches the weir and is floated into comparatively calm water, when it is carefully collected and sorted. Here a huge saw comes into operation, and cuts the logs into uniform lengths. Subsequent scenes show the process of stripping the bark from the timber by means of modern machinery, the timber yard where stacks of wood are stored, pulping, the packing of pulp, and the transhipment of the pulp by train to wharves and then by boat to England. In part two the arrival of the pulp in barges up the river Medway at the English works, Sittingbourne, is shown. The pulp is unloaded and transferred to the paper mills, where the pulp pressing machines come into play. Subsequently we are shown the compositors' room of the paper, and the linotype and monotype at work, then the general machines room, where making, cutting, counting and folding *Lloyd's News* goes on. The automator is seen at work—"Half a million copies an hour." The last scenes show the delivery of the paper, and *Lloyd's News* in the home. The picture is of stereoscopic quality right through, and as a picture which deals with the whole procedure necessary in preparing the indispensable and familiar weekly paper, cannot be surpassed, and will be heartily appreciated by showmen who are on the look out for a good thing.¹

Such films contained little of the "creative interpretation of reality" which has since been widely accepted as the definition of documentary film. The industrials, as well as the scientific films, dealt with things rather than with people, processes rather than human relations. It is true

¹ *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, November 7, 1907, p. 445.

that even the "ear of corn to loaf on table" school of film implied a certain amount of selection of facts, and in so far as it did this it was interpreting, breathing life into unassimilated and otherwise unassimilable records. A Cricks and Martin film of life on a reformatory ship¹ and Clarendon's *The Industrious Blind*² were rare examples of a new interest in social welfare, but they showed little tendency to turn the bare record of fact into anything less superficial. The Urbanora films *London Markets*³ and *Manchester Ship Canal*,⁴ again, dealt with subjects which had aspects of the greatest significance to industrial society, yet the technique employed in their production was scenic rather than analytical. Army life, a subject which was always recurring, is a good illustration of the relative absence of intellectual advance during this period. R. W. Paul's *Army Film* of 1905 had consisted of a series of scenes in the life of a military camp, groups of men marching, swimming, at firing practice. *In the Service of the King*,⁶ a Hepworth film made early in the second period, showed considerable advance since the simple collection of actualities which had formed Paul's film. It dealt in narrative form with the progress of a single soldier from his joining up to his bravery in battle and return to proud parents, and although it involved a good deal of reconstruction it adhered fairly closely to reality. Then, at the end of the pre-war period, came the extremely important *British Army Film* handled by Gaumont.⁷ This was made with official sanction and supervision, took six months to produce and a reputed 60,000 feet of film of which 6,000 to 7,000 feet were eventually used, and was given as much publicity as the Scott films. Yet in structure it was precisely the same as the Hepworth film which began the period, and showed much less real advance beyond it than the latter had shown in relation to Paul's film.

In general, the period had been marked less by a development of technique than by a crystallization of types, in travel and topical as well as in interest films. From the initial homogeneity of factual films, already considerably diversified by 1906, had emerged the several rigid conventions of bird film, flower study, industrial and so on, but neither in structure nor in purpose had they travelled far. The analytical presentation of fact was almost unknown, and as a fitting conclusion to the account of an uneventful

¹ October 1907.

³ 390 ft., released August 1910.

⁵ See Volume I.

² 515 ft., released April 1911.

⁴ Released March 1912.

⁷ For Keith, Prowse & Co. Ltd.

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period may be quoted the following naïve, unsystematic but heroically enterprising piece of sociological treatment:

WARWICK TRADING CO. *A Primitive Man's Career to Civilisation.* An interesting series of views from the camera of Mr. Cherry Kearton, being a *pot pourri* so blended that the result grips attention from the first scene to the last. The opening scene is in the wilds of Africa, where savages, unconscious of the camera's proximity, are busy making weapons in the most primitive fashion. A wood fire on the ground with a novel bellows fanning the flames, and the savage workman thrusting into the fire a piece of iron, which he afterwards endeavours to beat out with a stone upon another stone, is, to our civilized ideas, a crude method, but appears eminently satisfactory to the ignorant savage, for the next scene shows the natives quarrelling and using the recently made weapons upon each other. The fight is stopped by the Commissioner, and a most realistic war dance is given by the members of the tribe. Gradually an idea of civilization dawns on the savage, and a novel process of shaving is shown, the instrument used being a piece of ordinary glass. The succeeding scenes show the savage at the store getting himself a "rig-out" of European clothes, his subsequent walking out to "show off," and visit to church with the same object, his successful efforts to learn to write, and his final desire to visit Europe and civilization.¹

¹ *Bioscope*, January 19, 1911, p. 31.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER IV

A National Film Museum

Since the formation of the National Film Library in 1936 a number of early films have been collected and preserved, but many of them are of little intrinsic interest artistically or as records of their time, and the social historian, as well as the film historian, may well regret that a national collection of chosen films was not founded many years earlier, before so many of the films disintegrated or were destroyed. If it was forty years before official action materialized, this was not for want of prompting on the part of both the national and the trade Press. As early as 1906 the *Optical Lantern and Kinematograph Journal* quoted the *Referee*:

Will the day ever come when makers of bioscopic records will have to send two copies to the British Museum, two copies to the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and so forth, according to Acts of Parliament made and provided.¹

Some four years later a leader appeared in the *Bioscope* with the headline "A National Film Museum."² It followed a recent newspaper suggestion that films might be collected in one of the national museums without insurmountable difficulty of storage or preservation, and in passing reported that a Danish millionaire's offer to Copenhagen Municipal Government to found a Cinematograph Museum had lately been accepted. Next year, again, the attack was repeated with a "Plea for a National Film Museum," which stressed the fact that if the

features, figures, gestures and costumes of the great men of our day (are to be permanently recorded) the time for mere discussion has long since gone by. Something definite must be done, and that soon, otherwise the negatives of ten years ago will be either lost or useless.³

Later in 1911 the *Evening Standard* remarked "surely motion pictures should find a place in the archives of our museums,"⁴ while early next year rumour had it that Charles Urban had offered to present to the nation his colour films, including important topicals, as the nucleus of a permanent collection.⁵ But by the end of the pre-war period, when the

¹ *Optical Lantern and Kinematograph Journal*, April 1906, p. 117.

² *Bioscope*, May 26, 1910, p. 3.

³ *Ibid.*, April 13, 1911, p. 51.

⁴ *Ibid.*, December 7, 1911, p. 685.

⁵ *Ibid.*, March 14, 1912, p. 737.

APPENDIX

Bioscope re-opened its now almost annual attack, it pointed angrily to the beginnings of film archives in the Louvre, the Royal Library of Copenhagen, national records office at Madrid, New York Public Library—Brussels, Rome, and even Baroda; while in England—Croydon Public Library.¹

Such was the state of affairs in 1914. Infinite trouble might be taken to dig up and preserve combs, pots, axes and any other scattered and broken relics of past stages of society which might thereby be reconstructed in the mind of the antiquarian. But the “animated pictures” of the day, which could reconstruct 1914 before the very eyes of future students, were scattered and lost, burnt or tucked away to decay unseen. But it is probably not surprising that neither officials nor archaeologists had grasped the unique opportunities of the film as an historical record before it was twenty years old. It would certainly have been a miracle if the other reason for preservation, the demonstration of the growth of an art form, had been at all widely appreciated at so early a date. Even those most anxious to found some such museum restricted their outbursts to the following lines:

. . . Setting apart for a moment commercial and artistic considerations, one would be inclined to say that the side of cinematography which possesses the most lasting significance and the truest human interest is represented best by what is known as the Topical Film. . . . To ensure that the wonderful treasure of contemporary history, now in process of compilation by the topical cinematographer, be jealously preserved for our successors should surely be made a duty not merely by private individuals and companies, but by official bodies.²

¹ *Bioscope*, July 30, 1914, p. 471.

² *Ibid.*, July 23, 1914, p. 315.

Humorous Films

The Chairman: What do you like best at the cinema?

Schoolboy: All about thieves.

The Chairman: The next best?

Schoolboy: Charlie Chaplin.

The Chairman: And you?

Schoolboy: Mysteries; and then Charlie Chaplin.

The Chairman: And you?

Schoolboy: Cowboys; and then Charlie Chaplin second.

Monsignor Brown: If there were two picture houses together, and one was showing flowers and geography films, and the other one Charlie Chaplin films, which would you go to?

Schoolboy: The one showing Charlie Chaplin.¹

In 1906 the predominant form of humour in the cinema was the "comic" lasting a few minutes and consisting of one or sometimes more incidents, frequently of the simplest slapstick. By 1914 the emphasis had shifted to a more advanced type of film, which was longer and contained both a carefully constructed humorous story and the humorous treatment of character. Development from the Comic to the mature Comedy followed no clear-cut lines of progress. The simpler form was present long after the more complex had become general and throughout the period different producers remained at different stages of development, went back on their own achievements and frequently misunderstood and misdescribed what they were doing. But through all the confusion a general movement towards greater sophistication both of form and content can be discerned and, with due regard to the limitations of any theory of development, can usefully be analysed further.

The evolution of story structure, as such, has its counterpart in the

¹ Evidence before the Cinema Commission of the National Council of Public Morals in 1916.

evolution of film story structure during these years. The short *scena*, as it was often called, corresponds to the anecdote, the account of a single detached incident, which is the logical basis of story-telling. The next step may be described as the narrative, or recital of connected events, and examples could be found in abundance as films became longer. But gradually to mere length was added a greater complexity of structure, the plot. The word was frequently used merely to describe the contents of any made-up film, but here it is used more precisely to indicate that narrative whose connected events are of such an order as to require a final untying or winding up—the denouement. Such is the essence of the plot, the basis of most stories and a form which is capable of infinite elaboration and subtlety. The rescue films of 1903 and onwards were the earliest regular appearance of this more highly developed story structure in the cinema, but even at the beginning of the period under review some three years later, the more elementary forms were still current. Particularly was this the case among humorous films. And in this sphere the transition from the basic form, the comic anecdote or *scena*, to the highly developed comedy plot occupied at least the next eight years.

It is to be expected that at the stage of single comic incidents the humour should be that of action and, at the stage of plots, that of situation. Examination of the films of this period show that the humour of action was based entirely on physical discomfort. The humour of situation, on the other hand, had a more subtle appeal. Amusement was caused primarily by appreciation of the relationship between facts, rather than by the facts themselves, and therefore the incongruous and the surprising came to replace the slapstick. Between the stage of single incidents and that of plots lay the stage of sequences of related facts, and here, the more stress there was on the facts the nearer the humour came to slapstick, whilst the more there was on the relation between them the nearer it came to the humour of ideas, or of situation.

With this in mind, we find that what made people laugh at each stage of the structural development of the film story had an extraordinary lack of variety. The discomfiture which was the staple of the single incident comic might range from embarrassment to extreme physical pain, but it remained basically the same. A single cause and painful result were suffi-

cient to raise a laugh, with neither any element of surprise nor ingenuity, nor any distinction of personality:

SHEFFIELD PHOTO CO. *Banana Skins*. *Banana Skins* opens with a number of people buying the fruit from a hawker in the street and carelessly dropping the skins on the side-walk. As a result furniture removers fall with a heavy piano on top of them.¹

The next stage, as we have seen, is that of related incidents, and here again discomfiture remained the predominant theme. But a new element was present, that of the relation itself. The simplest form of this was repetition—with minor variations—for in this way greater length and a cumulative effect was achieved without any increase in complexity. The cause of the trouble went on causing more and more troubles of a nature similar to the first, and not only was laughter aroused afresh at each incident but, it was hoped, the cumulative effect of the repetition produced a louder laugh each time.

WALTURDAW. *Patent Glue*. (555 ft.) An ingenious comic film. The inventor of a patent liquid glue calls upon a professor in his study and, after demonstrating the wonderful adhesive powers of his glue, finally interests the professor and leaves a bottle with him. His two young sons appear, and quickly discover the glue, and then commences their round of pranks. Amongst the numerous comic scenes, perhaps the funniest takes place in the kitchen, where tea is ready for the servants. Glue, of course, is put by the boys on the chairs and round the rims of the cups. Enter servants—consternation when they find the chairs sticking to them, and that they cannot remove the cups from their lips—thus the three rush through the house, causing more trouble and confusion. A sentry is next visited, and while he is busily engaged with a pretty nursemaid, the boys glue his rifle across the sentry box. Officer appears. Sentry seizes rifle to salute, and in order to do so, has to raise box and all to his shoulder. Of course, the garden seat in the park was irresistible to the boys, and here a comic scene develops while the frantic efforts of the poor occupants to detach themselves are very amusing. The finale ends with the return of the boys to the studio, where paternal authority in the form of the professor and a cane greets them with a warm welcome.²

But the category of related incidents contained a subdivision, for repetition was not the only relation which could be used. Causation was

¹ *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, February 13, 1908, p. 252.

² *Bioscope*, May 13, 1909, p. 32.

even more popular, and though both were contemporaneous the latter was clearly a more complex form. In this form the cause of trouble caused trouble which cause more trouble which caused more trouble, and so on, until the producer felt the film was long enough:

CRICKS AND MARTIN. *The Biter Bit*. A good comic in which a bag snatcher—whilst a gentleman rests his portmanteau to get a light—acquires the bag and scoots off and is followed by the loser and numerous others, including a man whose pictures the thief had jumped through, a milliner whose bandboxes had been upset, a parcel delivery man whose parcels are knocked off his shoulder, a butcher whose bike had been acquired by the thief in his attempt to escape. Over bridges, through lands and across commons goes the thief in his headlong rush, knocking one poor woman into the river. Thence across a ploughed field where numerous falls take place. The thief then secures a motor-car and the crowd hang on behind to be thrown off at a sharp turn. Out of the car presently springs the bag snatcher, he rushes behind a hedge to see what is in the bag, when out jumps a terrier dog who immediately fastens on to the thief's nether garments and holds him, despite the frantic efforts of the thief to escape, till the crowd arrives and he is secured. A good film and a fine chase.¹

Here the interesting element of humour lies not merely in the thief jumping through the man's pictures and upsetting the milliner's bandboxes, but in the fact that as a result each joins in the pursuit, which thus becomes bigger and bigger. The effect is still cumulative, but whereas in the repetitive form humour attaches to each incident on its own, the essence of the causal form is the relationship itself—that is, although each incident may be and usually was funny in itself, fundamentally the joke was the idea that one thing could lead to so many others. Its appeal lay more in appreciation of the relationship than in the nature of each incident. It was thus more abstract than either the single physical incident or even the repetition of similar physical incidents, and one stage nearer to the plot or humorous situation.

But the general theme of both the repetitive and the causal sequences, both of which flourished until about 1910, remained essentially the same as that of the earlier, simpler form of comic. Someone else's discomfiture was still the mainspring of laughter, and the cruelty with which the unfortunate were inconvenienced, hurt, chased and humiliated was but

¹ *Bioscope*, December 2, 1909, p. 49.

thinly disguised in the more playful slapstick affected by some of the companies. The number of pranks played by "two naughty boys" during these years, particularly by two naughty boys with a glue pot, must have reached gigantic proportions. Week after week they upset things, hid things, spread glue on chairs, door handles, and anything else that was near at hand. "Naughty boy comics" and "glue pot comics" became generic terms typical of the repetitive sequence. Rarely, however, did any glue-pot incident lead causally to another. This form of relation was exemplified almost exclusively by the chase, which was as typical of the causal sequence as glue pots and naughty boys were of the other. The chase comic, with crowds of people chasing each other from right of screen to left, from left to right or even (less often) towards the camera, grew and grew as the result of one screaming incident after another until the screams of the reviewers at last became those of utter despair.

"A general scrimmage ensues" brought immediate relief to a producer whose two naughty boys had glued their way through the requisite two, three or four hundred feet of film, or whose chase had gone far enough. But the surprising twist, the ingenious solution of a tangled situation, the unexpected explanation—these were the endings by which the simple comic sequence merged into the more advanced plot-comedy:

CRICKS AND MARTIN. *Accompanied on the Tom-Tom.* A comic of universal merit, the conception is novel, the execution is as charming as it is laughable, and denouement is deliciously unexpected. Brown, a well-disposed suburbanite, reading in his newspaper that the Sultan of Bargoona is paying a visit to London, and that he has brought with him his tom-tom players, never thought to be brought into contact with the august visitor. It happens, as the procession, with the dusky potentate in a gorgeous palanquin, is passing through one of the streets, that a drunken man gets among the natives, knocks them right and left, and at last drags the Sultan himself to the ground. Brown rushes to the rescue, pacifies the drunkard, and, somewhat to his dismay, is presented with a tom-tom player as a reward. Brown's difficulty is now how to get rid of his unwelcome companion. Wherever he goes, there is the grinning, dusky face at his elbow, and the sound of the tom-tom is continually in his ears. It awakens him at 4.00 a.m., and, though the player is quickly thrown out of the room, he again turns on the music—just as Brown is kissing the servant-maid at breakfast time. He is hurled through a window, but turns up smiling when Brown leaves for business, jumps on a tram

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after him, and, though thrown over the rail, clings on behind and, undismayed by being thrown under a motor-car, turns up at the office as Brown is busy with his typist. The harassed man takes to the street again, but the tom-tom player is not to be beaten; even a volley of revolver shots fails to efface him. Brown at last gives him up to the police, and goes home with a sigh of relief. Soon, however, a letter is brought in. It is from the Sultan, who says: "The Sultan is sorry to hear that Mr. Brown's tom-tom player has been arrested, and in consideration of his great service sends him three more." The final tableau shows the played-out Brown in the midst of his newly acquired retainers, who are vigorously thumping their tom-toms.¹

HEPWIX. *The Umbrella They Could Not Lose.* (350 ft.) Gertie has an accident with her umbrella, which falls down a grating in the gutter. Its appearance, when recovered, is such that Gertie decides to discard it, and she drops it on the pavement and walks away. Mildred, who has been walking behind her, thinks that Gertie has dropped the umbrella by mistake, and hastens to restore it to her. Gertie, however, denies all knowledge of it, and leaves it in the newcomer's hands. Mildred tries a similar device for getting rid of the unwelcome article, but a "Johnny" appears and attempts to restore it to her. Foiled in this attempt, he tries to get rid of it by leaving it in exchange for another at his club, but this little dodge does not "come off." Finally he jumps into a cab, and whilst travelling at full speed throws it from the window. The action is observed by a policeman, who promptly pursues, but being unable to keep up with the cab, he, in turn, leaves the umbrella behind him, this time with a sentry, who is on duty at the barrack gates. No sooner has the sentry picked it up than his superior officer passes, and he is forced to "present arms," holding the unfortunate umbrella. His officer snatches it from him, and throws it over the barrack wall, and it falls into the hands of a tramp, who receives it with open arms. At that moment a shower of rain begins to fall, and so the poor umbrella manages to serve a useful turn at last.²

Gradually the denouement became of greater importance, and although crude slapstick and the cumulative effect of the simple sequence were frequently incorporated in the more complicated comedy situations, together with the growing attention to the humorous possibilities of personality, the stress was more and more on the situation as a whole. The comedy came to be built entirely round the denouement:

CRICKS AND MARTIN. *Much Ado About—*. (460 ft.) Mrs. Brown is surprised at the entry of her husband, who has returned from business

¹ *Bioscope*, February 24, 1910, p. 54.

² *Ibid.*, February 1, 1912, p. iii.

rather earlier than usual, and she immediately places a parcel in her box and quickly turns the key. Brown demands to know what the parcel contains. His wife refused to satisfy his curiosity, and he leaves the house, going straight to her mother, and suggests that she should interview her daughter to ascertain the contents of the parcel. This she agrees to do, while Brown awaits the result, but he is surprised on her return to be again refused, the matter being treated by her as a huge joke. Brown decides to place the matter in the hands of a private detective. Mrs. Brown receives a note to the effect that her husband has ordered the piano to be tuned, but the tuner is none other than the detective, whose object is not the piano but the work-box. Being left alone, he opens the box by means of a skeleton key, and enjoys a hearty laugh. Returning to his office, where Brown awaits him in feverish excitement, he tells his client that he can trace nothing and therefore cannot help him. Brown returns home with the determination that he will find out for himself, and proceeds to force the lock of the offending box. This he succeeds in doing, only to find that his wife had been preparing for an interesting event, and that he had been making much ado about—!¹

Laughter was no longer limited entirely or even mainly to the physical humour of single incidents. For the humour of relationship had come into its own, and both the subject-matter and mechanism of the denouement were capable of endless variation and embellishment. It is consequently not possible to single out an equivalent of the glue pot or the chase as typical, but the comedy of ruffled romance which was featured largely in the Hepworth revival of 1911 may be quoted as a characteristic new development:

HEPWIX. *Love in a Laundry*. (715 ft.) Three young girls who work in a laundry have three devoted lovers, who take every opportunity of slipping into the laundry and making love to them, much to the annoyance of their manageress. One day when the three lovers are out for a walk, they see the announcement of a dance at the Town Hall, and they buy tickets in order to give their girls a treat. The following day each one brings round his only white shirt to be washed for the occasion. But the three young men are fickle, and meeting three shop girls, they offer them the ball tickets that are meant for the other damsels. They pretend to the laundry girls that they are too ill to go to the dance. One of the girls, however, has seen them out with the shop girls, and they manage to get their revenge and stop them going to the dance by refusing to let them have their white shirts. The young men then decide to sue for pardon, but whilst they

¹ *Bioscope*, January 16, 1913, p. x.

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are kneeling at the feet of their one-time lady loves, three soldiers march in, and, offering their arms to the girls, out they all march, leaving the faithless nuts kneeling on the laundry floor.¹

The true comedy or humorous plot was now established and years of elaboration, lengthening and sophistication were to make little alteration in its fundamental structure. There was yet another development, however, which was to take place before the present period was over. This was the appearance of the burlesque or skit. Unlike other forms of humorous film, the burlesque had not been present from 1896 onwards, even in embryo form, but had a fairly clearly marked beginning in 1913. Naturally, it did not come entirely unannounced. In 1910, Cricks and Martin published a film called *Prison Reform*² ("with apologies to the Right Hon. Winston Churchill, M.P.") making fun of the proposals for better conditions in prisons along lines which can easily be imagined. Then again, in 1911 began B. & C.'s mock crime series *Three Fingered Kate*, in which Kate and her motley gang got themselves in and out of adventures which were only a slight caricature of the approved model. But the wave of skits did not begin in England until 1913 when it was associated pre-eminently with the films of Fred Evans. Hepworth and Kineto followed the fashion with respectively *Plot and Pash* and *Society Playwright*, skits on melodrama in the Melville manner. Evans, a music-hall comedian, turned to the films like many other music-hall artistes of the time as an easy way of making extra money on the side. The Brothers Egbert and others who clubbed together as the Ec-ko company did the same thing as Evans but did it without his quick appreciation of what the public wanted. As "Pimple," a white-faced clown in traditional funny-man get-up, he made a long series of "Folly Films" in which he developed a style and personality of his own and became, by the beginning of the war, a favourite whose popularity in England rivalled that of the rising star Charlie Chaplin. His recipe was a simple one. Week after week he turned out a burlesque version of the hit film of the moment. To name only a few, B. & C.'s *Battle of Waterloo* was followed by *Pimple's Battle of Waterloo*, the Italian *Dante's Inferno* by *Pimple's Inferno*, Herbert Brenon's *Ivanhoe*, by *Pimple as Ivanhoe*. As a friend of the audience he made nonsense of the ambitious Art which impressed and dazzled them.

¹ *Bioscope*, September 12, 1912, p. xx.

² October 1910.

The burlesque still contained slapstick. But its essence was the crazy distortion of the normal, and as such it represented not merely yet another line of development away from the humour of discomfort but a stage of even greater abstraction. Wit, as opposed to humour, is usually understood to mean the incongruous juxtaposition of ideas, and more particularly its verbal expression. The use of wise-crack titles was increasing before 1914 (they provided a cheap and easy way of making extra footage) but otherwise the verbal aspect of humour was naturally lacking in silent films. It was in Pimple's apprehension of the impossible and the unlikely, however, that wit found its visual expression or at least its visual equivalent. In the case of skits on feature films it might be argued that laughter contained the usual element of relieved hostility—in this case relief at the reduction to absurdity of films whose magnificence oppressed while it attracted. Whether this is so or not, it cannot apply to the countless films in which Pimple simply played with facts, with a skill to which synopses unfortunately cannot do justice.

FOLLY FILMS. *Pimple's Fire Brigade*. (415 ft.) The house is on fire, and Pimple's fire brigade is summoned. Pimple, in fireman's outfit, as captain drives, with his gallant crew seated behind him. The fire brigade is in no hurry, and stops at a water-trough to give the mokes a drink. Then a couple of carrots on the end of a long pole are used with a view to getting up speed. But a newsboy comes along announcing "all the winners!" and it is necessary for the fire brigade to discuss the news before they can go any further. The great engine once more gets on the move. It pulls up later near some cottages to inquire of a small boy if he has seen a fire anywhere. The small boy leads them to the burning cottage—the fire is already put out. Pimple, taking no notice of the occupants, runs up the fire-escape, enters the building, and begins to fling out the furniture. But he catches sight of a football match in the next field, and he and his gallant band crowd on the roof to watch it. When a goal is scored they are satisfied, and descend to knock off, as it is one o'clock. Their luncheon is interrupted by one of the firemen discovering that the fire engine is on fire, and we leave the party amongst the ruins.¹

Throughout these eight years, but particularly during the earlier period devoted to comics, the sameness of many of the films was remarkable, and reached such proportions as to indicate more than mere plagiarism. Reiteration of the two naughty boys theme, glue pots, chases and later

¹ *Bioscope*, January 9, 1913, p. vii.

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the lovers' tangle, has already been mentioned. But other even more detailed formulae were repeated and repeated. Magic drinks, tablets or garments again and again made their unsuspected users act in extraordinary ways: countless bathers tripped gaily into seas or rivers leaving their clothes to the mercy of tramps, hungry animals or those two naughty boys; husbands and wives, yearning for a little romance, made blind dates which turned out to be with each other; parted lovers secured the consent of hostile fathers by trickery; and the legatee who, besieged with suitors, on losing the money lost suitors as well, never failed to appear as a figure of fun.

Many another formula appeared with a depressing regularity as though from the recesses of a joke file. The background was almost always that of lower middle-class domesticity, a reflection of the real background of both makers and consumers, who found glamour and excitement in the lives of foreigners and the upper classes but felt it preferable to laugh at their own tribulations. Small houses and shops, servants and trades people, picnics and spring cleaning were the setting and the personnel of humour. Gaumont's *Algy Slacker* series of 1910 was a lonely attempt to lift comedy on to the high society level it inhabited in France, but in general it was the tramps, the servants and the lower middle-class household who were considered fitting subjects for humour in English films—never the upper classes, until the coming of the gentler romantic comedy.

The attitude to life which was expressed in humorous films, moreover, was as consistent and noticeable as their background. Hostility was the keynote. A good deal of straightforward social comment is found in such films as those mocking the fashions of the time, the hobble skirts and mushroom hats, but most of the films with deliberate topical content betoken little but the hostility of the ignorant to anything new or strange, that hostility, hatred and fear which find their relief in jeers. The extraordinarily numerous suffragette comics were typical of this. Even more pronounced were the unsympathetic jibes at the unfortunate, jibes of so active a cruelty that they seemed to be rooted not merely in indifference to another's misfortunes, but in the more positive emotion of relief that another's misfortunes are not one's own. Anything the spectator did not want to be, anything he feared being and was glad not to be—or anything that he knew he was, and hoped to deny by giving the loudest laugh—could serve as the basis for comedy. The embarrassment of fatness was such a theme:

THE HISTORY OF THE BRITISH FILM

URBAN TRADING COMPANY. *Too Stout!* (450 ft.) A man of enormous bulk receives an imperative message demanding his presence, and his trouble of mind and body in reaching his destination are laughably depicted. Doorways are too narrow, railway compartments too crowded, cabs too weak, chairs too frail, bicycles too slight, costers' barrows too flimsy to accommodate his weight and size. He tries them all, and comes to ignominious grief over each attempt. Ultimately, after a costly series of misadventures, he arrives in a strong wheelbarrow, but even from this vehicle he is upset into a dirty puddle of water. Intensely comic throughout.¹

Ugliness of any kind could be relied upon, particularly a woman's ugliness, and even more particularly the spectacle of an ugly woman in search of a husband:

CRICKS AND MARTIN. *She Would be Wed.* (345 ft.) A lady of uncertain age is seen trying to make herself bewitching and beautiful. She sallies forth to capture the heart of some poor unsuspecting man. She meets the postman, and tries to capture him, but he takes to his heels, followed by the amorous lady. A muffin man, fat man, cripple and dude, all receive the lady's attention, but none will have anything to do with her. She is not disheartened, but approaches a blind beggar, whom she partly persuades and partly drags to a registry office. The wedding ceremony is just completed, when those who have escaped the lady burst open the door and pelt the couple unmercifully with confetti.²

The spinster gag was played to death with all the trimmings of offensive indelicacy, and the suffragette comics expressed only too clearly the simple belief that only ugly (and therefore unmarried) women were interested in civil and political equality. In fact, women in general received more than their share of vicious spleen, whether as suffragette and spinster or as mother-in-law, "wifey" and "the great she." Marital difficulties—a never-failing source of hilarity—were that of the henpecked husband rather than that of infidelity, a theme more usual in French comics. But while laughter directed against women was vicious and unforgiving, when men were the butt the tone was more likely to be one of indulgent and pitying contempt. The henpecked husband, the unmanly man, was the complement to the unwomanly woman. The dominant woman who failed in her traditional role of beauty and submission was as much the undignified

¹ *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, July 11, 1907, inside cover.

² *Bioscope*, April 11, 1912, p. xxiii.

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victim of her own ineptitude as the man who failed to assert himself. But the more lenient tone applied to man not only in his capacity of the henpecked husband. Hepworth's "poor old" Mugwump and his P.C. Hawkeye, the amiable fool, were followed by "Poorluck," whose very name tells all that is necessary. Frightened Freddy,¹ Weary Willy and Tired Tim² were all in trouble because they were too clumsy or weak to cope with ill-fortune. Crick's especial favourite was poor old Pa, whose difficulties around the house were endless and familiar:

CRICKS AND MARTIN. *Father's Saturday Afternoon*. (610 ft.) Pa decides to stay behind at the office to clear up some arrears in his books, but the charwoman enters and puts him to flight. No response coming on to his knocks at the door of his residence, Pa sits down on the door step, and applies himself to the books, to be awakened by a stream of water from the first floor window. He is admitted, and attempts to start again in the sitting-room. But a couple of musicians have to be bribed to leave him in peace, then his daughter's desire to practise on the piano has to be repressed, and finally he flies upstairs to the bathroom. Going back to the bathroom after dinner, he finds it occupied, and the cellar seems to form an ideal retreat until a ton of coals is suddenly shot in, while the sloping roof makes an excellent writing surface until a discharge of soot comes from the chimney, but Pa finds peace at last in the dog's kennel.³

Without undue generalization these everyday topics, this rather hostile spirit and this changing form may be taken as a fairly comprehensive account of the humorous film between 1908 and 1914. There were many exceptions and inconsistencies, as is natural in a process of change; but at the same time both the content and the format of the vast majority of films were sufficiently routine to bring any underlying tendency to change into sharp relief. And the humorous film, unlike the factual film, was undoubtedly subject to changes of the very greatest importance during this period.

A separate branch of humorous films, which has not so far been mentioned, was the trick comic. This had occupied an extremely important place in the early period before 1906, but fell in relative importance during the present period and does not show the same amount of development. Most of the possibilities of the trick film had been explored fairly fully

¹ Clarendon Film Company, 1911.

² B. & C. Kinematograph Company, 1911.

³ *Bioscope*, July 6, 1911, p. xxv.

during the earlier period. They were of several main types, including those using double or triple exposure, reverse motion, stop motion photography whereby things suddenly appeared where they had not been before, or even a simple cord which did not show in the picture and which moved furniture, hats and so on. All this was felt to be good clean fun and the old routines were repeated with little variation in this period, although possibly with decreasing effect. People changed into other people, moved backwards or upside down; tables and chairs moved about of their own accord; things appeared and disappeared, people became invisible or performed superhuman feats of strength; hair-restorers, "anti-gravitation fluid," magic powders, drinks, and garments were all the excuse for series of surprising and incongruous effects which belonged to the same early class of humorous film as did the chase. There was a fascination in making the impossible happen, and for some years it absorbed the interest of both makers and audience. But as story development gathered speed these early exercises in the technical possibilities of the film except in rare cases proved more useful for drama than for humour. The early "trick novelties," which in themselves almost always aimed at a laugh rather than a thrill, grew up to be the trick and model work of drama—visions, dreams, the fire of London in Clarendon's *Old St. Paul's*, the battle between airship and liner in Cricks and Martin's *The Pirates of 1920*, the ghost in Forbes-Robertson's *Hamlet*. The firms who clung to the trick comic—R. W. Paul, the Sheffield Photo Company, and for a few years Hepworth—became fewer, and towards the end of the period Cricks and Martin were the only English makers with any considerable output. This lingering fondness was due to the unusual skill of J. H. Martin, who continued to produce a popular brand of trick film when he began production on his own early in 1913. But on the whole English makers lost interest in the trick film as such, and produced nothing so elaborate as, for example, Méliès' *La Conquête du Pôle* of 1912. This, incidentally, slipped on to the British market without creating much stir:

PATHÉ. *The Conquest of the Pole*. (2,078 ft., Released March 20, 1912.) An extraordinary voyage by Mr. George Méliès. The Méliès films are a bye-word for all that is grotesque and marvellous in the way of animated pictures. Mr. Geo. Méliès, as a matter of fact, is the H. G. Wells of picturedom, the wizard who gives the fillip to our imagination, and provides us with scientific phenomena of his own making. Let it be

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understood that this is the conquest of the Pole as seen through French eyes, for M. Méliès evidently prefers to believe that the Pole has not yet been discovered.¹

Other "novelties" which might be mentioned here are the cartoons, vaudeville films, and few odd silhouette and puppet² films produced from time to time. The old short film of some well-known comic act continued to appear occasionally, as indeed it still does. An early novelty showing the emergence of cartoon animation was Urban's *Magical Matches* of 1912:

URBANORA. *Magical Matches*. (330 ft., Released April 10, 1912.) A silver match-box appears on the screen, the lid opens, the matches come out and make up wonderful figures. For instance, the matchsticks form into a group of acrobats, and afterwards shape into a series of brilliantly revolving stars, which, in turn, become a laughing sun. A man's head is formed, and other matches become pipes, one after the other flying into the man's mouth. Each one is tried and rejected, until one comes along representing a man's face, and then this particular pipe suddenly becomes the man's head, and vice versa. The matches reappear and form a horse, cart and driver, and off they go. In quick succession another man's head appears, with a cigar in his mouth. Finally, the matches fly into position as a skeleton, which, after many curious evolutions, takes its head in its arms and disappears.³

The position with regard to cartoon films was summarized in 1914:

A resuscitation of the trick film, so popular ten years ago, is to be found in the "kinematograph cartoons" originally hailing from America, but now coming from anywhere, everywhere, and nowhere in particular. Probably it was the success of the "Flip and Doctor Pill" drawings in motion by the well-known newspaper artist, Windsor McKay, of the *New York American*, that put others on the scent of this particular novelty for the picture theatre patron. However this may be, kinematograph cartoons are now going strong. They all depend for their making on the one turn one picture movement of the kinematograph camera, in conjunction with much laborious and accurate black and white sketching.⁴

But these miscellaneous novelties are of little interest compared with the main body of humorous films, in which significant changes were taking

¹ *Bioscope*, March 14, 1912, p. iii.

² E.g. *The Doll's Revenge*, Clarendon, 410 ft., released February 26, 1911; *Cinderella*, Butcher's, 997 ft., released December 15, 1912.

³ *Bioscope*, April 4, 1912, p. xvii.

⁴ *Kinematograph Year Book*, 1915, p. 37.

place. In these changes the British makers lagged behind the rest of the world. While the humour of the short story type of film was permitting a greater elasticity of both form and content, Britain remained clinging to the early glue pot and the chase, the sex-starved suffragette and down-trodden Pa. As the unlikely situation and the humour of character replaced the now disguised or sublimated delight at another's discomfiture British firms would proudly present for the *n*th time some piece of familiar slapstick which had quite gone out of fashion among the important foreign brands. Even when Hepworth finally took up the humour of romantic complications and led the way to a more developed structure, British films rarely attained the pitch of elaboration and smoothness normal to the better American comedies.

The truth seems to be that comedy was not taken seriously. English makers rarely regarded comics as worth featuring, but treated them rather as reliable pot-boilers for which little inventive effort was needed. The few series which were the pale British reflection of the great continental buffoons of 1909 to 1912—Linder, Prince, Foolshead, Tontolini, Fabian, Gontran, Polidor and many others—were routine imitations with apparently little appreciation of the sustained effort necessary to build up such reputations. In the matter of length, again, a low valuation of humour is to be observed. By 1913 a length of 1,000 ft. or even more was not unknown for comedies, but English makers rarely rose to more than 500 ft., if as much. And when the lead passed definitely to the famous American comedians—true comedians, basing their appeal on personality rather than on farcical situations or buffoonery alone—English makers had little answer. The Americans' only English rival was Pimple, and even he retained the traditional clown make-up of an earlier idiom. By the beginning of the war Mabel Normand, Mack Sennett, Ford Stirling, Roscoe Arbuckle, John Bunny and Flora Finch, the Drews and many others were names which were world famous, and Charlie Chaplin was rapidly acquiring an unprecedented popularity. England had nothing to compete with this. Florence Turner, herself an American, made a series of comedies in 1913-14 which proved her a capable comedienne; Ivy Close and Elwin Neame, after their brief excursion into Classical Beauty, had in 1914 become known for their series of reliable comedies rather on the American pattern; and George Robey, in a specially written sketch in the summer

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of 1914, *George Robey Turns Anarchist*,¹ had shown signs of having a film personality of some promise. But the less well-known exponents of music-hall slapstick still constituted the bulk of Britain's film humour and the more important companies rarely exerted any great efforts in this direction.

The importance to British films of theatrical and literary adaptation has already been mentioned and will be discussed in greater detail in connection with dramatic films. It was into drama that the British producers flung all their resources after 1911, and the significance of stage plays and stage players was so great that their absence in the sphere of humour is the more striking. Apart from the London Film Company's *She Stoops to Conquer*² the stage's only gift to the humorous film was the music-hall comic, and whether this was so in the first place because producers were scornful of the artistic value of humour and so neglected it in their drive for improved British films, or because theatrical humour was either not available or not suitable, the result was the same and serves only to emphasize the extent to which the British revival was dependent on the stage.

¹ Trade shown July 14, 1914. #

² 3,000 ft. trade shown March 27, 1914.

Dramatic Films

(I) ADAPTATIONS

Even borrowed dignity can bring a new sense of self-respect, and the film adaptations of well-known literature which abounded during this period encouraged in the film industry a naïve consciousness of its own artistic mission. The penetration of a new idiom by old ones may seem a strange, even an unfortunate, road to the realization of its possibilities, and the film's dependence on novels and stage plays was not, finally, a healthy one. It has been said again and again that the seeds of development lay rather in the simple Westerns of the U.S.A., the few great factual films or the more realistic dramas, than in theatrical and literary transcriptions like *Les Misérables*¹ or *Quo Vadis*.² Nevertheless both the stage and the book made valuable contributions to the development of film drama, and the eagerness with which their use was praised at the time was not entirely unfounded. In addition to their more legitimate contributions, moreover, even the exaggerated respect which they were accorded had its function. Their prestige awed and dazzled a still largely undiscerning public into granting the cinema an artistic status which it may not yet have deserved, but which nevertheless gave it an ideal whose open recognition influenced every branch of film making.

The made-up film had appeared as early as the industry itself,³ and the difficulty experienced by the pioneer film makers in contriving some sort of plot was often considerable. The borrowing of well-known stories was soon adopted as a practical alternative. Even in 1898 R. W. Paul had his *Last Days of Pompeii*, a 65-ft. incident obscurely related to Lord Lytton's novel, while considerable prestige was attached to Gaumont's "Novel in a Nutshell" series, mercilessly condensed though they were. But until about 1908 Biblical stories were the most frequent form of borrowed plot. They had their own historical function to perform, for the Sacred Subject was

¹ Pathé, 1912.

² Itala, 1913.

³ See Volume I.

the industry's early weapon against charges of sin, and for years Christmas and Easter were regularly marked by the release of some firm's Real Sermon in Pictures. Even as late as 1912 a sensational American film about the Resurrection¹ was greeted with reverent enthusiasm by hard-bitten showmen:

It is well, therefore, that we are enabled, by means of the cinematograph, to be carried back through the countless ages to the time when Christ Himself trod this earth. It is well that we should be able to see a soul redeemed from wickedness and selfishness, and brought, in a spirit of true penitence, to the Divine presence that leads to a higher and nobler life.²

The two feature-length lives of Christ which appeared towards the end of the period, Kalem's *From Manger to Cross*³ and Pathé's *The Messiah*,⁴ marked the culmination of a form of production which from then on declined, and throughout the pre-war years French and American producers, particularly Pathé and Gaumont, had laced the flood of detective stories, smutty comics, flower studies, and "sensationals" with religion, whose only counterpart among British makes was the Biblical series produced in 1908 by R. W. Paul.

The unpopularity of the Bible among native producers was not echoed in the picture palaces, and foreign Prodigal Sons and Salomes were familiar figures on the British screen. Even more popular was another type of special-occasion film with borrowed plot, the Christmas film. Children's pantomimes were adapted anew year after year and sometimes accompanied by special films such as the Clarendon pair for Christmas, 1907, *The Water Babies*⁵ and *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*⁶ ("absolute fidelity to detail—real rats").

Such films were of little importance, however, in comparison with the plays, novels, and poems whose film versions constituted the bulk of the more important dramas produced during this period. These were increasingly used by producers all over the world from the beginning of the period, and from 1909 onwards they were a regular feature of the output of all big producing companies like Vitagraph, Biograph and Edison in America, Pathé and Gaumont in France, Cines in Italy and Nordisk in Denmark. Certain writers, and even certain works, were used again and

¹ *Though Your Sins be as Scarlet*, released March 1912.

² *Bioscope*, March 14, 1912, p. 727.

³ 1912.

⁴ 1914.

⁵ 955 ft., released November 1907.

⁶ 775 ft., released November 1907.

again. First came Shakespeare, a world record-breaker whose familiar mastery survived ruthless cutting by the inexpert, inept screen adaptation, and the mime interpretation of many nationalities. At least twenty films¹ of Shakespearean productions were released in this country in a period of six years, no less than four of them being versions of *Hamlet*.

There were six English films of Shakespearean plays during the years of stagnation, from which they emerge as some of the very few serious efforts of British producers. First was the Gaumont film of the Lyceum Theatre production of *Romeo and Juliet*² in 1908, with the well-known actor Godfrey Tearle in the lead. This was both the first important British screen version of a living show, and the first film appearance of a well-known British stage actor, and actually preceded the publication of the French *Films d'Art* by some five months. The *Kinematograph Weekly* reviewer was so impressed by the whole thing that he forgot he was looking at a Kinematograph Picture and fancied himself in a theatre, an illusion which he considered the highest possible tribute.³ The precedent was not followed until some three years later, when the funereal peace of British production was disturbed by W. G. Barker's extraordinary antics, already described, with his film of Sir Herbert Tree's *King Henry VIII*⁴ from His Majesty's Theatre. In this film Tree as Wolsey was supported by Arthur Bourchier as Henry and Violet Vanbrugh as Catherine of Aragon. Five complete scenes, words and all, were enacted before the camera by a cast which had been transplanted to Ealing together with costumes and replica scenery, and hastily rehearsed by the producer, Louis N. Parker. That little value was set on adaptation as such is shown by Barker's own words:

The pictures I am privileged to put before you—fine as they are—I must humbly confess give only a partial idea of the delights awaiting the many thousands who visit His Majesty's Theatre. . . . My object in trying to induce Sir Herbert Tree to allow his prodigious success, *King Henry VIII* to be

¹ Dates given are those of release in this country: *As You Like It*: Vitagraph, January 1913. *Hamlet*: Italian, May 1908; Lux, January 1910; Nordisk, March 1911; Hepworth (Gaumont), July 1913. *Henry VIII*: W. G. Barker, February 1911. *Julius Caesar*: Vitagraph, January 1909; Benson, March 1911. *Macbeth*: Vitagraph, May 1908; Benson, March 1911; (German), September 1913. *Merchant of Venice*: Vitagraph, February 1909; Thanhouser, December 1912. *Merry Wives of Windsor*: Selig, January 1911. *Midsummer Night's Dream*: Le Lion, December 1909; Vitagraph, March 1910. *Romeo and Juliet*: Gaumont, June 1908; Pathé, January 1912. *Taming of the Shrew*: Benson, April 1911. *Tempest*: Eclair, November 1912. *Twelfth Night*: Vitagraph, April 1910.

² 1,240 ft., released June 1908.

³ *Kinematograph Weekly*, June 18, 1909, p. 105.

⁴ Released February 27, 1911.

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kinematographed was not only to interest, amuse, and educate the myriads of Picture Theatre-goers, but also to enable me to hand down to posterity a faithful, silent, and permanent record of the wonderful, life-like portrayal and representation of some of the most important personages and incidents in the eventful history of England.¹

A month later the idea was taken up by the Co-operative Cinematograph Company, whose *Julius Caesar*,² *Macbeth*,³ *The Taming of the Shrew*⁴ and *Richard III*⁵ were all films of F. R. Benson's productions at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford. They received courteous, if not over-enthusiastic, appreciation.

The most important British Shakespearean film was not made until the revival was under way. This was Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson's production of *Hamlet*,⁶ filmed by Hepworth under the auspices of the Gaumont Company in 1913. Forbes-Robertson retired in June of this year at the age of sixty. His farewell performance at Drury Lane had been in *Hamlet*, and during the summer enormous preparations were made to produce a veritable masterpiece of film culture, a reverent record of this historic performance. The film cost some £10,000 to make, and an idea of the unusual effort involved is given by Cecil Hepworth's account of its production:

Words in the play must, of course, be translated into action in the film. It was necessary to interpolate all sorts of scenes visualizing episodes which are merely described in the play. The Queen's explanation that she has seen Ophelia gathering flowers by the side of a glassy stream is, for instance, quite useless for the purpose of the pictorial version; we had to show the incident in actuality. Wherever possible, we took the beautiful scenery painted by Hawes Craven for Forbes-Robertson as our model for the special cinematograph scenery which it was necessary to construct, but, where he had used flat cloths, we had to use solids, including huge carved Norman columns 2 ft. 6 ins. in diameter. Then, as no doubt you know, we built a complete reconstruction of Elsinore Castle at Lulworth Cove. It took us a week to find a suitable spot, and it was so secluded that all the building materials had to be carried over a sort of rugged mountain pass. As the plaster required alone weighed two tons, you can imagine this was no light business. Some other very beautiful outdoor scenes were taken at Hartsbourne Manor, the residence of Maxine Elliott, Lady Robertson's sister. The orchard scene was enacted in a private garden at Halliford-on-Thames,

¹ Publicity brochure for *King Henry VIII*, February 1911.

² 990 ft., released April 9, 1911.

³ 1,360 ft., released April 9, 1911.

⁴ 1,120 ft., released April 22, 1911.

⁵ Two reels, release unknown. See Chapter VII.

⁶ Released July 1913.

where the conditions we wanted were found—a beautiful old apple tree, of such a shape and size as would compose well in our picture overhanging a smooth lawn such as one would expect to find in the grounds of a king's palace. Ophelia “died” in the stream at Hartsbourne Manor, where, also, she was “buried”—in a real grave beside a specially built church. The scene showing the Queen watching her gather flowers was taken by the side of a private lake at Walton-on-Thames, where, of course, all the magnificent interiors were produced, in our own studios.¹

Undoubtedly this represents a more advanced conception of adaptation. The results, however, were disappointing. Their value as a unique record of a great actor was appreciated, but audiences had seen great actors before and the novelty of their appearance no longer justified a dull film. It was, in fact, a clear indication that producers were on the wrong path. More and more important stage productions more and more faithfully recorded, at greater and greater length, were an exaggeration rather than a development of the earlier, simpler type; to ignore the difficult implications of translating the essence of a work into an entirely new idiom was to sacrifice vitality for authenticity. Concentration on the physical difficulties of production, with all the embellishments of solid scenery and cleverly photographed ghost scenes, barely touched on the fundamental problem. Of what use were solid sets, when the camera remained rigidly trained on them for such long periods that observers longed for a change? The unacknowledged choice between a vital translation of a drama depending more on psychological and verbal subtlety than on action, and on the other hand a successful record of the performance designed for the stage, could be settled only one way when the performance in question was that of a famous veteran of the stage, accustomed to knowing best, who insisted on speaking every single line and only reluctantly agreed to certain cuts when the results were finally seen.²

All the British films of Shakespearean plays were adaptations of stage productions already in existence, with costumes, décor and stage directions little changed on the whole. Many of the foreign versions, however, had been specially produced by the film companies themselves. This brings to mind the distinction between the adaptation of stage productions and that of the written works themselves, in which latter category fall screen

¹ Cecil Hepworth, quoted in the *Bioscope*, July 24, 1913, p. 275.

² Lecture to the British Kinematograph Society by Col. A. C. Bromhead on December 11, 1933.

versions of novels. Here again English literature was popular not in Britain alone but in all film-making countries. Foreign producers drew from time to time on Zola,¹ Daudet,² Tolstoy,³ Dumas,⁴ Victor Hugo,⁵ or Mark Twain⁶ but above all it was the work of the English Victorian novelists which was dredged for plots and characters.

The novelists of the early romantic revival—Walter Scott,⁷ Harrison Ainsworth,⁸ Lord Lytton,⁹ Charlotte Brontë;¹⁰ the mid-Victorian novelists of social ferment—Charles Dickens,¹¹ George Eliot,¹² Charles Reade;¹³ the later romantics—Robert Louis Stevenson,¹⁴ George du Maurier,¹⁵ Thomas Hardy,¹⁶ Conan Doyle¹⁷—all were discovered and rediscovered, and even the neat sentimentality of Mrs. Hodgson Burnett¹⁸ was seized, concentrated and served anew. Literary humour, on the other hand, was represented only by W. W. Jacobs,¹⁹ Oliver Goldsmith²⁰ and F. Anstey,²¹ an oddly

Dates are those of English release:

¹ *Germinal*: Pathé, August 1913.

² *Jack*: unknown, 1913.

³ *Resurrection*: Pathé, October 1907; Biograph, July 1909; unknown, February 1913. *Anna Karenina*: Pathé, January 1911.

⁴ *The Lady with the Camelias*: Pathé, March 1912. *The Lady of Monsoreau*: Eclair, November 1913.

⁵ *Les Misérables*: Pathé, October 1912. *Ruy Blas*: Pathé, February 1912.

⁶ *The Prince and the Pauper*: Edison, September 1909.

⁷ *Quentin Durward*: Pathé, February 1912. *Lady of the Lake*: Vitagraph, August 1912. *Ivanhoe*: Imp, July 1913; Zenith, July 1913. *Heart of Midlothian*: Hepworth, April 1914.

⁸ *The Tower of London*: Williamson, 1909. *King Charles (Ovingdean Grange)*: Clarendon, September 1913. *Cloister on the Hearth*: Hepworth, November 1913. *Old St. Paul's*: Clarendon, February 1914.

⁹ *Lady of Lyons*: Co-operative, October 1913. *Eugene Aram*: Cricks & Martin, May 1914.

¹⁰ *Jane Eyre*: Cines, June 1910; Imp, May 1914.

¹¹ *Oliver Twist*: Vitagraph, July 1909; Cines, April 1911; Hepworth, July 1912. *Christmas Carol*: Edison, November 1911; Zenith, September 1913; London Film Company, January 1914. *Martin Chuzzlewit*: Edison, February 1912. *Nicholas Nickleby*: Thanhouser, November 1912. *The Old Curiosity Shop*: Pathé, February 1912; Hepworth, January 1914. *David Copperfield*: Pathé, February 1912; Hepworth, August 1913. *The Pickwick Papers*: Vitagraph, May 1913. *The Chimes*: Hepworth, July 1914. *The Cricket on the Hearth*: American firm, February 1914.

¹² *Silas Marner*: Edison, January 1914.

¹³ *It is Never Too Late to Mend*: Edison, February 1913. *Hard Cash*: Edison, January 1914.

¹⁴ *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*: Nordisk, September 1910; Imp, June 1913; Kineto, June 1913. *The Black Arrow*: Edison, January 1912. *Treasure Island*: Vitagraph, April 1908. *The Suicide Club*: B. & C., July 1914.

¹⁵ *Trilby*: Standard, April 1912; London Film Company, July 1914.

¹⁶ *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*: Famous Players, October 1913.

¹⁷ *House of Temperley (Rodney Stone)*: London Film Company, September 1913.

¹⁸ *Little Lord Fauntleroy*: Kineto, April 1914.

¹⁹ *Beauty and the Barge* (1,242 ft.), *The Bosun's Mate* (1,130 ft.), *The Third String* (2,377 ft.), *Lawyer Quince* (1,078 ft.), London Film Company, released February 26, 1914.

²⁰ *Vicar of Wakefield*: Pathé, 1912; Hepworth, 1913; Planet, 1913.

²¹ *The Brass Bottle*, four reels, released January 1914.

assorted trio, and Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *She Stoops to Conquer* were the sole protagonists of eighteenth-century wit, which appealed neither to producers nor to their public at this time.

The handful of films made by British producers which fell in this literary category were among their few important films of the period. The London Film's Company's *House of Temperley*,¹ a version of Conan Doyle's *Rodney Stone*, was their extremely ambitious and successful first production in late 1913, and was followed by *She Stoops to Conquer*² and *Trilby*.³ Kineto numbered a coloured *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*⁴ and *Little Lord Fauntleroy*⁵ among their rare dramas, and *Eugene Aram*,⁶ Crick's only big adaptation, was an unusually pretentious work for this modest firm. More significant was the adoption by the two firms of Clarendon and Hepworth of, respectively, Harrison Ainsworth and Charles Dickens.

Dickens was in a class by himself in the midst of the Victorian welter of historical romance and social realism. To film makers all over the world he was second only to Shakespeare as a source of material. His works occupied a particularly important position in the British revival, for Hepworth, seeking to keep pace with the great world producers and at the same time retain his reputation for a characteristically English atmosphere, found in the novels of Dickens and the services of the Dickensian character-actor Thomas Bentley the ideal channel for his desired development. Hence the first Hepworth film which ventured over the 3,000-ft. limit was Bentley's production of *Oliver Twist*⁷ made in late 1912, some twelve months after the company's revival had begun. It was received rapturously. A second followed next year, *David Copperfield*,⁸ which was more than twice as long—an extraordinary length for a British film. And in early 1914 *The Old Curiosity Shop*,⁹ the third and according to contemporary judgment the best, received such praise as had hitherto been reserved for foreign epics.

It is possible to question the *Bioscope's* enthusiastic assertion that Dickens himself had been improved. Again and again the realism of the productions, their resemblance to real life, was praised without questioning

¹ 4,000 ft., trade shown September 18, 1913.

² 3,000 ft., trade shown March 27, 1914.

³ Two reels, released summer 1913.

⁴ 4,000 ft., released May 1914.

⁵ 7,500 ft., released August 1913.

⁶ Trade shown July 8, 1914.

⁷ Four reels, released April 6, 1914.

⁸ 3,700 ft., released October 1912.

⁹ 5,300 ft., released January 1914.

whether realism was in fact the essence of Dickens's genius. "A page torn from the book of life" could hardly be confused with a page torn from a book of Dickens. Yet the distorting-mirror of his characterization was smoothed out in the monumental task of compressing his discursive stories into comprehensive yet comprehensible silent screenplays, and the result was a series of careful story treatments which made good films but were hardly all that was claimed for them.

Difficult as Dicken's novels were to adapt, their widespread popularity among producers, like that of Shakespeare's plays, was probably justified by their relative familiarity to the audience. In the case of Hepworth, Bentley's availability was an additional justification. And in the same way Clarendon's stress on Harrison Ainsworth may have been largely bound up with the talents and choice of their screen writer, Low Warren.

King Charles,¹ produced by Clarendon in 1913, was Warren's partial adaptation of Ainsworth's *Ovingdean Grange* blended with actual historical records, and was followed by a second Ainsworth classic, *Old St. Paul's*.² The two films were announced as Strong Historical Subjects and given unusual publicity, attention being drawn to the hundreds of extras employed, the fact that the costumes had been hired from a regular theatrical costumier³ instead of being raked together from a small costume department and, in the case of *Old St. Paul's*, the sensational fire effects achieved with a model of old London. Expeditions in search of good exteriors and "no expense spared" could not quell critics of the inferior photography and acting, and although this did not prevent the two films being outstanding events in British production the contrast between them and the Dickens films of the Hepworth Company is eloquent of the difference between the two companies. They represent, respectively, the two elements sought by ambitious producers: technical excellence and sensationalism. The better class firm took the greater novelist and sought to translate his work faithfully into a well-produced film; the other sought a short cut to an artistic reputation by making literature an excuse for high romance and startling model work.

In addition to some Shakespearean films and adaptations of the Victorian novelists, the class of films based on written works, rather than on

¹ 4,000 ft., trade shown September 9, 1913.

² 3,000 ft., released about February 1914.

³ Clarkson's.

productions, includes a certain number of stories taken from such Victorian poets as Scott¹ and Longfellow.² Tennyson was a particular favourite and Hepworth produced a *Dora*³ in 1910, and Clarendon a *Maud*⁴ in the following year. More popular, however, was doggerel and traditional ballads like *Napoleon and the English Sailor*, which was used by Gaumont in 1908.⁵ Even Hepworth adopted the popular ballad as the basis for relatively important films in his later period, and old favourites like *Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight*,⁶ *George Barnwell*, *the London Apprentice*⁷ appeared side by side with his more sophisticated products.

In the same school as this traditional verse were the popular melodramas which flourished well into the twentieth century, and whose importance to the early British film industry is rarely acknowledged. This brings us to the adaptation of productions rather than of written works, for the current stage productions of the Melvilles, Arthur Shirley, and that great exponent of Victorian popular art, George R. Sims, were readily available to film makers, who consequently needed to arrange special productions in only a few cases.

Melodrama was an early love of film producers, and even in the first ten years of their activity *East Lynne* had appeared in several different versions. This was the form of theatre enjoyed by the class which patronized the picture palaces, and while Shakespeare satisfied pride it was Sims who gave pleasure. Between 1906 and 1911 Shakespeare and strong melodrama, in fact, were the only examples of stage adaptation which occurred in this country, and each of the prestige films *Romeo and Juliet* and *Henry VIII* was followed by a more popular work. Gaumont's *Lady Letmere's Jewellery*⁸ followed their *Romeo and Juliet* by a few months. A singularly unlikely story of theft in high places, it was written and produced by Sims himself and was recognized as the herald of a new fashion:

Evidently one of the most important developments of the living picture trade in the near future is to be the presentation, with the consent and co-operation of their authors, of dramas or works of fiction, which, from their success on the stage, or as printed works, are already well known to the public. The Gaumont Co. were the first to issue a film subject of this sort and it is

¹ *Lady of the Lake*: Vitagraph, 1912.

³ 710 ft., released October 1910.

⁵ 530 ft., released July 1908.

⁷ 2,900 ft., released March 13, 1913.

² *King Robert of Sicily*: Hepworth, 1912.

⁴ 575 ft., released January 1911.

⁶ 1,000 ft., released 1912.

⁸ Released November 1908.

East Lynne

INSET I



Although the camera was almost always far enough away to show the principal players at least down to their knees, the film contained a few examples of closer shots such as this short flash of Isabel's anguish as she and Levison, hiding in the garden, witness her husband's meeting with Barbara. In the close-up of the gun bearing Richard Hare's initials, the plain background should be noted—the room in which the incident occurred is not shown.



*My dear Husband,
I feel unhappy and
lonely, and want to be home
again and safe with you.
Come at once and bring me
home. With love to you and
my dear children
Your affectionate wife
Isabel*



The value of cuts from one shot to another to avoid the use of explanatory subtitles was realized. Here we see Isabel talking to her husband in the first shot; in the second we see a close-up of the subject of their conversation, the letter she had written some time before (to which we then had to read); and in the third we cut back to the same shot of them talking about it.

East Lynne



Again, in the first of these three shots Levison persuades Isabel to look through the window. In the second we see, as she does, her husband and Barbara at the gate—note that the camera is placed outside the park gates rather than inside, as consistency would have required—while the third shot shows Isabel's reaction to what she has seen.



More elaborate uses of cutting are to be found. Levison's unwelcome attentions to Isabel at Bonlogne were indicated by a sequence of shots which were not essential to the action of the plot but which conveyed their meaning smoothly and efficiently.

Levison sits by the cliff—he sees someone he knows—moves towards the latter, who is seen to be Isabel—she rises to move away—but he insists on accompanying her—

East Lynne



—they pause to survey the scene—turn and go on—towards the town—and he leaves her at her door—continuing on his way with a malicious laugh.



For the most part, however, the maximum of meaning had to be conveyed by the miming of the players, who left nothing to chance in this respect. Richard's father indicates handcuffs to show his determination to have his son arrested, and Isabel points to her wedding-ring finger to suggest the reason for her quarrel with Levison.

East Lynne

Isabel's grief at Little Willie's death shows itself in energetic lamentation, and when she herself dies later in the film she draws attention to the fact by flinging her arms up and dropping them again limply.





Not all the shots were entirely successful. Some time was devoted to a rather confusing scene of the hustings; while contemporary reviewers noted with disapproval that during the scene showing Isabel (in disguise) fluttering anxiously over the ailing Little Willie, only the top of Willie's head was visible.

fitting that Mr. G. R. Sims should have entrusted to them the task of filming his well-known story *Lady Letmere's Jewellery*.¹

W. G. Barker, nearest of all great producers to the frankly melodramatic, followed his *Henry VIII* of 1911 with *Princess Clementina*,² a wildly impossible romance with H. B. Irving as the Jacobite hero who has to act as his friend's proxy in a marriage with the woman he secretly and hopelessly adores.

Deprived of colour and words, of whispered asides and the hissed triumph of villainy, transpontine drama still managed to flicker luridly over non-existent footlights as though playing to its old audience on the Surrey side of the river. It was a form of theatre well adapted to both the film medium and the film public at this time. The silent subtlety of the early film had little difficulty with heroines whose virtuous "No! No!" was always accompanied by the same conventional gesture of the hand, and unmitigated cads whose very cloaks and slinking walk revealed their evil intentions. The customary "You must and shall be mine!" and "Foiled again!" were well⁹ enough known to the picture-going classes to require little explanation and, unhampered by the envious awe of High Art which so often troubled the showmen, the makers could gloriously indulge in that tempting over-emphasis which otherwise meant disaster.

It was not until 1913, however, that the fashion for Surrey-side melodrama—and with it other types of theatrical adaptation, both plays already in production and those especially produced by film companies—suddenly become overwhelmingly important. The process was not confined to Britain alone, but it was of greater significance in this country than elsewhere and over twenty of the comparatively few important British productions of the next two years were of this type. The large companies like Hepworth, Barker and Kineto drew on the stage for either their major prestige films or at least for their anonymous pot-boilers, and countless part-time or specially-formed producing companies now used the filmed play as their initial production or sole *raison d'être* in the same way that they had previously used the occasional interest film or topical. It was this type of borrowed film play, more than any other single factor, that during

¹ *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, November 26, 1908, p. 713.

² 2,000 ft., released May 8, 1911.

this period was putting British film production on its feet—or rather, on someone else's feet.

Not all these films, of course, were barnstorming melodramas and there were frequent appearances of famous actors in more serious roles or comedies. Pathé started important feature production with the Big Ben film *The Fool*,¹ a “tensely drawn tale of gambling and duplicity . . .” produced by George Pearson, with Godfrey Tearle in the leading part, which incidentally laid emphasis on the British character of Big Ben films: “SEE this film; CONSIDER its atmosphere, its ART and its ARTISTES. Then say whether British production cannot hold its own.”² In the same month Zenith jumped on to the American Imp Company's³ band wagon with an *Ivanhoe*⁴ taken from the Lyceum production of Frederick and Walter Melville, and United Kingdom published a film of Charles Hawtrey in *A Message from Mars*,⁵ the famous play of a defaulting Martian who has to cure a single mortal of selfishness before being reinstated in Mars, a play continuously popular since its presentation at the Avenue Theatre some fourteen years before. A few months later Seymour Hicks was filmed in a favourite part, that of *David Garrick*,⁶ together with his wife Ellaline Terriss; and by the beginning of 1914 two more *David Garricks* were on the market, one made at Hepworth's studio by Sir Charles Wyndham (who was also said to consider it as one of his favourite parts) and one made by the London Film Company. In October, Gaumont announced their intention to film H. B. Irving in Sir Henry Irving's celebrated *The Bells*, and Co-operative released Lytton's *The Lady of Lyons*⁷—which was said to gain rather than lose “by being shorn of the exuberance of its verbosity,” although the publicity matter did its best to counteract this:

The Sun of the “cowboy” plot has set: the sun of highly staged sensationalism is fast setting. No corybantic splutterings, no pleonastic arguments can controvert these facts, because the march of progress is inevitable and inexorable, therefore be wise in your generation and take advantage of the coming change in the public taste. SEE AND BOOK!⁸

¹ 3,343 ft., released July 1913.

² *Bioscope*, May 22, 1913, p. xxxb.

³ The Imp *Ivanhoe* was one of the last important films to be sold on the open market at 4d. a foot, and 112 copies of it were sold (see lecture to the British Kinematograph Society by Col. A. C. Bromhead, December 11, 1933).

⁴ About 8,000 ft., released July 1913.

⁵ Four reels, released July 1913.

⁶ 3,000 ft., released September 1913.

⁷ 3,500 ft., released October 1913.

⁸ Advertisement for *The Lady of Lyons*.

Unusual and original were both Hepworth's version of F. A. Anstey's *The Brass Bottle*,¹ adapted by Sidney Morgan and produced for the Theatrical and General Filming Company, and the four sketches produced for Planet by Charles Vernon as vehicles for the character actor Bransby Williams.²

These were the better class of play, however. For the most part the attentions of film companies were attracted by productions of a ruder and more violent nature. Barker, in particular, dived deeply and with zest into full-blooded barnstorming and started the ball rolling in early 1913 with his film of *The Fighting Parson*,³ a music-hall sketch played by George Gray, who released a second film independently a year later. This was *The Road to Ruin*,⁴ based on Frith's once-popular set of pictures showing the fate of a gambler and drunkard. A few months after his *Fighting Parson* Barker continued with a new super-production of the beloved *East Lynne*,⁵ this time a 6,500-ft. "All British Masterpiece" with every one of the "Five Acts! 117 Scenes!" claimed to have both pictorial beauty and historical authenticity. (The story had been put back to an earlier period for the more "romantic" costumes.) It was Barker, nearly a year later, who filmed another of G. R. Sims's productions, the crime melodrama *The Lights of London*.⁶

Less reputable firms than Barker's found this a form of drama after their own hearts and *In the Grip of Iron*⁷ and *Maria Marten*⁸ were a natural choice for Brightonia and Motograph respectively. Other companies sprang up solely to handle similar works. Such were Magnet, which released John Lawson's *Humanity*⁹—"3,000 feet of sensations . . . full of thrills, including the greatest 'smashing' scene ever attempted, a thrilling race by motor, a dare-devil struggle on a tottering staircase . . ."; or the Kine-matograph Trading Company, for which Hepworth filmed Arthur Roberts' slightly *risqué* "screaming comedietta," *The Importance of Being Another Man's Wife*.¹⁰

Of greater significance was the fact that conservative companies like

¹ Four reels, released January 1914.

² *Bernardo's Confession*, *Grimaldi*, *The Streetwatchman's Story*, *The Seven Ages of Man*, released June 1914.

³ 3,000 ft., released January 1913.

⁴ 6,500 ft., released May 1913.

⁷ 3,250 ft., released about June 1913.

⁹ 3,000 ft., released about August 1913.

⁴ 4,000 ft., released January 1914.

⁶ Four reels, released March 1914.

⁸ 2,850 ft., released January 1914.

¹⁰ 2,000 ft., released September 1914.

Hepworth and Kineto also began to turn to this type of production. Hepworth's *Shadows of a Great City*¹ was a typical transpontine drama which "would doubtless prove very successful with audiences who like the agony laid on thickly." Maurice Elvey produced a film version of Douglas Jerrold's historical melodrama *Black-Eyed Susan*² as well as Walter Howard's *Midnight Wedding*³ for B. & C., and Union Jack's *The World, the Flesh and the Devil*,⁴ which at first was actually refused a Censor's certificate, was a version of Laurence Cowan's play popular on the Surrey side some five years earlier, and was made in Kinemacolor by the highly respectable firm of Kineto.

The filming of barnstorming melodrama, in fact, was neither confined to the more shady companies, nor was it a useless aberration in the development of the film. It is easy to criticize the faults of such films. Stage productions, tied to a theatrical idiom, they encouraged just that exaggeration of which many producers were already too fond. It is fashionable, moreover, to regard them as quaint survivals of a less sophisticated age. But in actual fact they were well adapted to the taste both of that section of the public whose support was necessary to the industry at that time, and of the contemporary makers and distributors. And in Britain they had another function which it is as well to remember, for they managed to breathe vigour into a lifeless period.

Together with the more reputable stage production and the nineteenth-century novelists, they have been described as unnatural teachers responsible for much that was uncinematic in later British production during the 'twenties. But it is superficial to ascribe such influence to adaptations in themselves. If the British film industry had not been in a pitiful state of weakness already they would not have occupied by 1914 the undesirably important position that they did, and the useful elements in this phase of development could have been absorbed without allowing them unnecessary and unhealthy predominance, as they were in other countries which went through the same phase. For there were, undoubtedly, desirable factors. For one thing, wholesale adaptation of books and plays supplemented the inventive powers of the ordinary run of film makers (there seems to have always been a shortage of good screen-writers) and set a standard corre-

¹ 3,700 ft., released November 1913.

³ 3,400 ft., released May 1914.

² Released about May 1914.

⁴ 5,100 ft., released February 1914.

spondingly high, if a trifle awry, for original plot writers. If stories by Dickens were screened, it appeared that writing for the pictures could not be completely beneath contempt as at first supposed. In the same way the invasion of films by stage actors, even if it meant the importation of their own largely unsuitable stage mannerisms, did much to raise the status of film acting and lighten the shame which many serious actors felt on being seen slinking into film studios. If Tree and Forbes-Robertson, or for that matter Gray and Lawson, could act for the pictures—why should any ambitious actor be ashamed to do so? Possibly stage acting was a bad pattern for the film actor, and members of the trained stock companies almost certainly put up better performances than those of the condescending but unteachable veterans of the British stage. And, too, tough handling of intractable material from unfilmable books often made lamentable screenplays. But one of the early obstacles the film had to overcome was a social stigma and a shortage of serious creative talent, and borrowed art was one of the means of doing this. The thing to be deplored is that British production did not have its feet firmly enough planted on the ground to avoid being swept away by the new temptations.

Literary and stage adaptations have been treated in this chapter as a separate branch of film making both because of their numerical importance and because they were distinct from other film dramas of the time in the nature of their contribution to the development of the film, and in their final influence on British production. Both detective drama and costume drama, however, fall partly in the class of adaptations and partly in that of original plots.

The detective drama was a category of film which, though small, had a steady following of its own; it was even said that of all types of plot those dealing with crime and its discovery were best suited to the film medium. Undoubtedly they were in vogue throughout the period, with a popularity which was probably greatest between 1908 and 1911, but which never failed.

The majority of detective films were regular series adapted from magazine serials popular at the time, or built around the character of some well-known detective of fiction. Before 1911 they were chiefly foreign productions—Nordisk's Sherlock Holmes, Nat Pinkerton and Pat Corner; Eclair's Nick Carter; Pathé's Nick Winter; Deutsche Vitascope's Arsene

Lupin; and many others. It was not until after 1911 that British examples became more frequent, and by this time although there were still numerous series there was a noticeable increase of individual crime stories, and an equally noticeable increase in sensationalism.

Among the British firms it was Cricks and Martin who, early in 1911, first made a special feature of detective films with the adventures of their Police Constable Sharpe in tracking down coiners and kidnappers.¹ During the next few years theft played a quite extraordinary part in their dramatic output and many of their films incidentally included detection, while early in 1913 they started another important series with *Paul Sleuth, Crime Investigator: The Burglary Syndicate*.² Theft was the basis of many—if not most—Cricks and Martin plots for several years. By 1914, however, the prevailing fashion for extreme sensationalism was affecting this firm as it was many others and their major film *Paul Sleuth and the Mystic Seven*³ included also the ultra-modern thrills of flight by balloon, pursuit by an aeroplane, and the automatic operation of a cinematograph camera hidden in a car to record its route.

Another firm which made a feature of crime films was B. & C., who also had a popular series in 1914,⁴ that of an eccentric Master Crook so chivalrous that it surprised no one when he finally turned detective. Other firms occasionally made a fully-fledged detective drama. Big Ben's *The Mystery of the Old Mill*,⁵ a weak story well produced, was one of Pathé's first important British productions; I. B. Davidson published a long Sexton Blake thriller produced by Charles Raymond, *The Mystery of the Diamond Belt*;⁶ one of Herkomer's few films was *Grit of a Dandy*,⁷ a crime story of theft and kidnapping and a "nut" who proved his valour by a daring rescue; while in *Dead Men Tell No Tales*⁸ Kineto reversed the usual order by having the detective rescued by the heroine.

Crime and detection films ran fairly true to type. Theft, especially of jewels, was at first the usual theme, and although kidnapping, forgery and

¹ *The Adventures of P.C. Sharpe*, 830 ft., released February 9, 1911. *The Adventure of P.C. Sharpe*, (2) *The Stolen Child*, 950 ft., released April 20, 1911.

² 1,140 ft., January 30, 1913.

³ 3,500 ft., released about June 1914.

⁴ *The Master Crook*, 3,240 ft., released December 29, 1913; *The Master Crook Outwitted by a Child*, 2,559 ft., released April 20, 1914; *The Master Crook Turns Detective*, 2,920 ft., released July 23, 1914.

⁵ Three parts, released about April 1914.

⁶ 3,500 ft., released August 1914.

⁷ 2,520 ft., released February 9, 1914.

⁸ 1,230 ft., released July 13, 1914.

coining were not infrequent, murder was more or less taboo until 1912 or thereabouts. They were dreams of society heiresses and pictureque underworlds, each with its familiar arch criminal of unbelievable villainy and that other, equally familiar, figure who tore away his disguise when the enemy was cornered, and stood revealed as the Master Detective.

By 1912 or 1913, when the crime series were being increasingly supplemented by the big individual feature, films were becoming longer and thrills more extreme. The sinister excitement of darkness and horrible danger was ousting the comparatively respectable burglar, murder was definitely increasing, and producers were seeking high and low for more bizarre settings.

Even the new thrills, however, were more legitimate than the sensationalism for its own sake which was permeating other forms of dramatic production, and it is noteworthy that detective dramas, though unpretentious, reached quite a high standard of film content and story development at a relatively early date. It is true that they neither achieved nor even attempted to achieve any degree of realism. But the same fascination which prevents most people from laying down a detective novel before the culprit is discovered was present from the first in the detective film, which thus was ideally fitted to hold the attention of an audience already conditioned by the magazine serials which formed the basis of the new fashion. This irresistible fascination was a useful factor in the gradual lengthening of the films. Any sort of detection meant a relatively involved plot in comparison with the ordinary run of dramatic incidents which still flourished in the early part of the period, and this more highly developed story structure made extra length essential, while its universal appeal made it tolerable. Thus 900 ft. or more was a normal length for detective films at a time when anything like a full reel was otherwise used only for prestige productions, and by 1912 even the English thrillers were always over 1,000 ft. in length while by late summer of that year there was a German example in circulation which exceeded 3,000 ft. This was a high standard, and gave scope for well-planned plots, which, depending essentially as they did on action and a denouement, gave detective films an early start in dramatic development.

Costume drama, like detective drama, partly overlaps the larger category of adaptations. It has already been mentioned that the historical romances

of the great Victorian novelists were a fruitful source of film plots, and the Bible was rivalled by legends and the writers of antiquity as the basis for countless films of the ancient world. There seems also to have been an early tendency for the producer engaged on a major production to choose an historical subject as his theme, and many famous landmarks in such developments as length, the employment of important actors or large numbers of extras, ambitious sets and so on were costume dramas. Napoleon and the American Civil War in particular, acted like magnets to French and American producers respectively. Films of the ancient world, it was sometimes said, were not very popular with British audiences, many of whom lacked the necessary educational background and preferred stories nearer home. Certainly British makers never concentrated on them to any great extent and it was Pathé and Gaumont and some of the American firms which accounted for most of this type of film in the early part of the period, later being supplanted by the Italian producers of spectacle films whose popularity in this country was certainly as great as it was anywhere in the world.

Not only did British makers avoid films of the ancient world, but for a long time they had no particular interest in historical subjects of any kind. Before the revival they tended to avoid the elaborate and expensive preparations necessary for period productions, and there were few apart from those of Clarendon and Williamson. The more important firms, Cricks and Martin and Hepworth, rarely produced anything of this sort and it was for two smaller firms to make this field their own, Williamson for a short while only but Clarendon as a preface to more important work at the end of the pre-war period. The English Civil War was their favourite background, taking the place of the Napoleonic and American Civil wars in the other countries. This Clarendon film may be quoted as a sample, although more than usually developed in the complexity of its plot and the inclusion of a last-minute rescue:

CLARENDON. *The Cavalier's Wife*. (Released October 1908.) This is a fine old story of adventure, illustrating the devotion of a Royalist lady of the Cromwellian period to her lord, who is captured and imprisoned by the Roundheads. . . . In his absence, the Captain of the Roundheads forces his attentions on the deserted wife, but by the help of a good friend, who agrees to take his place even to the death, the imprisoned

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knight obtains an hour's respite, and arrives just in time to rescue his lady from a dangerous encounter. Sir Harry must return to save his friend before the hour strikes, and we see him as he dashes back at full gallop, followed by his wife, and in a final scene Cromwell restores happiness to all when, having heard the story from the lips of the Cavalier's wife, he agrees to a free pardon.¹

The increasing ambition of British producers after 1911 brought a greater interest in costume drama as in everything else, and examples became more frequent, although they still remained a small proportion of the growing total output and were very largely literary or theatrical adaptations. Cricks, on location in the West country, set a couple of smuggling dramas in the times of Napoleon and George III. Hepworth, branching out in all directions, made not only a new *Curfew Shall Not Ring Tonight*, but also a "Strong, Heart-Stirring Drama dealing with the picturesque and thrilling period of the French Revolution," *A Peasant Girl's Revenge*.² And to emphasize the nationality of their new English production Pathé reverted to Clarendon's favourite period for their first "Britannia" film, *Peggie and the Roundheads*.³

Among the more important British costume films were B. & C.'s Dick Turpin series⁴ and their *Battle of Waterloo*.⁵ The Dick Turpin films of 1912 were not so much complete stories as one long meandering series of incidents in the famous highwayman's life. Their undoubted appeal lay neither in the stories nor in the acting—there was hardly time for acting. It was a question of swashbuckling adventures at breakneck pace, violent action of men and fine horses, and above all the virile, picturesque character of Dick played by Percy Moran. At the time these films were constantly being likened to Westerns, with which they undoubtedly had much in common. Even the settings were mainly exteriors, and much trouble was taken to find suitable thatched cottages and old inns to achieve a period setting without the cardboard unreality with which studio sets were still afflicted. In the following year the previous rather shapeless Turpin films

¹ *Bioscope*, October 16, 1908, p. 11.

² 975 ft., released August 15, 1912.

³ 1,000 ft., released June 26, 1912.

⁴ *The Adventures of Dick Turpin* (1), 1,132 ft., released July 1912, *The Adventures of Dick Turpin* (2), *The Gunpowder Plot*; *The Adventures of Dick Turpin* (3), *Two Hundred Guineas Reward, Dead or Alive*, 1,147 ft., released October 20, 1912.

⁵ Trade shown July 1913.

were remade as one long exclusive feature¹ which was said to show a great improvement in general dramatic effect, but the most important film put out by the company in 1913 was Charles Vernon's production *The Battle of Waterloo*. This was in the new tradition of tremendous spectacle and was sold jointly to Ruffell's Imperial Bioscope Syndicate Ltd. and Atlas Feature Film Company Ltd. for £5,000, one of the highest prices yet paid for an English production. The trade papers were full of pride that an English firm should now be capable of turning out one of the high-priced historical epics which had for so long been beyond their capacities or even their desires. But it is perhaps significant that the risks attached to handling it were shared by two renters. The film was advertised as containing "2,000 Soldiers. 116 Scenes. 1,000 Horses. 50 Cannons," and the most remarkable battle scenes ever filmed. It seems, however, that it contained little else, and although Vernon was complimented on his mastery over the vast forces at his disposal in the interminable battle, the reviews delicately indicated boredom.

One of the most interesting films of the period may be discussed here, although to describe it as historical drama is debatable. This was Barker's epic *Sixty Years a Queen*,² a film of Victoria's reign which achieved lasting fame. It was partly conceived by G. B. Samuelson, who handled its distribution. Care had been exercised that the actors should look as much as possible like the people they were impersonating and the whole was an historical reconstruction rather than an historical drama, although since Victoria was not long dead it must have been felt by many that it was hardly "history" at all. The summary of contents makes strange reading. For it careered, with little narrative treatment apart from strict chronology, from key State occasions to sentimental domestic scenes and random significant events such as the introduction of Penny Postage. It was in effect one long, rather loose, reconstructed actuality, the "fake topical" of old in a new and enterprising form. It was the striking and original outcome of Barker's curiously mixed enthusiasms for tremendous canvases and strict actuality, and aroused the utmost admiration.

By this time the occasional production of a costume drama of sorts was normal among more or less all producers, while B. & C. continued to lead

¹ *Dick Turpin and the Death of Bonny Black Bess*, two reels, released August 11, 1913.

² 6,000 ft., released November 1913.

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the way in 1914 with its *Life of Shakespeare*¹ and *Black-Eyed Susan*,² the latter produced by Maurice Elvey, and Clarendon had the two very important costume works mentioned before. Hepworth made relatively few, but the following review of his *Drake's Love Story* is interesting because of its wider implications concerning British production:

One's first sensation on seeing this very fine production by the Hepworth Company is a feeling of gratification that the splendid chapter of English history which it represents has been immortalized in pictures not by a foreign firm but by a company essentially and entirely English. For too long we have been forced to endure the ignominy of having our first literary masterpieces and our noblest historical passages flung back in our faces, as it were, by people of another land, and, apart from other considerations, we must all be ready appreciatively to recognize the laudable efforts of Messrs. Hepworth to remove this ancient reproach and to establish the art of film manufacture on quite as high and as national a basis in our own as in other countries . . . Scene after scene gives us glimpses of the beautiful old London that was, and we even have a remarkable model, faithfully reconstructed, of the picturesque vessel in which Drake left England to fight the Spaniards. Scenes in a garden and in a mansion of the period are no less strikingly perfect. Indeed, pictorially, the film could scarcely be improved upon. As a drama, perhaps, it is not quite so good. Sometimes the Hepworth Company seem inclined to neglect the play for the picture, and in the present instance we carry away with us a memory of exquisite *tableaux*, wonderfully arranged and perfectly reproduced, rather than of a stirring and charming romance . . . one fancies that the action of *Drake's Love Story* might have been "speeded up" a trifle without in any way lessening its value as a true tale. One wishes, too, that it might have been possible to make the plot plain with fewer sub-titles. The acting is good without being particularly remarkable . . . Miss Chrissie White is delightful to behold as Elizabeth Sydenham, and her acting is entirely adequate . . . The rest of the company do very well in their various smaller parts, though they do not all seem quite comfortable in their costumes. However, as a whole, the acting is entirely satisfactory, and it has the outstanding merit of being genuinely English.³

(2) ORIGINAL SCREENPLAYS

With the exception of the many literary adaptations, detective and costume films, the dramatic output of all the British companies between

¹ Five reels, released early 1914.

² Released about May 19, 1914.

³ *Bioscope*, February 27, 1913, p. 673.

about 1906 and 1910 was more or less homogeneous, and its characteristics may therefore be described without much distinction between the companies. Production was both small and uninspired. Hepworth, Cricks and Martin, Clarendon and to a lesser extent Williamson, the Sheffield Photo Company and R. W. Paul in 1906 all had a small weekly release of split-reel dramatic episodes of a routine character. These, as regards story treatment, were at the same elementary stage of development as the contemporary comics and consisted for the most part of the rather formless relation of vaguely moving incidents. The knockabout comic with no climax had no exact dramatic equivalent, but this does not imply that a carefully worked-out denouement made an early appearance in drama and the shapeless, pointless narrative lingered even longer here than in humour. Characters were few and until at least 1910 usually had no names at all, but figured in the story as "the masher," "a pretty girl" or "the drunken scoundrel." They were in fact symbols rather than individuals, in the manner common to most early forms of drama. Relations of cause and effect were extremely crude, and frequently the main point of the incident hinged on some apparently inconsequential change of heart or naïve conception of emotion almost inexplicable to one not already familiar with conventions which had been taken over from the melodrama and popular fiction of the time. Greater subtlety was introduced from time to time. But since the tendency was to cram it elliptically into the same 500 ft. or so, rather than to lengthen the film, the results were apt to be so confusing that at one time further development of the film seemed impossible without "lecturers" to explain the jumble of incidents which rushed after each other on the screen. It was as a result of this brevity, and of the shortage of plot-writers sufficiently ingenious either to fit into it or suggest a change, that for some time the films amounted to little more than pathetic or sensational incidents. But what they lacked in length and subtlety they made up in violence—this, for example, seems strong stuff for twelve minutes:

WALTURDAW. *The Locket*. (750 ft.) Walturdaw have another exciting story film with the title, *The Locket*. A boy goes to sea to support his mother, who has been deserted by a worthless husband. Before he leaves, his mother places a locket round his neck. After exciting adventures, the boy comes to shore again, and falls into the grip of a "land shark," and in

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a tussel with the latter is killed. Searching the body, the murderer comes across the locket—and recognizes it. He is the boy's father, and, driven mad by the realization that he has killed his own son, he goes out and commits suicide.¹

Pathos was one thing and sensation another, and the drama with room for them both was rare. The tear-jerking "pathetic" was a form which seems to have had a particular appeal for British makers and during the early part of the period the following type of scene was far more frequent than exciting stories like *The Locket*.

URBAN. *His Daughter's Voice*. (340 ft.) *His Daughter's Voice*, the second film of the week by the Urban Company, is of a pathetic nature. A blind violinist and his little daughter are seen entertaining a crowd in the street. A musical artist in the crowd is struck by the fine quality of the girl's voice. He gives them money and offers further inducement to the old man to allow him to have the girl's voice recorded on the gramophone. This operation is duly carried out, and the father and daughter are again seen in the street at their usual begging occupation. Near where they are standing is a row going on. Presently the girl attempts to quiet a man who appears to be the chief cause of the disturbance. The rough immediately abuses the would-be peacemaker, knocking her down with a severe blow in the face. The girl is tenderly taken away to the nearest hospital, whilst the drunken sot is mobbed, chased, and ducked in the river and finally taken into custody by an able limb of the law. The next scene shows the interior of the hospital where the girl is in a cot, in a critical condition. She is visited by her blind father, and whilst he is in her presence she expires greatly to his grief. The poor old man feels that life is not worth living without the presence of his little daughter. He would give worlds to have her back. He suddenly remembers that her beautiful voice had been recorded on the gramophone, and determines at once to visit the place to hear his daughter sing again. He arrives at the gramophone works, where the manager willingly provides for him the object of his visit. He listens to the song of his loving daughter once more, and when it is finished, the truth that she is no longer alive comes home to his heart with such force and anguish to his mind, it is too much for him and he drops dead upon the floor. As he expires, there issues from the horn of the gramophone the spirit of his little daughter in the form of an angel. She hovers over the dead man's form a few moments and then dissolves away. The technical quality of this film is excellent, and the plot is one likely to create emotions—it is a pathetic tale with a sad ending, although

¹ *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, September 26, 1907.

it may perhaps be assumed that both father and little one arrive safely in the land of peace.¹

Sentimentalizing poverty and suffering, such films teemed with little flower sellers, orphans, faithful dogs and children who reunited estranged parents (for some reason that endearing object, a baby's shoe, was a most popular means of reconciling husbands and wives). The elaboration of story and character made the same slow but definite progress in pathetics as in comedies and stronger drama. Particularly was this the case after 1910 when Cricks and Martin and others adopted the happy romantic ending which was sweeping American production, and more heroes were folding more heroines in their arms in final "close views" of bliss. But in general sophistication they changed little, and there was less difference in outlook between B. & C.'s 2,000 ft. *A Little Child Shall Lead Them* of 1914 and earlier less complicated versions of "reunited by a child," than between the early "strong" subjects and the sensational features which succeeded them. All the same, the type was becoming scarcer even in Britain, and tear-jerking sentiment, romance and sensational thrills were on the whole all being incorporated by the end of the period in one more mature form of story.

If a characteristic national style can be distinguished in the British films of the time one would be tempted to say that about 1910, when romantic drama was on the point of development by the Americans, social drama by the great Danish company Nordisk, and spectacle by the Italian companies, British producers on the whole still preferred the drama of situation. American producers tended to stress simple human emotions and actions, Nordisk the dramatic conflict of human emotions with social convention; but British producers clung to the drama of recognized patterns of action as tenaciously as they clung to the physical humour of slapstick in the other field. Certain situations were known to contain drama and the deft producer's business was to get as many of them as possible into a given period of time. Theft, brutality, suicide—the changes could be rung as quickly as desired, but no time was wasted over the dramatic impact of tension, the irony of fate, or human motives. The national style, in short, was simply the mark of a lower stage of development. Since the stress was on the action the only way to heighten the drama was to increase the

¹ *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, January 9, 1908, p. 155.

action, and a too rapid succession of physical disasters was made to do the work of a more sensitive treatment of facts and feelings. The poor reputation of most British producers at the time presumably confirms that this preoccupation with externals was a more primitive conception of drama and not, dramatically, as satisfying to the audience as some of the developments which were taking place in other countries. Such an analysis is of course a broad generalization, but a good deal of generalization is justified in this case because of the constant recurrence of standard themes and forms of treatment.

Similar consistency is shown in the moral outlook implied by the majority of the films. They sang the praises of poverty, youth and suffering, of which the apotheosis was the poor little flower girl. With the same unanimity they told of the wickedness of city life, while the sin of the *vie de bohème* was apparently only equalled by that of mixed bathing. The absolute power of the father over his daughter was unquestioned despite all struggles and tricks to secure his unwilling consent to her marriage. Its eternal rightness, together with that of class privileges, formed the austere background for much picturesque unhappiness. Virtue, from the earliest years of the film industry, always triumphed. But its triumph was frequently a moral one only and for some years the final vindication of a beautiful death seems to have been preferred to the sordid reward of earthly happiness.

The comparative rarity of happy endings before about 1910 may have been due partly to the undeveloped story structure mentioned before. For they were difficult to engineer. In 500 ft. it was easier to get your hero into an awkward situation than to get him out again, and the tragic misunderstanding and false accusations so fashionable around 1907 were usually left unrighted, while last-minute rescues, although well known as an effective use of the film, were still relatively few. Exhibitors frequently expressed the view that most audiences preferred a happy ending and after 1910 or 1911, when producers acquired a firmer control of their medium, they bowed more and more to the exhibitor's dictum. But it is questionable whether the latter interpreted, so much as guided, the taste of the audience and it seems certain that in the earlier period unhappy endings were not only produced but liked well enough to be produced again and again. The incipient consciousness of artistic mission seemed

to drive films towards not merely strong drama, but tragedy. Whatever the truth, the mortality among heroes and heroines was appalling. The cause of death was disastrously slight in many cases, love itself often proving fatal, while heroes were dashed to pieces over cliffs or heroines were starved in the streets with the utmost nonchalance. The alternative way out of a complicated situation was for someone to "become a lunatic"—a solution with perhaps a good deal more psychological foundation than was realized. People "became gibbering idiots" with an ease which helped many a desperate producer and the drunken husband or father who repented too late, after his maltreated wife or child had met an unhappy fate, rounded the film off nicely with a nervous collapse and a good, strong mad scene.

The tone of early British drama was strongly moral and the very popular drink motif was frequently linked to avowed temperance propaganda. The preoccupation with alcohol and poverty in the films at this time was very noticeable, and may well have indicated a projection of the chief worries of the film public, just as the tendency to mock the unfortunate in comics may have been an expression of the fear of misfortune. The obsession with drink and poverty greatly overshadowed sex worries. Jealousy was a fairly frequent topic, although far less so in England than abroad, and the wife-and-best-friend formula was occurring frequently by about 1911. But the two themes which left all others far behind were those of poverty as an encouragement to crime, and families wrecked by a drunkard.

In the next few years these stereotypes were to change, and from the early uniformity were to merge important firms with characteristic styles of their own. For in 1911 began the new era of British production, and nowhere was this more noticeable than in the ordinary dramatic film. The British revival must be seen against the background of a tremendously vital and rapidly developing foreign production or its importance will be distorted, for it was no greater than the mounting crescendo of energy in other producing countries before the war, and was consequently quite unable to make up the distance it had lost. Nevertheless in length, range of subject and maturity of treatment British dramas were about to undergo a sudden development.

The new tendency first became manifest in Hepworth's deliberate

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policy of expansion towards the end of 1911, but there were faint stirrings earlier in the year among other producers, notably Cricks and Martin, which might have come to nothing without Hepworth's lead but which nevertheless indicated an independent readiness for the change. For this was the year of W. G. Barker's early adaptations *Henry VIII* and *Princess Clementina* as well as the Benson Shakespearean productions, while *Nan, the Romance of a Coster Girl*,¹ although little more than an episode culminating in Nan's exciting rescue from a burning building, was a fore-taste of Barker's London dramas. B. & C.'s *Her Father's Photograph*,² too, although fundamentally a member of the dying breed of Pathetic Subjects—a foundling, unknowingly adopted by its own mother—aroused excited comment by its more elaborate story and superior production. Even more up-to-date was Cricks, who fulfilled his early promise of meaty drama with two sensational features which set the trade by its ears, *The Pirates of 1920*³ and *The Mighty Atom*.⁴ The second, a military drama about a brave little drummer boy, was the first ordinary British drama to exceed 1,000 ft. in length, and was perhaps the better story of the two, but *The Pirates of 1920*, which contained some interesting trick and model work, was better attuned to the growing delight in thrills. A futuristic story about an airship gang of ruffians, their battle with a liner, an heroic lieutenant (Jack Manley) who dangled between sea and sky in a most exciting way, and a villain who pressed his unwelcome attentions on the girl; it ended with a bomb, a last-minute rescue, and "Jack folds her in his arms."

Some time before *The Mighty Atom* Hepworth had released a film called *Till Death Do Us Part*⁵ which was longer and more publicized than his usual pictures and contained two good-looking and restrained young players, Hay Plumb and Gladys Sylvani. The significance of this did not become apparent until just after the release of *The Mighty Atom*, when Hepworth's next film, *Rachel's Sin*,⁶ was advertised "Hurrah! English Drama Again Takes Premier Position . . . A great triumph in film production, and it's all ENGLISH." Again Hay Plumb and Gladys Sylvani were seen and appreciated, and by the end of the year, when Hepworth at last reached the 1,000 ft. mark with *Stolen Letters*,⁷ he could proclaim without

¹ 600 ft., released February 1, 1911.

² 980 ft., released March 5, 1911.

³ 945 ft., released February 16, 1911.

⁴ 1,090 ft., released November 30, 1911.

⁵ 900 ft., released June 15, 1911.

⁶ 900 ft., released December 9, 1911.

⁷ 1,000 ft., released December 24, 1911.

absurdity "No greater Drama now than Hepworth's English Dramas . . . Leading part taken by the most charming English Actress, Miss Gladys SYLVANI." They were English dramas not only in origin but because the Hepworth company, with its roots firmly planted in the split-reel dramatic incidents of English middle and lower class life, deliberately chose to achieve maturity by a development of this rather than by an artificial introduction of unlikely thrills. Even the old favourite, strong drink, remained at its post.

HEPWORTH. *Rachel's Sin*. (900 ft. Released December 9, 1911.) Rachel, a very pretty girl, receives two proposals in one day. The first she refuses, but accepts the second. She is shortly married, and, on her wedding day, receives a present from Jacob, her disappointed admirer. The young woman soon discovers she has made a mistake; her husband is unfortunately addicted to drink, and does his utmost to make her join in his carousals. One day in an inn, her husband, in a half-drunken state, falls against a chair, and becomes violent. He attacks Jacob, but several companions drag the drunkard away and force him from the house. Returning home in a savage mood, he commences to avenge himself on his poor wife, who is getting tea for him. He suddenly rushes upon her and seizes her by the throat, half strangling her, and then brutally pitches her to the floor. As she rises he seizes her by the hair and drags her round the room. As he releases her he threatens more brutality, but Rachel rushes across to the fender and seizes the poker. The man rushes at her, and she lifts the poker and strikes him heavily, in self-defence. The man goes down like a log and lies there. Poor Rachel leans over him, and, to her surprise and grief, finds he is dead. The poor girl clutches her head madly, in agony and suffering. She does not hear the door open and Jacob enter, who comes forward and learns the dreadful news. She pitifully tells him what has happened, and he determines to shield her and suffer in her place. He tells her she must say he did it, but she will not hear of it. She insists and argues, and at last she leans against the wall, worn out with despair. A few neighbours begin to call, and Jacob lets them understand he gave the dead man an unlucky blow. The police are fetched, and Jacob is arrested. At the trial the young widow is called and asked to state if the prisoner killed her husband, but she breaks down in tears, and Jacob exclaims he did it, and further evidence is unnecessary. The verdict is one of manslaughter, and Jacob is sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. Time quickly passes, and on the day of his release the man, still young, goes straight to the home of his love. He enters quietly, and finds the young widow busy, but she glances up, sees him,

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and holds both hands out. He rushes forward, and the pair become locked in one another's arms.¹

There was nothing sensational about this, apart from the unexpected production by a British firm of a film worthy of serious consideration. But the new craze for sensation was sweeping foreign production and during the following year most British makers found it easier to emulate than Hepworth's more sober lead. Imported shockers were as lurid as their titles: *The Sewer*,² *The Mystery of the Glass Coffin*,³ *A Sheik's Jealousy*,⁴ while *Drama in the Air*⁵ contained a thrilling fight in a balloon between husband and lover, who both met a horrible death when it crashed, and *A Beautiful Fiend*⁶ was the type of superlatively fascinating actress who spells ruin to all men.

Flaming romance with one astounding moment like the leap from a burning house or the fight in a balloon gave novelty to even the least inventive of producers, and in the spring of 1912 English drama suddenly jumped to 3,000 ft. for the first time (apart from literary adaptations) with Clarendon's startling *Saved by Fire*. This was handled as an exclusive and given great publicity, and was welcomed as a more daring strain in British production at last. It was ". . . a chapter of real life . . . jealousy, weakness and desire, whirling in a mad game on the brink of a precipice"; the story was of the actress Eulalie, "a beautiful butterfly-woman," who lures Stanmore from "his poor, soft-eyed little wife," played by Dorothy Bellew, who, "concealing herself amongst the curtains of the actress's boudoir . . . sees him about to succumb to this illicit love"; this is too much—she leaps out—a lamp is upset—the place catches fire and "after a series of most exciting incidents . . . the actress dies, they are reconciled to each other, and thus the story ends."⁷

The lead given by such films was not without its influence, although in 1912 few British companies were able, or anxious, to climb to such heights. During this year W. G. Barker produced few dramas of any kind, Kineto was submerged in an ill-advised imitation of the Westerns, and Ivy Close films were still struggling with Beauty and Fantasy in *The Lady of Shalott*⁸

¹ *Bioscope*, November 9, 1911, p. 445.

² Solax, 1,830 ft., released October 10, 1912.

³ Eclair, 2,845 ft., released February 29, 1912.

⁴ Cines, 1,016 ft., released February 24, 1912.

⁵ 1,000 ft., released by Walturdaw, January 10, 1912.

⁶ 2,900 ft., released by Andrews, June 3, 1912.

⁷ *Bioscope*, April 18, 1912, p. 161.

⁸ 800 ft., released November 7, 1912.

and *The Sleeping Beauty*.¹ Nevertheless the spectacular, although somewhat diluted, was slowly penetrating the work of two major firms, B. & C. and Cricks and Martin. In addition to their Dick Turpin films B. & C. produced in 1912 a quartet of simple romances (obstacle parts lovers—obstacle overcome) whose greatest significance lay in the fact that they had been made on location in Cornwall and Wales, but their longest and most proudly presented production was *The Great Anarchist Mystery*² in which Percy Moran played a gallant young lighthouse-keeper who prevented the anarchist from wrecking the Grand Duke's ship off the English coast—a story in which mere adventure was reinforced by glamour (foreign aristocracy) and wickedness (the Anarchist, a popular figure of sin). Their sensationalist tendencies became more apparent in the following year when, in addition to a large number of unimportant short dramas they produced a few long and extraordinarily involved adventure stories such as *Through the Clouds*,³ a three-reeler which followed the prevailing fashion and included balloon and aeroplane thrills. By 1914 B. & C. was an acknowledged maker of thrill-films. Usually one or two thousand feet in length, they were presented without much fanfare but acquired a steady reputation for containing at least one unusual feature to be used as a selling point—a will tattooed on a sailor's back in *The Tattooed Will*,⁴ a sewer, and a woman defending herself with a revolver in *Water Rats of London*,⁵ a woman and child in their nightclothes crossing telegraph wires from a burning building in *When London Sleeps*.⁶

A similar search for new and extraordinary dangers was seen also in the weekly 1,000 ft. dramas of Cricks and Martin, who throughout 1912 were striving to retain the modest supremacy they had been acquiring before Hepworth's recovery, with a catholicity of subject ranging from fishermen to baronets, with drinking, gambling, mortgages and murder, and a particular fondness for military scenes and a happy romantic finish. The standard was safe if not remarkable, although not all were as smooth as the following famous drama:

CRICKS AND MARTIN. *A Son of Mars*. (1,190 ft. Released October 3, 1912.) Colonel Riley is stationed with his regiment at Simla, and his daughter has become the "daughter of the regiment." Lieutenant Jack

¹ 1,000 ft., December 22, 1912.

³ 3,150 ft., released about August 1913.

⁵ 1,891 ft., released July 13, 1914.

² 2,040 ft., released January 9, 1912.

⁴ Three reels, March 2, 1914.

⁶ Released about July 1914.

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Winford is madly in love with her. At a ball given by the Colonel, Winford gets an opportunity of proposing, and is accepted, when the Colonel interrupts their conversation. He is told the news, and gladly gives his daughter to the lieutenant. An orderly from the General is announced. The dispatch he carried orders the Colonel and his regiment at once to the hills. The Colonel is persuaded by his daughter to allow her to accompany the regiment, and we next see her at Fort Nagur, where small encounters with the enemy are almost a daily occurrence. The natives keep sniping the sentries, and a company is sent to dislodge them but they are ambushed, and, with one exception, laid low. The only survivor returns to the fort, and they prepare for action, but find the telegraph wires have been cut, thus isolating them. Lieutenant Winford volunteers to fetch assistance, and, disguised as a native, almost succeeds in getting through the enemy's lines, but a false step trips him, and he awakens the sleeping tribesmen, who go in hot pursuit. He is wounded, but escapes by grasping a branch of a tree and lowering himself down a precipice. He succeeds in reaching the camp of a Highland regiment. They, without delay, hasten to relieve their comrades. In the meantime, at Fort Nagur, the natives have succeeded in battering down the gates, and are only kept at bay by the incessant fire of the machine guns. Miss Riley clings to her father's side, and makes him promise to save his last shot for her rather than she should fall into the enemy's hands, but happily the arrival of the relief party makes short work of the enemy. Lieutenant Winford is congratulated and thanked by his colonel, but his words are insignificant compared with the embrace and kisses of the daughter.¹

The firm maintained a steady stream of dramas throughout this year and the next, and 1913 saw the publication of two important Cricks features, *A Sporting Chance*² and *The Scapegrace*.³ By 1914, however, it was quite evident that they had failed to keep abreast of Hepworth, B. & C., Barker and some of the new companies. Apart from these two features their drama became stereotyped to an alarming extent. Week after week, in whatever class of society, there was a good girl who through no fault of her own became involved in theft; and although box office popularity may at first have seemed to justify this obsession it became only too clear after some eight months of theft that originality had quietly passed away. The two features, on the other hand, were decidedly ambitious. *The Scapegrace* was set on an imitation Yukon goldfield, with "an

¹ *Bioscope*, September 26, 1912, p. xiv.

² 2,000 ft., released May 1, 1913.

³ 1,885 ft., released July 3, 1913.

effective sensation scene" in which the heroine struggled with the villain on a collapsing bridge over an abyss, while *A Sporting Chance* was the "eminently British" story of a cad who claimed the daughter of a country squire as payment for a gambling debt but lost all when her sportsman lover won a boxing match, and thereby retrieved both the old man's money and the honour of the girl he loved. Twenty-minute films, they had everything the current fashion demanded. But isolated examples such as these were unable to give the firm that extra push which would have put it on an equal footing with Hepworth and Barker.

Meanwhile Hepworth, partly by a steady technical superiority and partly by the tremendous prestige attached to his literary adaptations and costume dramas, was gaining inexorably on his old competitors. Until 1914 his ordinary run of dramas did not greatly exceed those of other well-established companies in either number or length. Indeed, as regards length the Hepworth film was more conservative than most and it was not until 1914 that 2,000 ft. and more became at all normal. Nor did they show any conspicuous originality of theme, which remained substantially the same in the more complicated stories of 1914 as in the Wholesome Subjects of 1906. No Hepworth story was set in a sewer or a balloon to send an exquisite tremor through the audience, and the nearest approach to the popular aerial thrills was *The Terror of the Air*,¹ an unusual thriller at the very end of the period, which contained both aeroplane scenes and an explosion. But such adventures were rare, and for the most part the background was simply that of middle or lower class domesticity as before. Low life occasionally seemed to be yielding to the Nice People, English homeliness to the American goldfields or Australian Bush. But on the whole the drama of English everyday life was the theme, and solid, moral sentiment the keynote. Romance was not flaming but tender and the shy young clergyman the characteristic hero. Repentant drunkards still provided lessons in temperance, dogs were still the faithful friends of man and crime was that of petty criminals in sordid surroundings rather than a glamorous adventure.

HEPWORTH. *The Traitor of Parton's Court*. (1,050 ft. Released April 25, 1912.) Sally, a pretty coster girl, living in Parton's Court, hears cries of help proceeding from the court below, and sees Bill committing

¹ 2,300 ft., released August 3, 1914.

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robbery on a defenceless old man. Sally is too late to prevent the theft, but assists the old man to his feet, and accompanies him to the police station, where she gives information which leads to Bill's arrest. This action causes consternation amongst the inhabitants, who send her to Coventry. Returning home, accompanied by her lover (a fireman), a very unpleasant individual, known as the "Basher," is standing in the doorway, and it is not until the lover has thrown him out of the way that Sally is enabled to pass by. Sally finds it impossible to go on living in such a hostile atmosphere, so she determines to slip out one afternoon when the court is quiet. She gets down to the foot of the staircase, and there stands the "Basher." Sally flies up the stairs again, locking herself into her room, piles the furniture against the door for greater security. Ripping out the contents of the mattress, she climbs up into the loft, and setting light to the straw, deliberately fires the roof, knowing that the flames are bound to attract attention and bring the firemen to her aid. The flames are followed by a turn-out of the fire-engines from the nearest stations, which is the one at which her lover is quartered. The gang of villains outside, alarmed by the puffs of smoke, soon scamper downstairs, with the exception of the "Basher" who, inflamed by his hatred of Sally, is careless of his own safety, provided he can get at her in the end. The engines have arrived, and the first up the escape is Sally's lover, who is amazed to see that the figure cowering in the smoke is that of the girl he loves. He carries her on to the landing, where the "Basher," to his utter astonishment, is confronted by the young fireman, who throws him into the sea of flame that is raging below. In the last scene we find the radiant Sally, garbed in white and orange blossom, passing through a triumphal arch, through which she emerges to the happiness of her married life.¹

HEPWORTH. *The Deception*. (975 ft. Released April 11, 1912.) Fay and Esme are in love with Hugh Mortimer. They visit him at his laboratory, and it is apparent that Mortimer prefers Fay. Esme, seeing them so wrapt up in each other, sadly departs, and Hugh proposes to Fay, and is accepted. Shortly after this, whilst experimenting in his laboratory, Hugh meets with a terrible accident. When he recovers consciousness it is to find himself completely blind. He feels that he ought to release Fay, and sends her a letter telling her what has happened, and that she is to consider herself free. Fay feels that she cannot face the prospect of marrying a blind man, and takes off her engagement ring. Esme takes a desperate resolution, to save from further pain the man she loves. It has often been a subject for joke that the voices of the two sisters are alike,

¹ *Bioscope*, April 18, 1912, p. xiv.

so Esme slips on her sister's ring and goes to Hugh's house determined to impersonate her sister. She explains the situation to old Jasper, Hugh's servant, and persuades him to keep her secret; then, passing to where Hugh is lying, she gently calls his name, and Hugh is overcome with delight at what he imagines is a proof of the steadfastness of his fiancée's love. One day, whilst reading the paper to him, Esme comes across a paragraph in which a certain oculist states that it is nearly always possible to restore sight that has been lost through accident. A consultation is arranged, and Hugh hears the welcome verdict that he will soon be able to see. Esme knows that the time is now approaching when he must know the truth. The moment comes, and Hugh realizes that he can see once more. Esme comes slowly into the room, and craves his forgiveness. Taking her in his arms, he tells her how much he realizes the value of her great and unselfish love when compared to Fay's, which failed when put to the test.¹

Examination of contemporary criticism of Hepworth films shows that this divergence from the new sensationalism was construed as a lack of originality. Films were making the most of their new individuality and it was no longer sufficient to advertise "A Pathetic Incident—*The Drunkard's Remorse*" as one of a class; the daring and original thing to do was to catch the public's eye with something unique and startling ("See the drunkard walk the tight rope to save his child"). This inclusion of one surprising feature in each film was completely foreign to the strong Hepworth tradition and its absence largely explains the guarded appreciation which his stories received. It did not stop the company from being held up as a model for others to follow. Photographic sharpness, pictorial composition, intelligible continuity, restrained acting from good looking and dignified players all received unqualified appreciation from both trade and audience. But it is an interesting paradox that the basic reason which shone through the widespread praise of these qualities, the fact that they gave the film dignity and "class," was the most powerful of all reasons for avoiding the sensationalism whose absence they simultaneously criticized. The respect accorded to Cecil Hepworth by his contemporaries was very great, and scarcely a film was published by his company without calling forth references in the trade Press to his good taste and the technical mastery of his staff. But because of the very unobtrusiveness of this good

¹ *Bioscope*, April 4, 1912, p. xiv. ✓

taste its greatest merit escaped notice. For what seemed at the time a lack of originality was in fact the deep artistic integrity which eschewed cheap effects. Superficial admiration for technical excellence as such hardly touched on the real value of Hepworth dramatic production, the appreciation of the end towards such technical excellence must be directed—the dramatic portrayal of real life by a new medium whose most appropriate use, still being worked out, revealed no trace of the theatre.

Kineto, Urban and the new Pathé brands of Britannia and Big Ben were adding to the volume of British drama in 1913 and 1914; Turner and Ivy Close films were alternating polite comedies with equally polite adventure stories; Herkomer and the Marchioness of Townshend were adding a dash of social and artistic distinction and Brightonia and Moto-graph were frankly engaged in producing shockers. But apart from the work of Hepworth, B. & C. and Cricks, 1913 was Barker's year and 1914 that of the London Film Company.

In 1913 W. G. Barker at last began to fulfill the old promise of amazing production hitherto realized only in his occasional flings at historical or melodramatic adaptations. Following the production of *East Lynne* and *Sixty Years a Queen* in the first half of the year he began a series of exciting crime films in which, although law and order finally triumphed, they did so without spoiling the fun by moralizing. *London by Night*,¹ *Younita*,² *In the Hands of London Crooks*³ and *The Great Bank Robbery*⁴ had common characteristics which marked Barker's style as clearly as other features marked Hepworth's. Melodramas they still were, but with little trace of stagey unsuitability. They were long, their stories were complicated with many characters and interweaving strands which nevertheless were always perfectly easy to follow, for Barker, like Hepworth, had mastered continuity at a time when film reviewers still found it necessary to say whether a film was intelligible or not. His stock players were almost as well known as Hepworth's company. His film settings had an unusual elasticity because of the ease with which he accepted the possibility of location work. In the same way the crowd scenes for which his films were famous often presented less difficulty than the elaborate battle scenes which formed almost the only excuse for crowd work amongst other British producers, for he saw

¹ Length unknown.

³ Length unknown.

² 4,000 ft., released late 1913.

⁴ 2,300 ft.

that a real street scene, a race-meeting, or a march past of the Guards could be filmed for a drama as well as for a topical and added enormously to the "realism" to which such lip service was paid. London life and adventure was his favourite theme, particularly its crime and night life, and proved so satisfactory a subject that his example was followed more faithfully than was proper by both Motograph and B. & C. *London by Night* is a typical example; long and complicated, it has great variety of setting which includes a London cabaret, a race-course and the Embankment. Emotions are violent if not credible and the audience is allowed to revel in the revelation of sin, though not so much sin as to turn enjoyable disgust into anything more dangerous.

BARKER. *London by Night*. (3,500 ft. Released October 13, 1913.) Young Dick Ralston, the heir to Ralston Towers, down from Oxford, is met at the station by Sir John his father, and Mary, his father's ward. Very soon Dick falls a captive to the sweet simplicity of Mary, proposes to her, and is accepted. The betrothal is witnessed by Sir John, who sees his dearest wish realized, for he had always intended that Mary should become the mistress of his old home, to reign at his death, as Dick's wife. One day Dick receives a letter from a college chum, reminding him of a promise to read in chambers for the bar. Dick acquaints his father and Mary of the promise. They are delighted with Dick's resolve to study for an honourable profession and wish him every success. Next day he leaves for London. For some time Dick reads hard in his chambers at Lincoln's Inn. One evening Jack, his friend, comes in and persuades Dick to leave his books and go for a night out up West. Dick, fed up with reading, does not take long to make up his mind—he slips on an evening coat and goes with Jack to the Cabaret, where they meet Estelle, an adventuress. Estelle sees in Dick easy prey, and Dick, unused to wiles of London sirens, soon falls an easy victim. Time passes, and Mary at home is troubled by reason of not hearing from her lover. Sir John, noticing the girl's unhappiness and knowing the reason, suggests a visit to his son in town. Meanwhile, Dick, infatuated by Estelle, is holding a wine party in his chambers. Sir John and Mary arrive, outside the door they hear the sounds of drunken revelry. Mary is afraid and tries to persuade her guardian not to enter, but Sir John, wondering at the tumult, takes no heed, opens the door and enters his son's chambers. For a moment he stands still, aghast at the scene before him, while Mary, with a little pitiful cry, covers her face with her hands. The room is filled with men and women, and the air thick with the fumes of wine and cigarette smoke.

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Dick is seen with his arms round Estelle. Recovering his composure, Sir John strides forward and demands from Dick an explanation of his conduct. Dick hangs his head and refuses to answer. Mary pitifully adds her entreaties, but Dick can only turn shamefaced away. Estelle is amused, she taunts Mary on the loss of her lover and insults Sir John. Sir John, furious, takes the now weeping Mary and leads her from the room, sick with disgust at his son's behaviour.

Disgusted at his son's disgraceful behaviour, Sir John determines to cut him out of his will and leave all his property to his ward. Unconscious of this, Dick is attending a race meeting with Estelle—the horse he has backed heavily meets with an accident, and the infatuated young man loses all. Estelle asks for money but is refused. She leaves him in a fury. The behaviour of his son has greatly affected Sir John's health, and one day, while out walking with Mary, he has a fatal seizure and dies a few hours later. Then comes the reading of the will; Dick discovers that his father has left all to Mary—he is stunned, while Mary, more than amazed, for she has no idea of the altered will, eagerly begs Dick to take back the money, but he, feeling that he has been ill-used, leaves the house in anger. Hearing that Dick has been disinherited, Estelle has no further use for him and encourages the attention of a certain wealthy stockbroker, who presents her with a diamond necklace. Dick seeks an interview with Estelle and receives his congé. Estelle also instructs her maid to, in future, refuse to admit Dick when he calls. Dick goes threatening the woman who has wrecked his life. Now upon the scene comes a thief, Sly Ned, breaking into Estelle's flat he sees her admiring her diamonds in a mirror. The man's cupidity is immediately roused and he makes a bid for the jewels. Estelle will not, however, give her possessions without a fight, and in the struggle she is killed. Seizing the necklace the thief makes good his escape. In the meantime Dick determines to make one last appeal to Estelle. Refused admittance by the maid, he makes an entrance to the house as did the thief. Then, to his horror, he discovers the dead body of Estelle—as he is examining the weapon the maid ushers in Estelle's new lover—Dick is accused of the crime but makes good his escape. Next morning he reads in a newspaper that a hue and cry is out for him. Frightened at the strength of the evidence against him he becomes a fugitive from justice.

Mary, refusing to touch any of the money that she thinks by right belongs to Dick, makes use of a diploma that she has earned, and becomes a hospital nurse in an East End hospital. Time passes as Dick is still a fugitive from the law. Down to the lowest dregs, penniless and homeless, he is resting his tired body on a seat on the Embankment, under the shade of Big Ben, when irony of ironies he is accosted by the man for

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whose crime he is suffering and asked for a light. Then Sly Ned, noticing the forlorn appearance of Dick, invited him to accompany him to a doss-house in Limehouse. Thankful for a bed of any sort, Dick agrees. They reach the doss-house and retire immediately to bed. In the doss-house kitchen, where the habitual dossers are gathering, a fight occurs, and during the mêlée a lamp is smashed—the house, one of the old timbered variety, soon catches, and soon the whole place is ablaze. A fierce fight occurs amongst the frantic dossers striving to escape from the hungry flames. Sly Ned is struck down. Dick comes across his unconscious body and carries him to a temporary place of safety. Up, up shoot the flames into the sky and all around is alight with the lurid glow of the burning building—great columns of smoke roll in majestic splendour across the starlight sky—crash after crash is heard as one floor after another caves in. The fire brigade are soon on the scene and Dick drags the now unconscious Ned to the window and drops him into the blanket held by the firemen, following himself a few seconds later. They are quickly taken to the hospital where Mary has entered as a nurse, and she does not recognize him as he comes in, blackened and begrimed by smoke. Sly Ned, injured unto death, confesses to the crime and so clears Dick of all suspicion. In the meantime Dick has been washed, having only received injuries of a trifling nature. Mary walks in and with a cry of joy and recognition rushes at once to his side, but he turns away with shame, saying that he is wanted for murder. Mary at once rushes back to the ward and brings the Police Officer to show him the signed confession by Sly Ned. Dick overjoyed clasps Mary in his arms and she nestling up close to him prevails upon him to return to Ralston Towers. Dick consents and at last passes out of the gloom into the sunlight.¹

It was at the end of 1913 that the London Film Company made its appearance with the *House of Temperley*, and throughout 1914 a steady flow of moderately long, important dramas established this company during the first year of its existence as one of the best in the country, with an output and a reputation to rival even those of Barker and Hepworth. This first production was a characteristic choice. Steering a middle course between Hepworth's realism and Barker's melodrama, they favoured stories which were exciting and yet avoided the excessively lurid and improbable. They had a fair number of adaptations as well as original screen plays by their staff writers, Anne and Bannister Merwin. Subjects were not stereotyped, and ranged from a story of racial intermarriage

¹ *Walturdaw Weekly Budget*, September 22, 1913, p. 7.

in "scenes of Oriental splendour" to one of a Russian secret society or another about Scottish crofters. On the whole their productions were more polished than was usual among British makers, with considerably more attention paid to style, and the pleasing effect of the lighting in the fireside scene of *Child O' My Heart*,¹ as well as the sense of drama achieved by cutting shots of sleeping London into the approach of the hostile fleet in *England's Menace*² received particular notice. This last film, published as it was in June 1914, forms an appropriate conclusion to the pre-war period. Produced by Harold Shaw, it concerned a "hostile power" with plans for an invasion of England, and came at a time when the long-standing love of military drama was about to be granted a richer playground than hill tribes in the Outposts of Empire. Its enormous success was of course due largely to the universal popularity of war and espionage as a theme, and to the particular interest of the public at that particular moment in any stories of a hostile power. But what placed the London Film Company in the front rank as a producer, and what seemed to portend a real revival of British films in the world market at last, was more than a timely choice of theme. It was that their films were, in the phrases of the time, "well-mounted productions, whose meaning is clear throughout, and which show life as it really is."

The London Film Company was one of the better representatives of the new spirit in the industry, a spirit which by 1914 was permeating even the older companies. In the old days the pioneers frequently had mechanical skill, energy and daring—everything for the production of an Original Subject except an original subject. The lack of this most necessary element could be concealed up to a point by repetition of a few standard themes, but it did not require much artistic or commercial sense to realize that greater attractions would soon be required to keep the public interest. Isolated socially and artistically, the film makers hoped that by borrowing "plots" on a big scale from Shakespeare down to Mrs. Henry Wood they would both rise in the social scale and provide themselves with reliable Subjects on which to exercise their growing skill. Swept away by the importance of improving Dickens and giving orders to Forbes-Robertson the British makers, suffering from artistic isolation to a greater extent than those of perhaps any other country, lost their heads to a correspondingly

¹ 1,920 ft., released June 19, 1914.

² Trade shown June 19, 1914.

greater extent. But while the adaptors were running riot with Art, the hardy strain of melodrama and the foreign importation of Sensation were together exerting an influence which, while less respectable, was probably more acceptable to all but the *ton patrons*. "How animated and real!" had breathed the earliest audiences, and as films became more and more fantastically unlikely their makers, as though obsessed by the guilt of this absurdity, cried louder and louder that this was realism unsurpassed, a page torn from the book of life, a mirror to nature. Better photographic quality and projection, as well as a new school of mime, undoubtedly increased the sense of reality a good deal. But nothing could alter the fact that if audiences wanted that kind of sensation they could not have realism too, and the contemporary standing of a production company depended not only on the technical quality of its output but also on the degree of skill with which it blended a reasonable amount of thrill with a likely or at least slightly possible story. Brightonia and to a certain extent Moto-graph, for example, cared only for the thrill and had a poor reputation in consequence. Hepworth, at the other extreme, disregarded thrills to such an extent that although revered as a producer of exceptional sincerity and technical ability it was felt, almost reluctantly, that he was somewhat lacking in spirit. This we have already noticed as a misapprehension probably inevitable at the time. Even from the standpoint of the time, however, no such defect was attached to the London Film Company's productions. They had much of the irreproachable acting, photography and continuity of Hepworth films without the shamefaced reproach of stodginess—exciting and unusual without entirely losing touch with possibility, they were probably better adjusted to contemporary standards than the films of the greater producer. For the film of the time had to ". . . appeal to the lowest class of audience by its daring sensationalism and its mass of incident, and to the higher class by its sincerity, its humanity, and its real dramatic power."

Perhaps a coda should be added to correct any exaggerated ideas about the "emergence of the new art." Although the predominant form of drama had changed during the pre-war period from the split-reel *scena* to the story of thirty minutes or more, the undoubted development that this implies must not obscure the fact that the more primitive form not only still existed, but even flourished. It had lost its place at the top of the

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bill, but it was still a good commercial proposition for even the most advanced companies and nothing affords a more forcible reminder of the less inspiring foundations of even the finest companies than a simple recital of the Hepworth company's repetition of their early four-minute triumph *Rescued by Rover*, in which a kidnapped baby was rescued by a dog. (See Volume I.) In *Black Beauty*¹ of 1907 the dog rescuer was replaced by a horse. In *Dumb Sagacity*² of the same year the pattern was repeated with both Rover and Black Beauty officiating. In *Rover Drives a Motor*³ the wonder dog stole the kidnappers' car and actually drove the baby home. In *Baby's Playmate*⁴ it was once more the turn of Black Beauty, who called a fire engine to save the baby from a burning hayrick—tinted red, this one. Later in 1908 it was a little girl rescued by an elephant.⁵ *Plucky Little Girl*⁶ showed a slight variation in 1909, for a little girl and her dog captured a criminal. In February 1910 there was a new edition of *Black Beauty*. In *Dumb Comrades*⁷ later in the year a little girl was once more rescued by a dog and a pony, but the old theme was refurbished up a little by the addition of some pigeons. In *The Detective in Peril*⁸ a little dog rescued a drowning detective. In *A Dog's Devotion*⁹ in 1911 the dog became even more sagacious and brought a man and his erring wife together. *Lost in the Woods*¹⁰ showed that the babes in the woods would have had a different fate if Rover had been around. And in *The Dogs and the Desperadoes*¹¹ of the following year two dogs tracked and caught a thief. In February 1914 Rover died. The first British named star, he had started Hepworth on a full ten years' run of dumb sagacity, the steady popularity of which had easily held its own beside the growing attractions of Art and Sin.

¹ 475 ft., 1907.

³ 452 ft., April 1908.

⁵ *Snatched from a Terrible Death*, 550 ft., August 1908.

⁶ 550 ft., January 1909.

⁸ 750 ft., December 1910.

¹⁰ 550 ft., June 1912.

² 450 ft., September 1907.

⁴ 375 ft., July 1908.

⁷ 575 ft., November 1910.

⁹ 400 ft., January 1911.

¹¹ 350 ft., July 1913.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Analysis of Three Films

RICHARD III

Produced by the F. R. Benson Company and released by the Co-operative Cinematograph Company in early 1911. Two reels. With F. R. Benson as Richard III. Adapted from the play by Shakespeare.

EAST LYNNE

Produced by Barker Motion Photography and trade shown on May 27, 1913. 6,500 ft. Adapted from the novel by Mrs. Henry Wood.

<i>Lady Isabel</i>	Blanche Forsythe
<i>Archibald Carlyle</i>	Fred Paul
<i>Cornelia Carlyle</i>	Rachel de Solla
<i>Joyce</i>	May Norton
<i>Little Willie</i>	Pippin
<i>Captain Levison</i>	Fred Morgan
<i>Barbara Hare</i>	Lindsay Fincham

DAVID COPPERFIELD

Produced by Thomas Bentley for the Hepworth Company and released in August 1913. 7,500 ft. Adapted from the novel by Charles Dickens.

<i>David</i>	Master Eric Desmond
	Len Bethel
	Kenneth Ware
<i>Wilkins Micawber</i>	H. Collins
<i>Uriah Heep</i>	J. Hulcup
<i>Daniel Peggotty</i>	Jamie Darling
<i>Little Emily</i>	Edna May
	Amy Verity
<i>Dora Spenlow</i>	Alma Taylor
<i>Mr. Steerforth</i>	Cecil Mannering
<i>Agnes Wickfield</i>	Ella Fineberg

Richard III

INSET II



Much attention was paid to the "grouping," which was that of the theatre and frequently resulted in a confused and crowded picture leaving an empty foreground.



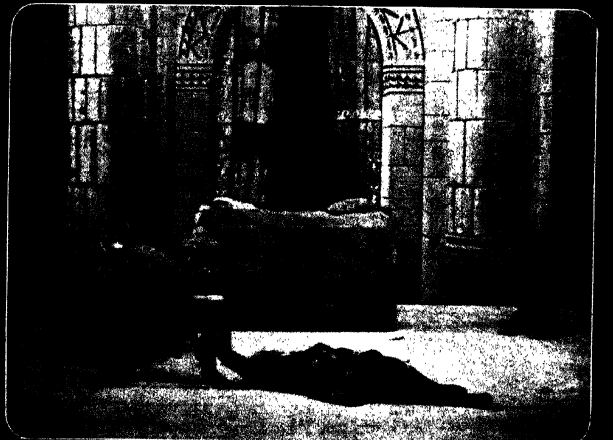
Here again the foreground in the first picture is empty and the group across the back of the stage tends to merge with the figure of Richard, who is vigorously wooing Lady Anne. In the second the emphasis is on the two figures at the back and the floor-line of the back-cloth rather than on the woman who is cursing the king.

Richard III

The actions of the players are those designed for a large stage.



Richard III



The murder of the Duke of Clarence involves a fight which covers the stage like a ballet. Afterwards, considerable time is spent in showing the murderer removing the body, although it was never indicated where or why the body was taken.

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<i>Betsy Trotwood</i>	Miss Harcourt
<i>Mr. Murdstone</i>	Tom Butt
<i>Mrs. Micawber</i>	Miss West
<i>Mr. Wickfield</i>	Shiel Porter
<i>Ham</i>	T. Arnold
<i>Mr. Creakle</i>	Harry Royston
<i>Mrs. Gummidge</i>	Marie de Solla

Amongst the miscellaneous films still in existence which were made in this country before 1914 there are three: F. R. Benson's *Richard III*, Will Barker's *East Lynne* and the Hepworth-Bentley film of *David Copperfield*—which were of such importance when they were produced, and which have such individuality of style as to merit detailed attention. In a way it is a pity that they are all literary adaptations, since the light thrown on the nature of film composition at this date is thus coloured by a particular influence. At the same time, however, it merely serves to emphasize a point which has already been made, that adaptations accounted for an extremely high proportion of all films of any importance. At all events it is fortunate that these three films, preserved in the National Film Library, include examples on the one hand of the crude theatricalism which appeared in all film-producing countries for a few years after 1908, and on the other hand of the culminating pre-war production of the two most important British companies.

It would probably not be unfair to say that *Richard III* represents the pre-1914 stage adaptations at their worst. Praise may be due to the Benson company for a brave and broad-minded experiment with a new medium, and to the sponsors of the film for a necessary search for new and more dignified sources of cinema material. The film remains a mistake. It shows not the slightest appreciation of the possibilities of film making, ignoring not only the obvious advantage of performing outdoor scenes out of doors, but even those elements of continuity and editing known at the time and employed all over the world in the most humdrum little films. It does worse. It imitates a medium in which the sense of continuity is entirely different, and it makes no attempt to clarify the resulting confusion except an exaggeration of gesture, a liberal use of titles, and a curtailment of all "business" considered inessential. What was left may have been essential but it was not intelligible. Of what use were the wild gestures

which registered scorn, greed, fear and the rest of the emotions with such emphasis if the audience were not sure who the people were and why they experienced these violent feelings? For it is wasted effort to consider such a film from the standpoint of one who already knows the original work, and to compare it in detail with this. Quite apart from the aesthetic poverty of a film that can only be understood by one who has previously read the play on which it is based, it must not be forgotten that the audiences of the time were more familiar with Sherlock Holmes or Maria Marten than with *Richard III*. And it is hard to believe that prestige adaptations of this type had much success in the conversion of a more cultured following.

The film, which lasts approximately half an hour and thus was moderately long for 1911, is in black-and-white with green titles. The latter occupy as much as half the total footage, and precede every scene with a very brief description of the action and a quotation of some two or three lines from the play. The seventeen scenes which account for the other half of the footage all last less than three minutes, several less than half a minute. This is extremely short for Shakesporean scenes, and it is obvious that the intensification of gesture has been accompanied by drastic cuts in both the speeches and the action of the play. For shots, on the other hand—and they are, in effect, both scenes and shots at the same time—they are on the average exceedingly long and more than a little tedious. Each scene is a single medium shot which takes in the whole of a small stage. There is no camera movement or change of camera angle in the whole film and the only cuts are those marked by titles between each scene. Variety is only introduced into this simple photographic record in the dream sequence. This is preceded by the following titles:

Title 27 SCENE 12. RICHARD'S DREAM, THE NIGHT BEFORE THE BATTLE.

Title 28 "O COWARD CONSCIENCE, HOW DOST THOU AFFLICT ME."

The subsequent scene, which occurs towards the end of the film, shows Richard lying on a couch outside a tent before a wooded backcloth. His dream is indicated by the successive appearance of the gesticulating victims of his ambition at the foot of his bed, changing into each other with the bewildering rapidity of a change which occupies only one frame of film. Such a crude technique, with its almost comic effect, was already amateurish by 1911, for it was some fourteen years since the suitability

of double exposure for dreams and visions had been discovered and widely adopted.

There are only some half-dozen backdrops used in the piece, on each of which the camera remains trained with an unblinking fixity. Interior sets are adequate—heavy curtains, stone walls—although since they contain only the minimum of properties essential to the action (a bed, a throne) they smack somewhat of the empty stage. Exteriors are painted backdrops quite pleasing in their general effect until someone moves and reveals a dark horizontal line where the backcloth meets the floor.

The first few scenes, normally used by Shakespeare for a little verbal scene-setting, are confusing in the extreme. Shots 1, 2 and 3, described respectively as "The Battle of Tewkesbury," "Murder of King Henry VI" and "King Edward IV orders arrest of Clarence," seem to consist of unwieldy groups of unrecognizable people brandishing swords, arguing and moving about on their own obscure business. This mystification lasts for some four minutes of screen time until in Shot 4 (Gloucester's wooing of Lady Anne) Gloucester's long shuddering movements, villainous rubbing of hands and stiff contortions present the audience with a central figure and action which cannot fail to be understood. But the absence of the early explanatory speeches continues to be felt throughout the film, and the audience can never really recover from its initial ignorance of who everybody is and what they are doing. The attempted solution of this problem is the anticipatory summary given in double titles like the following which precede every scene:

Title 17 LORD MAYOR OF LONDON OFFERS CROWN TO RICHARD, WHICH HE RELUCTANTLY ACCEPTS.

Title 18 "THEN I SALUTE YOU WITH THIS ROYAL TITLE, LONG LIVE KING RICHARD, ENGLAND'S WORTHY KING."

OR :

Title 29 BATTLE OF BOSWORTH. DEATH OF RICHARD. RICHMOND OFFERED THE CROWN.

Title 30 "GOD AND YOUR ARMS BE PRAISED, VICTORIOUS FRIENDS; THE DAY IS OURS, THE BLOODY DOG IS DEAD."

"NOW CIVIL WOUNDS ARE STOPPED, PEACE LIVES AGAIN: THAT SHE MAY LONG LIVE HERE, GOD SAY—AMEN."

Such titles are not a continuity device like "Came the dawn." They are

intended not to link a connected story but merely to explain what is about to happen in the next scene, which is thereby admitted to be incapable of explaining itself. It is as though the film consisted of a number of illustrations to be scattered through the pages of a book, each bearing a full explanatory caption. There is no attempt at continuity, however, and the scenes follow each other simply as a number of tableaux. Another Shakespearean device, that of emptying the stage at the end of each scene, is as unnecessary in a film as the preliminary explanations are necessary. Yet while the producers had perforce to abandon the former they retained many examples of the latter, with such inconsistency and lack of function as to indicate complete unconsciousness of the existence of any problem. The servant who comes on the stage, after the murderers have left, to drag Clarence's body out of range of the camera before the scene changes to the Court adds nothing to either dramatic effect or smoothness of continuity.

Apart from Benson's centre-piece of crooked villainy there is not the slightest attempt at characterization. At that distance from the camera, and with so many disastrous things happening so rapidly to so many people, it would be surprising if it had been otherwise. But the results of this, together with the absence of continuity, are extremely puzzling. Why did the Queen die, why was Hastings executed? The incident of the two little princes in the Tower is widely enough known to present no problem. But who was Buckingham and why did he make a single sudden appearance in the fifteenth shot only to be marched off to execution? Such questions could be multiplied to such an extent that the film seems not so much a story as a series of incomprehensible happenings linked only by the presence of Richard, black-shrouded, chin-stroking and prone to violent arm-swinging argument. The contemporary reviewer's apparently naïve preoccupation with a film's comprehensibility appears more reasonable after the baffling experience of watching *Richard III*.

W. G. Barker's *East Lynne* was made in 1913, some four years later than *Richard III*. Adapted as it was from a popular Victorian novel, its story is banal. The film technique employed, however, is polished and in respect to everything but theme it is immeasurably superior to the Shakespearean production of four years earlier. These four years had been marked by the emergence of the long film and a clarification of certain

theories of film construction, all of which had combined to raise the general level of production, but this is only part of the story. The different origins of the two films should also be considered. For *East Lynne* was no stage production amateurishly filmed, but a major work of an experienced and enterprising firm unaffected by theatrical tradition, and in this way forms a useful contrast to the earlier film. The results are representative of the best work before 1914 and show a certain amount of tentative experiment as well as smooth and efficient handling of the standard techniques of the time.

The film is in black-and-white with the exception of the exterior night shots, which are bluey-green. It is 6,500 ft. (nearly two hours), still a fairly unusual length in 1913, and the copy analysed seems to be complete except for a missing title at the beginning of the fifth reel. Its division into five reels seems to have no dramatic significance, although they are described in the publicity as "5 Acts."

Titles are used with some skill, and occupy about 20 per cent of the total footage, a considerably smaller proportion than those of *Richard III*. Their normal length is ten feet, but varies slightly according to the number of words they contain. Disdaining the stylish verbosity of the Shakespearean quotations, they are packed with information and never used to underline the obvious, in which latter respect they may also be contrasted favourably with the Motograph titles on page 256. They are still, to a certain extent, advance summaries preceding the scenes rather than links between them, although "Next week" and "A year later" perform the second function in a few cases. But they are not made the excuse for poor visual continuity and may be described as a complementary running commentary to a connected story, rather than as a series of independent descriptions of disjointed tableaux. Considerable flexibility is shown in their use. In several cases they are interposed between two shots of the same set in order to indicate the passage of time, and in one case a conversation title is employed. Even greater flexibility has been shown in the use of letters, of which there are five, all containing between twenty and forty words. These are shots rather than titles, since the actual letters are seen, and together with some other images are in several cases interpolated into longer shots in a way which shows a growing appreciation of the influence of editing over the audience's attention. For

on the several occasions when letters previously shown for some ten to twenty feet are flashed on the screen for three or four feet in the middle of another scene, they are in fact being used as pictorial symbols of the thoughts and conversation of the characters.

With the exception of Fred Paul, who makes a handsome Carlyle, the players are on the whole perhaps not sufficiently aristocratic in appearance for such a high society drama and tend to overplay in their more emotional scenes, although their praying hands, leering asides, staggers, gasps and faints are restrained in comparison with the antics in *Richard III* and probably not out of keeping with a Victorian melodrama. At least there is never the slightest doubt as to what they are doing or feeling, and this is an achievement which belongs quite as much to the players as to the titles. Conventional mime gestures, such as Justice Hare's suggestion of handcuffed wrists when he learns that his son is suspected of murder, are used on several occasions and, although crude, form a useful alternative to titles:

- Title 7* MR. JUSTICE HARE, IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER BARBARA, VOWS HE WILL HAVE HIS SON RICHARD ARRESTED.
- Shot 13* A medium shot of a drawing-room showing the three members of the family seated. The maid enters, leading in the farmer and a peeler. Mr. Justice Hare is shown the gun.
- Shot 14* Here there is a short close-up of the butt of the gun which bears the initials "R. H." (5 ft.)
- Shot 15* Justice Hare stands nobly with hands clasped and chin up; meanwhile the mother sinks down in hysterics; Justice Hare crosses his hands to indicate handcuffs, and leaves the room. (110 ft.)¹

Costumes and settings are those of about 1840, a period prior to that in the novel, and one which was preferred for its "picturesqueness." Great care was taken to avoid anachronisms in this change, even the famous P. C. Bullock giving way to the "peeler." But theatricalism was not so easy to avoid although the twenty or so interior sets are carefully furnished and incomparably more convincing than the backdrops of *Richard III*. The exteriors, of which there are also about twenty, are mostly real roads and undergrowth with little or no building visible, and consequently do not have the same faked appearance. The sets most often used are the East Lynne hall and drawing-room, Carlyle's office and the

¹ Figures in heavy type refer to the total length of the group of shots between two titles; those in lighter type refer to the single shot after which they occur.

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shrubbery where Richard hides, but almost all appear more than once during the course of the film's 118 shots.

For the most part the camera is in the same position each time a particular set is used, but this is by no means an invariable rule and there is, for example, considerable variety in the angle from which the East Lynne drawing-room is shown. There is clearly a very different conception of the correct relation of the camera to the players in this film and in *Richard III*, connected with the rigid identification in the latter of the frame of the picture with the frame of the stage. In *East Lynne* players are constantly shown from the knees or even the waist up, particularly in interiors, and in exteriors very frequently advance towards the camera and pass on one side of it. It is not suggested that camera technique is particularly advanced. Camera mobility, although not unknown, was still not usually employed and appears here only once, when the camera pans after Barbara and Carlyle (in Shot 69) during the following passage of events which lead up to Isabel's elopement:

- Shot 65* Exterior of Carlyle's office. Barbara arrives at the door, he comes out and they go off together. (20 ft.)
- Title 30* STILL LOATH TO BELIEVE LEVISON'S SUGGESTIONS, LADY ISABEL IS INDUCED TO SURPRISE HER HUSBAND AT HIS OFFICE.
- Shot 66* The same as the last shot. Levison and Isabel approach from the other direction and enter the office. (20 ft.)
- Title 31* MR. DILL INFORMS LADY ISABEL THAT CARLYLE HAS JUST LEFT WITH BARBARA HARE.
- Shot 67* Inside the office. The old clerk ushers Isabel and Levison in and explains. She is aghast and nods to Levison, whereupon they leave together.
- Shot 68* Outside the office. Levison and Isabel come out and walk off.
- Shot 69* Cut to a village pond. Barbara and Carlyle pass from right to left along a path at the far side. The camera pans with them and they approach it at the left of the screen. As they leave the picture Isabel and Levison follow after them, he pointing them out to her.
- Shot 70* The shrubbery. Barbara appears and motions Carlyle on. She gets Richard Hare from his hiding-place, and he and Carlyle clasp each other by the hand. All three retire into the bushes. Levison drags the collapsing Isabel hard on their heels.
- Shot 71* A garden, showing the French windows of a house. Carlyle, Barbara and Richard, anxiously looking over their shoulders towards the camera, creep in through the window. Levison and Isabel follow

them near the house and hide in the bushes. Barbara and Carlyle come out of the window again and come towards the camera, talking. They stop near the camera, while Levison and Isabel peep out from the bushes behind them.

- Shot 72* A short close shot of Levison supporting the sinking Isabel. (5 ft.)
Shot 73 A long shot of the window. . . . Barbara and Carlyle go into the house and Levison drags Isabel away. The three come out of the window again.
Shot 74 Closer view of the window from a slightly different angle. Carlyle escorts Richard away from it.
Shot 75 Outside the park gates. Levison and Isabel come through, she still refusing his advances. She returns quickly and he waits. (170 ft.)

It will be noticed, incidentally, that the title between shots 65 and 66 is one of those interpolated between two events in the same setting to suggest the passage of time. It has been said that camera technique was not advanced. The short close shot (*Shot 72*) of Levison supporting Isabel as they listen in the garden to Carlyle and Barbara underlines the tension of the moment but is apparently the only manipulation of camera angle and footage for their emotional effect. The only other close shot is the big close-up quoted above (*Shot 15*), a five-foot flash of the initials on the gun, whose purpose plainly is the practical one of indicating that the gun belonged to Richard Hare. Nevertheless these and other examples testify to a growing elasticity of camera position, and a more imaginative use is suggested in an interesting shot of the beach (*Shot 34*—see below) in which only the heads and shoulders of Levison and Isabel are visible at the bottom of the picture, thus greatly emphasizing the height of the distant cliff which he is pointing out to her.

The continuity of *East Lynne* is vastly more complex than that of *Richard III*, if indeed the latter can be said to have any continuity at all. The units, still described in the publicity as "scenes," are shots rather than acts and a new shot no longer invariably means a new setting—a title indicating the passage of time, a short flash, a letter or even (*Shot 74* above) a change of angle can all be used to break into the consecutive appearance of one scene. The length of the shots varies in the neighbourhood of fifty feet; variations, which are very considerable, have no emotional significance with the possible exception of the quick shot already mentioned of Levison and Isabel listening in the garden (*Shot 72*). The

length of the shot depends simply on the amount of action essential to the development of the plot, and this is allowed to follow a normal pace without giving an impression of ridiculous haste. This leisureliness, of course, was the subject of complaint in trade reviews.

With only one exception (see Shots 40-41 below) transitions of time and most transitions of place are managed smoothly by means of titles, and in several cases transitions of place without titles to show what is happening in two different places at the same time are managed successfully. Several sequences are of quite ambitious construction. In the long excerpt already quoted (Shots 65-75) the story unfolds itself through as many as nine shots without verbal explanation. In the following passage also the use of titles is avoided for as much as 220 ft., including in Shots 87 to 90 the co-ordination of simultaneous action in different places:

Title 34 LADY ISABEL, BELIEVING HER HUSBAND TO BE FALSE, IS TEMPTED BY LEVISON TO ELOPE WITH HIM.

Shot 82 The East Lynne drawing-room. Isabel is weeping in the bottom left corner of the screen when Levison taps on the window. She goes to open it, and he enters and points outside, persuading her to go out with him.

Shot 83 Flash of Barbara and Carlyle at the gate. (3 ft.)

Shot 84 The drawing-room again. Isabel backs into the room aghast, swooning and weeping. Levison kneels and talks persuasively, pointing to the door. She capitulates and lets him kiss her. With extreme rapidity she writes a note which she leaves on a table, and is escorted off by the jubilant Levison.

Shot 85 The hall. Levison and Isabel enter, and she gazes yearningly up the stairs; he does not allow her to go up but escorts her, still gazing up, out into the night.

Shot 86 The park gates. A fairly close shot of Barbara and Carlyle, who depart together. (220 ft.)

Title 35 RICHARD TELLS CARLYLE THAT THE STRANGER WHO KILLED HALLIJOHN IS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD.

Shot 87 The undergrowth. Barbara and Carlyle appear. They get Richard out of his hiding-place and he explains rapidly. He then retires and they leave.

Shot 88 The steps of East Lynne. Levison and Isabel descend and get into the carriage, which drives off.

Shot 89 Flash of the drive, with the carriage coming towards the camera. (5 ft.)

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Shot 90 At the gates, Carlyle and Barbara part and she walks up the road. He is just about to enter the grounds as the carriage dashes past. He turns in surprise, and then goes in. (95 ft.)

Title 36 A TERRIBLE SURPRISE.

Shot 91 In the drawing-room Carlyle finds the note.

Shot 92 TO REMAIN UNDER YOUR ROOF AFTER YOUR CONDUCT THIS NIGHT WOULD BE UNBEARABLE.

MAY HEAVEN FORGIVE US BOTH.

YOUR WIFE,

ISABEL. (10 ft.)

Shot 93 Carlyle registers anguish, opens the window and gazes out. His sister comes in and he hands her the note, pointing out of the window. He dismisses the gaping servants and sinks into a chair. (60 ft.)

Title 37 A YEAR LATER AT GRENOBLE. LADY ISABEL AND LEVISON RECEIVE NEWS THAT CARLYLE HAS OBTAINED A DIVORCE, AND LEVISON THROUGH THE DEATH OF HIS UNCLE IS NOW SIR FRANCIS LEVISON, Bart.

Shot 94 Seated at a meal table they each receive and read their letters. Isabel reads hers aloud with great pleasure, which he reciprocates. He then reads his, and becomes puffed up with pride and rebuffs her. She protests and points to her wedding finger. (60 ft.)

Title 38 "AS I AM NOW A BARONET, I CANNOT MARRY YOU—A DIVORCED WOMAN."

Shot 95 He laughs, and she is angry and weeps. He gets his hat and coat and flings some bank notes on the table. These she burns, indignantly pointing to the door. He laughs and jauntily leaves her weeping. (25 ft.)

In this passage the use of the letter, the conversation title, and the crude mime gesture as Isabel points to her wedding finger should also be noted. Both this and the previous excerpt illustrate the emergence of a simple form of editing for purposes of story construction, and another from an early part of the film will show, in its first six shots, that although the camera itself was still static the further use of editing already permitted it to follow people about in a way not directly necessary for the development of the plot.¹

Title 19 AT BOULOGNE. LADY ISABEL UNEXPECTEDLY MEETS LEVISON.

Shot 31 Levison seated before a rocky wall. He peers, rises and advances towards the camera.

Shot 32 A long shot of the beach shows Levison approaching Isabel, who is seated beneath a sunshade. Startled and embarrassed, she tries to get away but he goes with her, helping her over the rocks.

¹ See illustrations.

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- Shot 33* Cut to a view of a path at the foot of a cliff. They approach, he chatting amiably.
- Shot 34* A long shot of the cliff, the back of their heads and shoulders at the bottom of the picture. He points to the cliff, and they turn and come up towards the camera, passing it diagonally.
- Shot 35* A long shot of an arch; the two of them cross the picture and go through it.
- Shot 36* Street wall of a house. They come towards the camera, she stops at the door and they say good-bye politely and she enters. He walks on chuckling wickedly. (190 ft.)
- Title 20* A WEEK LATER. LADY ISABEL INDIGNANTLY REFUSES THE ADVANCES OF LEVISON.
- Shot 37* Camera looking out to sea. Isabel sits by a breakwater, reading. Levison, who is seated near her, attempts to woo her. She flees, dropping her book. He shrugs and pockets the book, nodding to himself. (45 ft.)
- Title 21* CARLYLE HAPPY WITH HIS CHILDREN RECEIVES AN URGENT MESSAGE FROM HIS WIFE.
- Shot 38* East Lynne drawing-room. Carlyle is romping with his children; his old sister, who is playing the piano, reprimands them and rings for the maid to remove the children. A footman brings Carlyle a letter.
- Shot 39* MY DEAR HUSBAND,
 I FEEL UNHAPPY AND LONELY AND WANT TO BE HOME AGAIN AND
 SAFE WITH YOU. COME AT ONCE AND BRING ME HOME.
 WITH LOVE TO YOU AND MY DEAR CHILDREN,
 YOUR AFFECTIONATE WIFE,
 ISABEL. (20 ft.)
- Shot 40* Carlyle is worried, and shows the letter to his sister, who berates him.
- Shot 41* In a hotel hall Isabel stands explaining to Carlyle—
- Shot 42* Flash of the letter in Shot 39— (3 ft.)
- Shot 43* and they embrace. Levison, who has been watching, approaches them and Isabel is distraught. He ogles her; she introduces him to her husband and they all walk off together.

Shot 42 provides an illustration of a letter, shown in a short flash, used as a visual image of the subject of conversation between characters in the film. The passage also contains, in the jerky transition from Shots 40 to 41, the only unsatisfactory continuity example in the film. On the other hand it is evident that considerable care was spent on the comparatively elabo-

rate sequence of Levison and Isabel walking home from the beach, in each shot of which they advance in a different direction from that of the immediately preceding shot. The carefully planned multiplication of images beyond the absolute minimum required by the plot was carried even further in a couple of brief shots (one of them, Shot 83 above, the flash of Carlyle and Barbara at the gate which tells the audience what Isabel has seen through the window) which show appreciation of the fact that shots, as well as letters, could be cut into a scene as pictorial alternatives to titles. Such pictorial elaboration showed a growing control over the film medium and imparted a new style and even elegance to the work of the producer who could handle it successfully.

In general, the film sorts out its involved story with complete success and tells it smoothly and with a fluidity and economy which obey all the canons of film making as explained by contemporary theoreticians. Titles and letters were short; no unfinished business was left at the end of a shot unless it was carried over into the next; the relatively numerous characters were handled firmly and except in two crowd scenes there was one, and only one, focus of attention on the screen at any one moment. The subject was perhaps not worthy of so much skill, but the drama went with a swing and yet without giddiness and this in itself was no small achievement.

Turning to *David Copperfield*, which was released by the Hepworth company at the same date as Barker's *East Lynne*, we find interesting points of difference between the two films. These, unfortunately, cannot be taken as entirely typical of the difference between the two producers, since *David Copperfield* was the work not of Cecil Hepworth himself but of Thomas Bentley, a Dickensian character actor who was making a series of Dickens films for the former about this time. Nevertheless many features of the film—camera movement, dissolves, and possibly the choice of setting and camera angle—are more likely to have emanated from the production staff of the studio than from their still quite inexperienced visiting director, and are consistent with contemporary accounts of the distinctive style of Hepworth production. Briefly, it may be said that this style, together with the complexity of the story chosen, contributed towards a film in which the content of the individual shots was of greater artistic maturity than their relation to each other. It is in this fundamental

respect that it contrasts most strongly with Barker's film, of which the reverse is true.

Like *East Lynne*, *David Copperfield* is black-and-white except for the few exterior night shots, which are tinted blue. Somewhat longer¹ than the other film, it is divided even more arbitrarily into "Parts" which correspond to the six reels, and are not only without dramatic significance but may even split single shots² into two sections. The film contains only forty-five titles as against *East Lynne's* fifty-five, and yet these occupy more of the greater total footage. On the whole they are considerably more elastic in length, varying from a couple of feet for the shortest to some twenty feet or more for a few rather long titles of pretentious literary flavour, written in the first person. This use of the first person, directly inherited from the novel, raises an unusual point; as much of the action before the audience is quite obviously taking place without the presence of the principal character the question of audience identification with him is confused, and towards the end of the film the first person is dropped altogether. It is doubtful whether the technique could have been found satisfactory without being much more skilfully integrated in the conception of the film as a whole.

The titles are employed rather differently to those of *East Lynne*. They are never used for conversation, and only once to indicate the passage of time (an instance which is not altogether successful, possibly because the time indicated in the title is too long to be conveyed so directly between two shots of the same set, from the same angle, and containing the same characters). Their somewhat different purpose is a consequence of the nature of the story chosen. The novel is of a relatively complicated structure, with many ramifications and many characters. The film does not attempt to deal with these by multiplying the number of shots; indeed, despite its greater length it contains very few more shots than *East Lynne*. Instead, it employs many of the titles to convey, in condensed form, much essential knowledge which is otherwise completely inaccessible to the

¹ 7,500 ft. (over two hours). The copy analysed seems to be complete except for the end of Shot 108, which is marked by a very rough join in the film and a jump in the continuity. The length of the missing part is not known; it probably shows Daniel Peggotty's meeting with Little Emily.

² In the analysis a shot has been strictly defined as one uninterrupted picture of the same set from the same angle; any insertion whatever, whether of a letter, a title or even the announcement of the "End of Part X," has been treated as breaking the shot into two.

audience. Understanding of later action depends on such titles as the following:

Title 26 URIAH HEEP STEALS THE DEEDS BELONGING TO BETSY TROTWOOD ON WHICH SHE HAD HOPED TO RAISE MONEY.

Without this concentrated information much of the story's subsequent development would be quite inexplicable. Thus it is through titles that the audience learns of such important incidents as the death of David's mother,¹ Micawber's employment in Mr. Wickfield's office, Steerforth's schoolboy friendship with David, and the latter's marriage to Dora.

At the same time there are a number of titles which are more like the old advance summary. But whatever their form, the development of the story is very much more dependent on titles than in the case of *East Lynne*, and in parts it might almost be maintained that the actual pictures are merely "scenes from the novel." As a result of this it is tempting to regard the film as retrograde, especially since its visual continuity is comparatively poor. Nevertheless the actual position of the titles, which are frequently cut into the middle of shots, corresponds more closely to the practice of later years and must be counted an advance, although on occasion they may be felt to interrupt the smoothness of the story. It should perhaps be added that titles are virtually the only insertions, apart from the three letters, which are allowed to cut into a scene since there are hardly any changes of camera angle, no close-ups, and nothing to compare with Lady Isabel's glimpse of Carlyle and Barbara at the gate. Even the three letters approximate more nearly to titles than to shots, for although the actual letters are shown on the screen they are used only to convey information and are never flashed on again, as in *East Lynne*, as symbolic reminders of something that has gone before. It would probably be a fair summary of the position to say that while this use of the title as an instrument for packing in background information was undoubtedly extending the range of stories capable of film treatment, for the moment it delayed the perfection of visual continuity, which was capable of reaching quite a high stage of development in less rambling stories such as *East Lynne*.

Thus in some respects *David Copperfield* failed to reach the standard

¹ See title 8 below.

of the other film. In others, among them settings and players, it far exceeded it. Both architectural and natural exteriors, said to be the actual places "immortalized by Dickens," are unusually well chosen for their pictorial qualities as well as for their period atmosphere. Steerforth's house at Highgate, the inns and gardens, streets and lanes not only have an air of authenticity but are taken from a variety of camera angles which reveal their beauty and show a rare sense of composition. No particular enterprise was shown in the choice of camera position within the studio, however, and it is probably safe to say that the interesting effects to be achieved by varying it were discovered more readily when the camera was taken on location, and its position thus became a matter for deliberate choice. As in *East Lynne*, some twenty interior sets are used in the course of the film. Because of the structure of the story, however, most of them are used only once or twice. Less obviously theatrical in appearance than those of *East Lynne*, they seem to pay for their greater realism by a lack of individuality and one sitting-room appears much the same as another.

A similar lack of individuality is shown by most of the players in the film. Out of a very large cast, few appear often enough to build up any particular personality and the rich Dickensian characters are reduced to lay figures important only as elements in a plot. Minor eccentrics such as Mrs. Gummidge and Barkis are stripped of all interest. The three who attempt to pack some high-pressure character acting into the few shots at their disposal—Mr. Micawber, Daniel Peggotty and Mr. Dick—do so with a volubility which is not merely useless in a silent film, but completely out of tune with the rest of the playing. On the other hand the good-looking juveniles, David as a man (Kenneth Ware), Steerforth (Cecil Mannerling) and Dora (Alma Taylor), accept their more colourless roles as entirely subsidiary to the development of the story and play with an easy assurance, dignity and restraint which some of Barker's players might have envied. At the same time other members of the company are stiff and awkward, especially the little David, who glances frequently towards the camera for directions. Much of the stilted acting may be the result of the increased restraint and leisurely pace, which leave more room for awkward pauses than the continuous action of an *East Lynne*. Not only does the effort to appear natural while inactive make far greater demands on the actors; but the elimination of crude pantomime, praise-

worthy in itself, leaves many details of behaviour unexplained although the general drift of most passages is clear. David and Steerforth shaking hands is such a detail; coming after the letter suggesting David's visit to Yarmouth, it would surely fail to indicate their decision to go together were it not for the accompanying title. Although such "business" was more realistic than, for instance, Mr. Justice Hare's imitation of handcuffed wrists, it was not sufficiently expressive until film editing had taken over the function of directing the audience's attention. Again, Steerforth's pleading with Little Emily, vastly more credible than Levison's with Lady Isabel, takes the form of a single long shot of them in earnest conversation which is neither so clear nor so interesting. In the absence of even near close-ups such subtlety is frequently lost on the audience, is apt to become tedious, and contributes to the lack of individuality among the players who, at some distance from the camera, require considerable exaggeration of gesture to establish distinctive personalities. The increased restraint was, of course, a very necessary step forward. But without complementary developments of cutting and camera position it tended to increase the burden already thrust on the titles by the impossibly diffuse story.

The leisureliness noticeable in the acting is also characteristic of other aspects of the film. Its blessings are equally mixed. For one thing, although the length of the shots varies constantly within the wide range of 5 to 175 ft., it is not neatly fitted to the amount of plot-developing action as in Barker's production, and in several places the dramatic balance of the film is upset by the inclusion of unnecessary passages of meaningless length. In the first passage quoted below, for example, there is a fairly distant shot¹ which lasts for nearly two minutes of a number of people, unknown and of no interest to the audience, as they dismount from a coach. The major part of another shot² in the same passage is devoted to the riotous behaviour of a class of small boys, which is equally irrelevant to the story, while later in the film Daniel Peggotty takes fully two minutes to enter the boat and take off his boots before finding Emily's letter. The length of such interludes is out of all proportion to the speed with which key events are treated, and deprives the film of any pretensions to emotional rhythm.

¹ Shot 16.

² Shot 24."

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An apparent waste of feet is the way in which one or two of the characters stand watching and waving good-bye to another long after the latter has left the picture. This, a good idea in itself, happens not merely once but eleven times, sometimes at considerable length. The device obtrudes itself uncomfortably on the observer, yet it has a very definite function in the film, for apart from the dissolve it is the only systematic effort to ease the continuity of the shots. For the most part this is extremely perfunctory and lacks the little graces which distinguish *East Lynne*. Even the long passages without titles, of which there are several, are straightforward series of scenes which derive more from the stage than from the camera or the novel, both of which have the power to glance quickly from place to place and back again. To illustrate this the two longest untitled sequences in the film may be quoted, one of eleven minutes and eleven shots and one of ten minutes and sixteen shots.

Title 7 LEAVING MY NATIVE VILLAGE, I AM SENT TO SALEM HOUSE SCHOOL, AS A PUNISHMENT.

Shot 14 David sits dejectedly in the inn yard as the coach is loaded. (40 ft.)

Shot 15 Dissolve to a long shot of a sunny road, partially framed by tall grass in the foreground and a tree at extreme left. A tramp stands in its shade, back to camera, and waves at the coach as it passes. (27 ft.)

Shot 16 Dissolve to a village street. The coach comes on from the right front and draws up before an inn with its back to camera. The passengers dismount with great commotion. Finally David appears and is led by the hand by an old waiter into the inn. (105 ft.)

Shot 17 Fade into the interior of a restaurant. David and the waiter enter by a door at far left and walk towards the centre front (camera pans slightly to the right). (15 ft.)

Shot 18 Cut to a slightly nearer shot as David sits at a table. The waiter serves him but eats the food himself, finally wiping David's mouth and leading him out again (camera panning slightly to left as they go). (130 ft.)

Shot 19 Dissolve to the street. The coach leaves amid similar commotion (85 ft.)

Shot 20 Cut to inside a baggage room, where David is met by a schoolmaster. (Camera pans back and forth several times.) (30 ft.)

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- Shot 21* Cut to a street, and David and the schoolmaster walking off left to front. The man from the baggage room stands shaking his head after them. (9 ft.)
- Shot 22* Dissolve to high wall with the notice SALEM HOUSE SCHOOL beside the gate. David and the master come from the left front. The master holds David up to read the notice and they go in. (23 ft.)
- Shot 23* Cut to the headmaster eating and his wife reading in their sitting-room. When David is brought in the former brings out his cane and laughs, bullying him. Shows him a notice TAKE CARE HE BITES. After caning him on the hand he hangs the notice on the weeping David's back. David is removed and the head is left alone, smiling at the camera. (103 ft.)
- Shot 24* Dissolve to a schoolroom. When the master brings David in the boys are riotous at the sight of the notice. Quiet is restored when the headmaster enters, but when he and the other master leave there is prolonged uproar. (130 ft.)
- Title 8* AFTER BEING AT SCHOOL FOR A FEW MONTHS, I AM INFORMED OF THE DEATH OF MY MOTHER.

This passage demonstrates both the good and bad points of the film. Shot 15, indicating the journey in a somewhat cursory way, has at the same time the originality and curiously striking composition which is characteristic of many individual shots. Similarly Shot 16, although it has the meaningless length to which reference has already been made, is marked by an unusual and effective choice of camera position. Shot 17 contains an example of the camera panning which will be discussed later, while the change of camera angle between this and the next shot is one of the only two in the entire film; the latter's style is such as to suggest that this isolated change was largely accidental, particularly as the change is very slight and is not reversed when David goes back to the door after his meal. The meal itself, which was consumed with the unreal rapidity known only to stage meals, would have been considerably improved if the passage of time had been suggested by a dissolve, a title such as Barker might have employed or even by a simple cut.

The other long passage without titles has similar points of interest:

- Title 22* STEERFORTH AND I SET OUT FOR YARMOUTH.
- Shot 60* Cut to the front door seen slightly from one side. Steerforth's mother and Rosa see David and Steerforth off. (23 ft.)

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- Shot 61* Cut to inside the upturned boat. Steerforth's gazes as he shakes hands with Little Emily are returned by her. (4 ft.)
- Title 23* STEERFORTH IS GREATLY ATTRACTED BY LITTLE EMILY.
- Shot 62* Cut back to the same. David, Ham and Daniel, who are conversing in the background, go outside leaving the demure Little Emily under the prolonged scrutiny of Steerforth. (71 ft.)
- Title 24* A FORTNIGHT LATER I RETURN TO CANTERBURY AND STEERFORTH REMAINS BEHIND.
- Shot 63* Dissolve to the inn yard (as in Shot 8) with a horse and trap waiting. David and Steerforth come from the right side of the camera and the latter sees David off. He stands pondering for a while and then, with a gesture of decision, walks off. (81 ft.)
- Shot 64* (BLUE) Cut to the beach, with Steerforth scrambling to the right front amongst the boats and ropes. (8 ft.)
- Shot 65* (BLUE) Cut to outside of the upturned boat. After a pause Steerforth runs on, peers through the window and enters. (10 ft.)
- Shot 66* Cut to inside the boat. Steerforth enters and talks to Emily, who is alone sewing. He begins to make love, talks persuasively, and kisses her. She rapidly writes a note while he beckons to someone outside the door. (115 ft.)
- Shot 67* (BLUE) Cut to outside the boat. Steerforth's messenger comes out of the door. (5 ft.)
- Shot 68* Dissolve to inside the boat. Emily and Steerforth prepare to leave, placing a note by the window. (21 ft.)
- Shot 69* (BLUE) Dissolve to the inn yard. Steerforth's messenger dashes on and a horse and carriage are rapidly made ready. (27 ft.)
- Shot 70* (BLUE) Dissolve to outside the boat, with Steerforth and Little Emily coming out and disappearing at front left. (17 ft.)
- Shot 71* (BLUE) Dissolve to Yarmouth beach, strewn with boats and with houses in the background. Crossed by Steerforth and Emily from back right to front left. (15 ft.)
- Shot 72* (BLUE) The messengers in a lane with the carriage. Emily and Steerforth come from the back left and get into the carriage which drives off to the front right. The messenger watches it out of sight, pauses, and walks slowly after it. (66 ft.)
- Shot 73* (BLUE) Dissolve back to outside the boat. Daniel appears dragging a net, which he deposits, and goes in. (23 ft.)
- Shot 74* Cut to inside the boat, with Peggotty, Mrs. Gummidge and Ham. Daniel enters and takes off his boots. Emily's note is discovered. (111 ft.)

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Shot 75 Cut to:

WHEN YOU, WHO LOVE ME SO MUCH BETTER THAN I HAVE EVER DESERVED,
SEE THIS—I SHALL BE FAR AWAY.

IT WILL BE NEVER TO COME BACK, UNLESS HE BRINGS ME BACK A LADY.

THIS WILL BE FOUND INSTEAD OF ME. LOVE SOME GOOD GIRL THAT
WILL BE TRUE TO YOU AND KNOW NO SHAME.

IF HE DON'T BRING ME BACK A LADY, AND I DON'T PRAY FOR MY OWN
SELF, I WILL PRAY FOR ALL.

FORGET WE WERE EVER TO BE MARRIED BUT TRY TO THINK AS IF I DIED
WHEN I WAS LITTLE.

MY PARTING LOVE TO ALL,

EMILY. (30 ft.)

Shot 76 Cut back to the same. All four register horror; Ham sinks his head
on his arms on the table; Daniel sits in silent wrath. (26 ft.)

END OF PART IV

Shot 77 Cut back to the same. Daniel rises and, expressing his fury takes a
melodramatic leave. (80 ft.)

Shot 78 (BLUE) Outside the boat. Daniel emerges and sets off. (15 ft.)

This passage contains the film's extremes of both good and bad continuity. Unlike the journey to Dover which David makes as a small boy, and which is granted the unusual subtlety of seven shots in 260 ft., the journey to Yarmouth is dismissed in Shots 60 and 61 with an uncomfortable jump which might have been avoided if, for example, Title 22 before Shot 60 had been replaced by a slightly different title after it. On the other hand the rest of the quotation shows the smoothest and most elaborate continuity in the whole film, although it should be added that even here the progress of time and place is an orderly one and presents no difficulty. Only in Shot 69 is there a mild example of the device, already used by Barker with greater facility, of alternating shots to show what is happening in different places at the same time. It is no credit to the film that there are in this short section no less than three examples (Shots 60, 63 and 72) of the favourite "watching out of sight," while Shot 66 contains the instance of unsatisfactory mime cited earlier and Shot 74 the exaggerated length. On the other side of the balance Shot 70 is an interesting composition, with its two small figures crossing the windswept beach as they leave the upturned boat.

Except in this passage the cutting of the film adds nothing to its cohesion. Yet at the same time extensive use is made of that feature of Hepworth

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production, the dissolve, which was regarded at the time as a most ingenious way of binding a film together. Simple cutting, in the almost invariable method of other producers at the time, is comparatively rare and most of the shots are either introduced or terminated, or both, by a fade. There are several cases in which this is clearly appropriate, such as the final "toast to absent friends" which dissolves to a shot of the absent friends rising to a similar toast and back again. But there are more cases in which the chosen transition from shot to shot seems strange to a modern observer, although in part this may be merely the reaction of one conditioned to more recent practices. The comparatively few instances of simple cutting, for example, seem more or less haphazard and without dramatic functions. There are cases such as Shots 20 to 23 above, on the one hand, where the cutting of shots that are supposed to follow each other quickly is entirely satisfactory. But there are also some very misleading uses of the dissolve where cuts might have been better, and vice versa:

- Title* 2 I WAS BORN AT BLUNDERSTONE, IN SUFFOLK. MY FATHER'S EYES HAD CLOSED UPON THE LIGHT OF THIS WORLD SIX MONTHS, WHEN MINE OPENED ON IT. MY EARLIEST RECOLLECTIONS ARE THOSE HAPPY DAYS SPENT WITH MY WIDOWED MOTHER.
- Shot* 1 In the garden of a pleasant country house David's mother sits near the camera, with the little boy playing about her. Arm in arm they walk towards camera and off right. (55 ft.)
- Title* 3 MR. MURDSTONE, A MAN I DISLIKE, SEEMS TO TAKE GREAT NOTICE OF MY MOTHER.
- Shot* 2 A midshot of Mr. Murdstone as he holds his horse and stares sourly at the camera. (N.B.—The impression that he is actually staring at David and his mother is somewhat marred by the position of the title.) (8 ft.)
- Shot* 3 Dissolve to an arch. David and his mother come through it; she stops, waves excitedly and runs back; glumly David turns and slowly follows her. (30 ft.)
- Shot* 4 Dissolve to Mr. Murdstone riding away from the camera, alongside a fence. (10 ft.)
- Shot* 5 Dissolve to a sunny picture of the side of the house. Outside a gate at the extreme right Mr. Murdstone rides up and dismounts. David and his mother appear at the extreme left and she runs along the path to meet Murdstone. David advances slowly and then turns back, the camera panning with him to reveal a door at the further left. He

stands here with the maid for a moment and then goes in. Murdstone and the mother then reappear from the right, kiss good-bye outside the door and part. Fade. (82 ft.)

Here, for example, each dissolve suggests a finality which in fact the passage has not yet reached. The contrary fault is shown by a sequence later in the film, where in one shot David meets Dora for the first time and in the next, cut into the former with an entirely inappropriate abruptness, they are seen wandering arm in arm in the manner of intimate friends.

The outstanding feature of *David Copperfield* is not its narrative structure, but the actual physical use of the camera. A certain gift for dramatic invention and elaboration should not be overlooked: the two inquisitive heads that appear over the high-backed settle as David and Steerforth noisily greet each other in the inn; Agnes' unhurried gesture as she gently folds the dead Dora's hands on her breast—a finesse significantly lacking in the abrupt death scenes of *East Lynne*. But it was not only in the content of the pictorial compositions that the film excelled most of its contemporaries but also in their form, that is in camera angle and camera movement. In its relation to people the position of the camera was similar to that of the other film; interiors were chiefly midshots with the characters visible down to the waist or slightly below, and exteriors were more likely to be long shots, although there was considerable movement to and from the camera and past it on either side. It has already been remarked that neither close-ups, nor near close-ups were used, even the notices in Shots 22 and 23 (see above) being shown in long shot and drawn to the attention of the audience in a somewhat forced manner. But panning, which occurs only once in the whole of *East Lynne*, is used frequently and naturally in *David Copperfield*. The camera follows the central figure back and forth with ease for small distances in no less than fourteen shots, in most of them moving not merely once but several times. It is impossible to over-emphasize the importance of this development, but perhaps of even greater interest is the unique shot in which the camera tilts as David bends over to lift Little Emily from where she lies prostrate on the floor. Use was being made of the fact that the camera could move on its axis, although not yet that the axis itself could move. At the same time, care was being exercised in the choice of camera position, at least in location work. Some examples of this have already been mentioned, but

there are many more and the film is full of compositions which seem exciting and delightful in comparison with the unimaginative viewpoint of *East Lynne*. A dusty lane curling across the screen from the background of one side to pass by the camera on the other; an expanse of white stone wall with the child's small figure leaning wearily against it; the overhanging embankment with Emily in its shadow, bent on suicide; the sunlit front door of Steerforth's Highgate home, seen first through its wrought iron gate and then, as David and Daniel Peggotty fling this open and walk up the path, in a frame of iron fencework. Such qualities are harder to demonstrate verbally than the structural smoothness of Barker's film, but were widely appreciated at the time. Contemporary observers admired Hepworth films for their beauty and their gift of capturing the charm of the English scene. They might have added a tribute to the originality and artistic perception with which the possibilities of the camera viewpoint were being explored, and of which a final example may be quoted. David and Emily emerge from the house to which she has fled, and David hails a cab.²

Shot 105 Dissolve to a long shot of the street. A horse and cab walk across the line of vision so near to the camera that when the horse stops only the lower part of the cab door is visible. David and Emily come from behind the camera and as they get in we see first their backs, and then the jostling backs of an inquisitive crowd which gathers round the cab door. As the cab drives off the crowd scatters in all directions. (37 ft.)

East Lynne and *David Copperfield* set each other off so well that their preservation side by side in the National Film Library is one of the few pieces of good fortune enjoyed by the historian of the early British film. The shortcomings of each are illuminated by the successes of the other. *East Lynne* on the one hand was a simple melodrama hardly worthy of the assured mastery with which it was transformed into a film narrative; the structure of *David Copperfield*, on the other hand, which was more advanced in its use of titles and at the same time less advanced in its cutting, was the rather unsuccessful attempt of a more dignified producer to compass a more complex subject. But while the former has the virtues of a work that is fashioned as a whole, the latter has those of one that is perfected piece by piece. The relationship of one shot to another is less

advanced, but the nature of the shots themselves is considerably more so. Editing is usually accepted as the essence of the film as an art form. It would be superficial, however, to conclude from this that the producer who had already mastered its elements was making the greater contribution to the aesthetic development of the film; or that while the Barker type of production was hammering out the essentials of film technique the Hepworth type was merely embellishing it with luxurious details. Both were equally necessary to each other. For although at this stage the use of dissolves and a panning or tilting camera was largely haphazard and seemed to concern only single shots, its future development was bound up with the relationship between them; and in the same way, the workmanlike cutting shown by one film would in the end have been sterile without the other's exploration of camera angles. For it is fundamentally misleading to evaluate two lines of development by their nearness to the stage in which they find joint fulfilment, since this exists only by virtue of their synthesis. It should rather be said that the two films, strangely reflecting the contrasting personalities dominating their production, typify the development of film technique in the two complementary aspects of pictorial and narrative composition.

Aesthetic Development

The formulation of aesthetic standards, and the endeavour to decide where responsibility lay for the film as an artistic whole, were processes furthered not only by an artistic vanguard with preconceived theories, but also by the conscientious technician learning by experience and more than a little inclined to deride artistic theorizing. To view the art of the film as a fusion of elements from other arts with elements peculiar to itself is historically justified, and through the contemporary accounts of theoreticians the fusion and transformation can be seen taking place. During this period music and other sound was still external to production and in so far as it existed at all was contributed by the showmen.¹ To the renter was due the over-emphasis of the film's affinity to the stage, and the art of the theatre acquired an unhealthy influence largely through renter-sponsored films of stage productions. But the two predominating influences of the time were those of literary and pictorial art, twin strains in the aesthetic standard which was becoming defined in the minds of film makers and film critics whether art-conscious or not. The early film reviewer harped on comprehensibility and "grouping." Did the images succeed in telling their story clearly? and were they, individually, pleasing to the eye? The two points were the expression of this dual influence, and more, of the duality of the film's aesthetic composition. For the question of comprehensibility, which was seen as the function of the scenario and as such primarily a literary function, is the first problem of the film as a series of images, or as a composition in time. Whereas grouping, epitomising the contemporary consciousness of pictorial composition, was the simplest recognition of the film as a visual art.

Such were the influences. Of the two it was the literary strand around which centred the more ordered body of aesthetic theory. The written scenario was uncompromisingly regarded as the repository of not only

¹ See appendix to this chapter for an account of music and sound effects between 1906 and 1914.

story content, but also of its film treatment and thus of the film as a construction in time. Of course, accounts of the division of labour in the industry showed the same over-simplification then as they do now, since production depended on the collaboration of different specialists and the true extent of their contributions varied with the individuals concerned. In particular the influence of the director was increasing throughout the period. Nevertheless in contemporary theory the stress was on the scenario, which may therefore be regarded as the work of a somewhat hypothetical scenario or "photoplay" writer, and there was a clearer formulation of the rules of a new craft in this field than, for example, in that of camera work. It is not intended to imply that the two were mutually exclusive, or in fact that they were not merely different aspects of the same process. The construction of the scenario changed to include each new development in the use of the camera. But it was the scenario, rather than the camera itself, which was temporarily the focus of artistic interest.

The importance of the written scenario was bound up with the appearance of the long film, for the latter both required careful preparation and gave scope for serious artistic treatment. In particular it was bound up with the adaptations, which initiated the long film and themselves seemed the very embodiment of Art. But despite several years of lip-service to the "new art" the artistic functions of the long film were not universally admitted at first and its advance, although inexorable, occasioned one of the most bitter controversies of the period.

By 1906 1,000 ft. was a length not unknown among the more important films. In 1912 films of an hour or more and even one of some three hours appeared, and by 1914 films of one or two hours were becoming more frequent among the many exclusives and features although the average drama still lasted some ten minutes. Resistance to the new lengths was at its height during the months immediately preceding the 1912 mammoths and centred round the three-reelers. The protests were from the exhibitors:

I've allowed Mr. Film Producer to tell me, week by week, what I should show—nay, even have admired their quaint language, "You must show," and I've allowed them to make films twice as long as the subject needed, and been amazed at the actors' slow and graceful methods of love-making, reminding me of nothing so much as an elephant sitting down after a hard day's work. I have

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even watched unmoved the machine absorb 20 ft. of film to show a swain turning from his lady-love and passing through a door.¹

The complaint against padding was hardly a legitimate one yet, however. Length itself was the enemy, and the showman, claiming to be the interpreter of the public's wishes and the protector of its interests, angrily reiterated that no audience would stand these monstrous lengths, and that if fools and cranks persisted in such production the cinematograph was doomed. The indisputable drawing power of the long films already in circulation was dismissed as temporary, merely hastening the race to disaster.

The exhibitors were not unanimous and many were glad to book the long films, particularly wealthy exhibitors with big first-run houses. The stiffest resistance probably came from the small proprietors, who noticed with alarm that prices were increasing even more than length. On the other hand, even R. T. Jupp, who has already been described as one of the biggest and most progressive exhibitors, declared himself against the long film in 1911—only two years, incidentally, before he himself was to found one of the biggest producing companies of moderately long feature films in England. The financial motive for disapproval seems to have been augmented by a firm and widespread belief among exhibitors that the popularity of the picture shows rested almost entirely on one thing—their variety. People went to picture theatres rather than to “real” theatres, it was felt, because there they had comedy, drama, interest and news in one programme and because they could walk in at any time and pick up the thread within a few minutes, when a new film began. This theme was repeated again and again. The implication was that films were good only to while away an odd hour or so and any attempt to raise them above this humble station would drive audiences back to the “real” theatre, which they would naturally prefer.

It was clear, in fact, that despite their preoccupation with *ton patrons* and high-class Art the exhibitors in general had little faith in the future development of the product they were selling. This is not unexpected, since anyone possessing such faith would probably have been drawn to production rather than to exhibition. More surprising is the widespread misinterpretation of public demand, for in every way the film makers, who were in a position to know the inadequacies of five-minute dramas

¹ *Bioscope*, July 6, 1911, p. 7.

and how they could be lessened by greater length, were vindicated by a level of public appreciation considerably higher than that envisaged by commercial interests.

The worse period of disagreement was over before British films of any considerable length began to be produced in 1912. Naturally enough it was not until then, when opposition had died down and the production of a long film ceased to be a daring venture undertaken only by the visionary, that a genuine grievance against the long film appeared. For by 1913 second-rate material was being puffed and padded to feature length simply to capture the exclusive market and extra length no longer always implied extra effort. But by this time the compromise view was generally accepted that although there would always be room for split-reel dramas more serious artistic works were also desirable, for which greater length was essential. The defence of a few years earlier was proved again and again.

It is impossible to condense within the space of ten minutes happenings which, in real life, would occupy perhaps as many hours or weeks, if justice is to be done to the subject dramatically and the sense of realism maintained. There can be no creation of an "atmosphere" under these conditions, nor can there be any attempt at characterization except in the rougher outlines. In short, all talk of Art and the cinematograph must inevitably remain windy and ineffectual cant while managers force manufacturers to dispense with all so-called "padding" and reduce everything to a jargon of sensationalism. Imagine the tragedy of *Macbeth* enacted in any form within the space of fifteen minutes! If it were intelligible, which is doubtful, it would be emotionally valueless, whilst the pell-mell rush of incident would destroy any significance it might otherwise possess as the portrait of a past age.¹

The truth of this will be seen by reference to the analysis of *Richard III* (see page 222), and the long film had fully justified itself by 1914 if only in increased comprehensibility.

While length was increasing, the growing attention paid to the scenario manifested itself in the elaboration of a technique of photoplay writing. Instructions for writers tended, particularly during the earlier years, to include miscellaneous rules about subject-matter. Writers were exhorted to avoid more than one murder per drama, and "don't let villainy be triumphant";² too great a use of visions and dreams and other "back-business" was stigmatized as amateurish; while by 1912 one company at

¹ *Bioscope*, September 21, 1911, p. 629.

² *Ibid.*, June 26, 1910, p.4.

least was already bored by Boy meets Girl, Boy loses Girl, Boy gets Girl—"This worn-out practice . . . 'they meet, they love, they have trouble and are reconciled'."¹

The bulk of such instructions occurred before the growing command of technique began to encourage greater elasticity in the choice of theme, and rules of construction became of greater importance than rules of content. Writers were told more often to "remember, that a comedy subject requires less scenes than a dramatic. For the former, about a dozen scenes are needed; the latter will probably run to about eighteen, or at the most twenty."²

1. Synopsis.—Write a synopsis of the story of the play. Make the synopsis as brief as possible, and yet have it tell the real story of the play.

2. Cast of Characters.—Follow the synopsis with a cast of all the important characters. Describe each important character briefly.

3. The Scenario Proper.—Divide the scenario into scenes, giving each change in the location of the action a separate scene—that is, whenever the plot renders it necessary for the operator to change the position of his camera, as from an interior to an exterior view, begin a new scene. Number the scenes consecutively to the end of the play. At the beginning of each scene, give a brief but clear word picture of the settings of the scene; also the position and action of the characters introduced when the pictures first flash on the screen. Do not overburden these descriptions with words, and yet tell all that it is necessary for the proper picturing of the scene . . . Now carefully study out the needed action for each scene and then describe it briefly, being careful to cut out every act that does not have a direct bearing on the development of the plot. Do not enter too much into details in these descriptions. . . . Use sub-titles or leaders sparingly—only when necessary to the proper understanding of the play. Make the action in the pictures tell the story as nearly as possible. Never use a note or a letter, unless the action absolutely demands it.

Introduce your important characters in the first scene . . . Have only two or three leading characters, and confine the plot to them. No side complications are needed.

Do not introduce bar-room scenes, drunkenness, needless drinking, brutal murders, robberies, etc. Keep your plays clean.³

It was necessary to explain the importance of good continuity:

A "scene" is the action taken by the camera in one spot without stopping. More than one scene may be made in the same setting, but each one must be numbered. Do not write:

¹ *Bioscope*, September 19, 1912, p. 879.

² *Ibid.*, June 26, 1910, p. 4.

³ *The Pictures*, August 17, 1912, p. 4.

Scene I.—John comes from house, walks rapidly up the street, and presently finds himself in the country.

Write it thus:

Scene I.—Exterior of house—John enters from house—exit up street.

Scene II.—Street—John passes across picture.

Scene III.—Country road—John enters, etc.

The average full reel contains between eighteen and thirty scenes, according to the length of the scenes. It is best not to keep the action in one scene too long, though the same scene may be used again. The audience gets restless if the same setting is in sight for too long at one time. Plan your scenes so that the action is advanced properly, the characters moving from one scene to another in regular sequence. If at the close of a scene some of the characters are left on the stage, they cannot be seen the next moment standing in another scene. Either take them off the stage, to bring them on again in the next scene, or plan some other scene in which they do not immediately appear.¹

Barker and Hepworth films have already been described as British productions remarkable for their lucidity and smoothness, and in particular Hepworth's use of the dissolve has been seen in the last chapter:

. . . the dissolving effect which this company usually employs to take one scene into the next. This method not only avoids the harsh, unpleasant jerk which usually associates itself in pictures with a change of scene, but also secures an increased realism. It provides a sort of "intermezzo," which prevents the hiatus in the action from being too harsh, and even produces an apparently greater continuity. It is not a method which can be employed indiscriminately, of course, but the Hepworth Company are careful of the way in which they use it, and it is consequently very successful.²

It seems fairly plain that some makers not only mastered the current theories of continuity but were actually far in advance of the rest of the trade. In fact many of the complaints against padding, like the following trade criticism of *The Lure of London*, were directed at promising attempts to effect difficult continuity by visual means. *The Lure of London*, filmed at the Hepworth studio, was a stage adaptation and as such all the more noteworthy for its new conception of continuity—which can hardly be believed to have wasted very much footage in this four-reel film:

It is . . . sufficient for the plot to show that the heroine has signed a contract for an Australian tour. To see her embarking, to assist at her farewells on the

¹ *Bioscope*, August 22, 1912, p. 559.

² *Ibid.*, February 29, 1912, p. 629.

landing-stage, and to watch the vessel slowly leaving the dock, delays the action of the play, and has no immediate bearing on the plot.¹

In the work of inferior film makers the perfecting of visual continuity may have been delayed by the existence of an alternative and much easier device for bridging gaps, the sub-title, and its satellite the inserted letter. These increased steadily from 1906 onwards and were the subject of further instructions:

“Leaders” (or “sub-titles”) cannot be more than twenty words in length, and should be much shorter. Letters cannot contain more than thirty or forty words.²

The longer films encouraged the ambitious use of stories whose complications could probably only have been clarified, at this early stage of film technique, by an extensive use of sub-titles. But despite the popularity of the latter among harassed film makers the need for a more highly developed film technique was recognized by some. It was only after a period of elaboration during which they were used by the more advanced producers with greater skill and often replaced by visual continuity, that the titles came to occupy a less conspicuous, though still important, part in the film. Herkomer, indeed, said that a “great film should tell its story almost without a sub-title. A sub-title is often a subterfuge to escape representing action.”³ But although by 1913 it was already felt by a vocal minority that the “perfect picture play should contain no sub-titles at all”⁴ this was an exaggeration upon which not even the most advanced producers acted and the correct use of titles was an accepted branch of photoplay writing. This commentator continued:

Its primary function, of course, is to explain points which might not be wholly clear from the action, but its possibilities do not end here. In some cases, for instance, a sub-title may take the place of the “curtain” on the legitimate stage in dividing two scenes which cannot easily be separated in any other way, but which are better not placed immediately next door to one another. Then, the sub-title will sometimes heighten dramatic effect. If, for example, you prefix before a big explosion scene a sub-title, “The Explosion,” you will prepare your audience, work up the excitement, and, consequently, enhance the effect of the incident. Humorous sub-titles constitute another branch of the art. One has often seen cleverly phrased sub-titles draw hearty laughter in comedies, and, although this may not appear, from an artistic point of view, an entirely

¹ *Bioscope*, February 5, 1914, p. 595.

³ *Ibid.*, October 30, 1913, p. 341.

² *Ibid.*, August 22, 1912, p. 559.

⁴ *Ibid.*, July 3, 1913, p. 39.

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legitimate method of doing things, it unquestionably increases the success of the piece, which, after all, has to be the first consideration.

As a general rule, sub-titles should be worded as concisely as possible. They should not say more than is absolutely necessary, lest the subsequent scene should lose its interest through having been fully described beforehand. An involved style should be rigorously avoided, as the audience has only a limited space of time in which to read the explanation on the screen, and may find it difficult to grasp the purport of intricate sentences.¹

The use of titles was the subject of almost as much bickering on the part of the exhibitors as visual continuity, and many of them took the comprehensive view that anything but pictures of action was a tiresome waste of film:

... not only have the lengths of title but also the number of sub-titles increased beyond comparison during the past four years. Further, the innovation of announcing the cast and actors, together with the necessary mark of the makers or the agent, who has obtained, in many cases, sole rights, and yet another addition, in the form of the Censor's certificate, brings up this list of more or less useless film to such a formidable matter, that, if the abuse is allowed to go unchecked, in time we shall be able to eliminate the actors, and tell the story without the pictures.²

Such complaints were certainly not always justified. The use of the wise-crack title, for instance, especially by Pimple and other music-hall comedians, was a feature of the pre-war comic which had considerable popularity of its own. At the same time the title was undoubtedly used in many cases, particularly by the less reputable firms, as a cheap and easy way of securing extra length and its abuse allowed many a second-rate film of slight content to pass as a long feature. The forty-two titles of Motograph's *Great Gold Robbery*,³ must have occurred at the rate of one every fifty-five feet, or about two every three minutes, and at least sixty per cent of them would seem to be superfluous by any reasonable standard:

Home, Sweet, Home.

The Thieves Plan the Gold Robbery.

Spies Watch the Unloading of the Treasure Ship.

The Thames Police.

Walter Hyde is late for duty.

Walter overhears the thieves planning the desperate theft.

Captured.

In peril of his life.

¹ *Bioscope*, July 3, 1913, p. 39.

² *Bioscope*, July 10, 1913, p. 136.

³ 2,300 ft., released 1913.

David Copperfield

INSET III



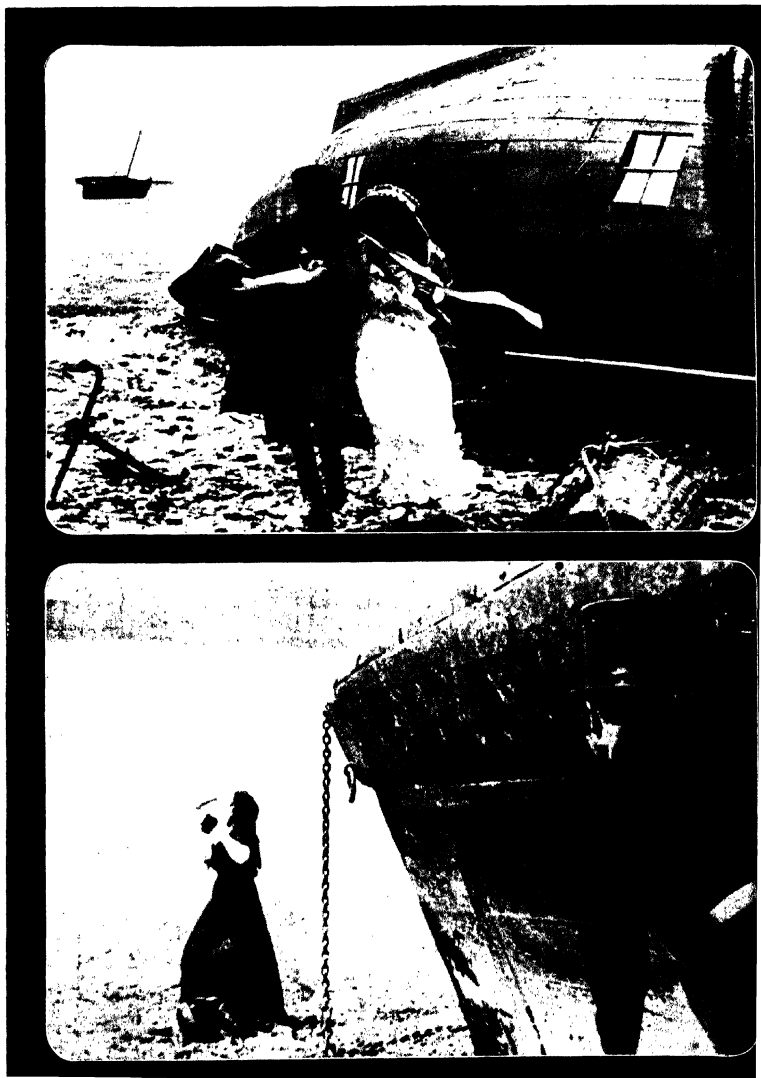
The behaviour of the players was considerably more restrained than it was in *East Lynne*, as in this piece of by-play between Steerforth and Little Emily, or at Dora's death-bed.

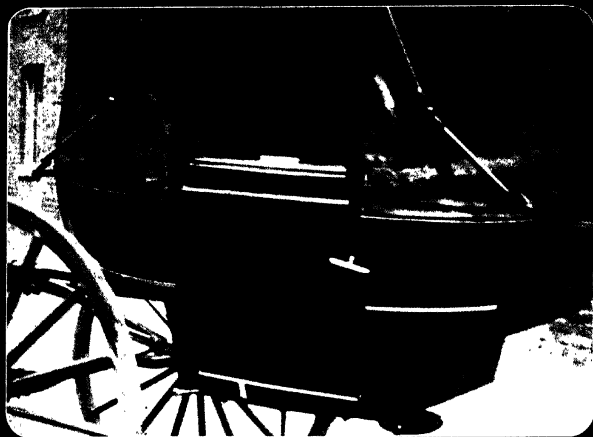


The "grouping" was awkward at Heep's arrest, which took place in a confused scuffle, but the film contained many evidences of an unusual care for pictorial composition. Examples include this view of the coach bowling along a country road—

David Copperfield

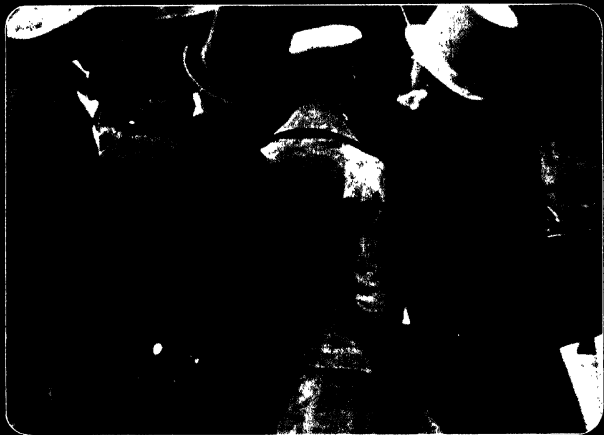
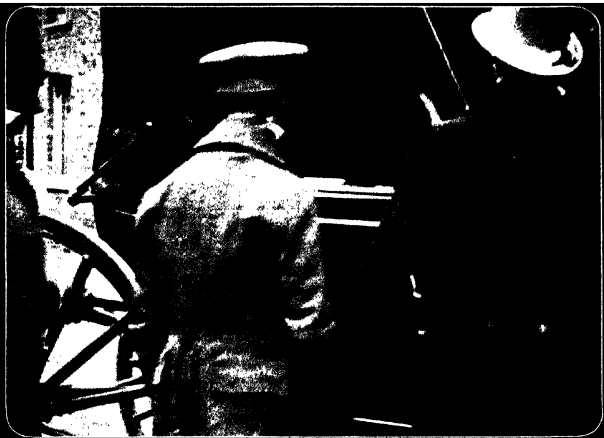
—Emily and Steerforth eloping from the boat—and Emily about to attempt suicide.





An original shot shows a carriage driving up—David and the driver assist Little Emily into it—David gets in and the driver goes round the back—

David Copperfield



—a crowd collects
round the door—peers
in as the carriage
starts moving—and
scatters as it drives
away.



Outdoor shots show that choice of location and camera angle which gave Hepworth films a reputation for pictorial beauty and for realism and charm in their portrayal of England. Illustrations of this include the following shots of the journey of Peggotty and David in Barkis' cart—David and his mother at their home—

David Copperfield

—the flight of Steerforth and Emily at Yarmouth—David's encounter with Dan'l in London—





—David's journey to his aunt at Dover—and Steerforth's home at Highgate.

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A desperate situation.
Suspended in mid-air.
A perilous position.
A false policeman.
A street accident.
The robbery is accomplished.
The theft of the gold-laden van.
Walter is missing.
The thieves cache the gold in the river.
Walter's struggle for freedom.
A signal for help.
"Dot" crosses the river.
To the rescue.
Her lover in danger.
At the risk of her life.
Climbing to the rescue.
A dizzy height.
The police arrive.
In the nick of time.
The lowering of the crane.
The release of Walter.
The thieves convey the stolen gold to a barge.
Down the river.
The fight on the barge.
Boarded by the police.
A struggle in the water.
Beneath Big Ben.
A desperate dive from Westminster Bridge.
Saved.
The capture of the gang.
The death of Swell Jack.
A honeymoon trip.
In the shadow of old Saint Paul's.

Bannister Merwin, one of the few photoplay writers widely known by name, described too great a reliance on titles as one of the greatest snares awaiting inferior writers. Merwin was chief staff writer of the London Film Company and a "man deeply in earnest, who has taken the trouble to acquire real knowledge of the medium in which he worked." This knowledge told him that he could manipulate time and space, arrange scenes in such a sequence as to have logical or even dramatic meaning, and obtain

special effects by close-ups, cut-backs, multiple exposure and titles. Close-ups, known as early as 1901, were a favourite form of comic climax by 1906 or 1907 and the flash-back was fairly widely used by 1912. The writer, Merwin explained, must have an understanding of the "time values." Knowing the technical possibilities of the film he must use them to show rather than to tell his story, a distinction echoed by another well-known photoplay writer, the Marchioness of Townshend. Merwin made it clear that his interest was at least as much in the treatment of the story as in its content and there was a growing feeling that it was for the writer to design not merely the substance but the form of the film. The film's artistic future seemed to lie in the hands of the trained writers. Paradoxically, any attempt to wean films from the original source of the writer's importance, literary adaptations, merely served to accentuate it since the new lengths established by the adaptations made professional authorship indispensable. Merwin realized that "adaptations must always be false are to a certain extent," and optimistically declared, "I don't think that they will last much longer, or, at any rate, be nearly so prevalent, when writers realized the possibilities of the cinematograph as a distinct new means of expression."¹

The continuity aspect of editing, as opposed to the emotional aspect, was, as we have seen, already being developed as a function of the written script, and there was reasonable ground for belief in the creative importance of the script writer. But by the time it became articulate the responsibility for the conception of the film as a whole was already shifting to another member of the production team, the director. The latter, still sometimes indistinguishable from the unspecialized producer or "maker," was by 1913 acquiring a personal ascendancy which embraced artistic as well as managerial responsibility. The reviewer of *The Battle of the Sexes* in 1914 was praising not the writer but D. W. Griffith when he said that "the film illustrates the enormously increased importance of treatment over story matter."² As the work of editing became more important, it fell to the director:

The photographer should be able to cut up and piece the negatives but it is surely better form for him to leave this essentially dramatic part of the work to the producer . . .³

¹ *Bioscope*, April 9, 1914, p. 172.

² *Ibid.*, June 25, 1914, p. 1303.

³ *Picture Play Photography*, by H. M. Lomas, 1914, p. 166.

This change was due partly to the personal influence of the best directors, especially of D. W. Griffith, but also to more fundamental causes. Why, for example, was talent attracted to direction rather than to writing, since the theory of the time stressed the creative function of the latter? The low pay (see elsewhere) may have failed to attract writers of creative ability in sufficient numbers to fill the place assigned to them. The fashion of Sensation may have directed the writer's attention away from development of form and back to subject-matter. But in addition it seems probable that an exaggerated claim had been made for the writer, and one which if rigidly accepted would have facilitated little further development. For the elementary definition of continuity may have been possible from the writer's desk and even the emotional values of quick or slow cutting might have been appreciated theoretically; but variation of camera angle and camera movement, even in such simple essays as the following unusual shot in a Hepworth film¹ of 1914, were more likely to be developed on the floor:

Especially remarkable is the scene wherein the camera follows a pedestrian walking slowly through a wood—an example of absolute technical perfection.²

The literary connotations of photoplay writing, moreover, encouraged in the less experimental an exaggerated idea of the film's affinity to other forms of story telling at the expense of its affinity to pictorial art.

The latter was the second influence mentioned above and the basis of another school of thought, which was preoccupied with the visual, as opposed to the temporal, aspect of film construction. This body of opinion was characterized firstly by the fact that it still conceived the pictorial values of the film largely in static terms; secondly, by the fact that considerations of lighting, décor and composition were tested not by their contribution to the film's emotional tone but by their positive approach to the two paramount virtues, realism and beauty.

One of the first things to strike early audiences had been the film's wonderful illusion of reality. Following not long afterwards, the fascinating ingenuity of the trick film was admired as a peculiarly appropriate use of the film, yet for some time the devotion to reality was such that the occasional use of trick work to secure "fake" effects in ordinary dramatic films was regarded almost as fraud. Such examples as the following, apparently using multiple prisms to give illusion of drunkenness, necessarily remained

¹ *Blind Fate*, 1,000 ft., released March 1914.

² *Bioscope*, February 12, 1914, p. 708.

“novelty items” as long as serious dramatic films were used only to convey an impression of objective reality:

WARWICK. *He's Got 'Em*. This picture permits us to see things through the confused vision of an individual who has imbibed somewhat too freely, and the strange and fantastic shapes which are conjured up from the effects of a distorted vision are remarkable in the extreme. The kaleidoscope changes of mosaic-like segments as they merge from one unexpected shape to another, provide a series of views something out of the common, and as a trick picture, embodying such mysterious powers of creation from the inanimate, possesses a fund of entertainment.¹

The sharp distinction between trick and ordinary films, however, broke down as the many convenient ways of giving a totally false impression of reality were adopted. As early as 1906 someone was struggling with the problems later solved by rear projection:

Briefly the principle of the invention is to effect a combination between an optical lantern and a kinematograph, the former being used for the background of a picture, for instance, and the latter in representing the action in the foreground. It might be required to represent a rescue from drowning in the Thames. A lantern slide would give the view of the river and a kino. provide the representation of the rescue, the foreground of the slide being blotted out and the film projection taking its place. If the invention has any merit, it should prove of use in at least one way. A film might be required of an incident which occurred some distance away. It would cost a great deal of money to take an expedition down and re-act the occurrence for the camera, but the utilization of the lantern for the surroundings of the scene would save a great deal of trouble, and the action could easily be performed at the headquarters of the firm.²

In a few years' time the new sensationalism demanded all the powers of deception the film could command, and Kinetograph's *The Aerial Anarchists*,³ which contained bombed forts and bridges, wrecked trains and a startling view of St. Paul's dome surrounded by painted flames, was an early example of the model and semi-trick effects which abounded just before the war. A convincing appearance, however, was still the only aim; with very few exceptions, the fantastic was strictly confined to novelty films and the introduction of subjectivity into ordinary dramas was almost unknown. Much the same orientation is to be found in the use of lighting and décor,

¹ *Bioscope*, June 2, 1910, p. 39.

² *Optical Lantern and Kinematograph Journal*, September 1906, p. 199.

³ 700 ft., November 9, 1911.

by now described as the "mounting." Authenticity and a "real" look were still sufficiently difficult of achievement to exclude much deliberate use of such elements for subjective impressions, to set the mood or heighten the dramatic effect. However, a second consideration crept in here, for the desirability was assumed not only of realism but also of beauty.

Pictorial composition, like story construction, had soon become the subject of detailed instructions and an early attempt was made to reduce the search for beauty to simple rules. In 1906 Theodore Brown of the *Optical Lantern and Kinematograph Journal* wrote:

Of course, the composition of a picture must necessarily be ever on the change as regards its "living" parts, but those parts which remain stationary may be arranged so as to produce either a pleasing or a disagreeable effect on the mind of a trained and critical observer. It is painfully apparent that in many living pictures a far better viewpoint might have been chosen from which to take the photographs; on the other hand, certain makers evince considerable artistic skill in their selections, arranging their subjects in such a way and at such places that pictorial beauties are embraced as much as possible. Apart from the fact that varying positions will be occupied in the film by the moving figures, there are certain rules of pictorial composition that should be borne in mind when choosing the surroundings which are to form the background of the picture.

He continued with such rules as:

Parallel lines are objectionable. If the horizon is bounded by a straight line the middle distance or foreground should be undulating . . . a few straight lines are exceedingly valuable in a landscape, giving variety by opposing the more graceful curves, and presenting a feeling of stability in the picture. The lines of a building on an eminence, or seen through trees always add to the picturesque effect. The choice of the position of the horizon is often a matter for serious consideration, but it may be taken as a rule that it should never be equidistant from the top and bottom of the picture . . . it will be found that most subjects require the greater portion of the picture to be devoted to the earth. This is especially the case where a view of the moving objects is to be covered as far as possible through their progress from a distant front to one close at hand. Before passing from the question of composition, it might be remarked that the introduction of moving figures should be strictly confined to actors absolutely necessary to the plot. . . . We always considered that the excessive number of actors in the subject known as the "Trip to the Moon" was a weakness in this otherwise excellent production.¹

The primary importance of beauty was usually unquestioned, and static

¹ *Optical Lantern and Kinematograph Journal*, July 1906, p. 167.

terms such as "grouping" and "posing" were preferred to a word like "mime," which is essentially connected with movement. They indicated a certain decorative importance of the players which was noticeable until about 1911. An example of this concentration on visual beauty is the first of the Elwin Neame series, *The Lady of Shalott*, in which Ivy Close posed with a mirror in a decorative period setting. The film apparently had little dramatic intention or structure, being rather a cinematic exercise of pictorial beauty:

The mirrored pictures of the wayfarers on the road to "many tower'd Camelot," for instance, strike one as quite unique. The use of a mirror is, in itself, by no means a novelty in films, of course, but in this particular case the reflection is far more cunningly arranged than usual. A concave glass is used, picturing a wide area in a small space, and the whole vision has been given a mystical effect by what is apparently a certain misty dullness on the mirror's surface. This difference in tone may be due to natural shadows, but, whatever its cause, it is certainly very striking, as is the whole scene in which the mirror figures.

The sailing of the boat "down the river's dim expanse" at the end of the film is quite one of the most beautiful open-air studies we remember. The effect at times is almost stereoscopic, and throughout the artistry of the photography and arrangement generally is so admirable, as to move one to avow that it is "better than Nature."¹

Just as many writers felt that it was on them that the development of the film depended, pictorial artists were inclined to feel that it lay rather with them. But the very terms used emphasize the static nature of visual composition as it was understood at this time, and the many analogies to painting or draughtsmanship usually ignored the essential difference between the film and other forms of visual art. Herkomer was impressed by the similarity:

I see the greatest possibility of art in the film. I do not always find it, certainly, but then I do not always do so throughout an exhibition of paintings or sculpture. . . . I should think the black and white artist never had such a chance as now, with the cinema by his side.²

Furniss, too, saw the likeness:

One must not lose sight of the fact that to write plots for picture plays is essentially work for an artist rather than for an author or dramatist, for the artist sees and thinks in pictures . . .³

¹ *Bioscope*, October 17, 1912, p. 171.

² *Ibid.*, October 30, 1913, p. 341.

³ *Ibid.*, December 26, 1912, p. 949.

although he later expressly recognized the dynamic element:

As an artist who, all his life, has posed models and arranged pictures . . . I have been a director of composition—of movement. All I lacked was the necessary mechanical knowledge.¹

But in general the fact that the visual aspect of the film, too, was subject to a time element had not yet engaged the attention of theoreticians. Even in 1914 the camera was almost invariably fixed, throughout each scene, at the one and only angle which would permit the maximum movement of the "living parts" and except in rare cases neither the choice of camera angle nor camera movement were perceived to give scope to the creative artist. Moreover, in the absence of a developed theory of editing there was little attempt to relate the visual composition of different scenes to each other, although as we have seen some attention was being paid to the logical, if not yet the emotional, relation of their content. Thus the essentially dynamic nature of film composition, which links its temporal and visual aspects and in the end falsifies the arbitrary distinction between them, had not yet emerged to resolve the apparent divergence between those who believed that the artistic future of the film lay with the writer, and those who believed that it lay with the pictorial artist.

In the absence of some thousands of the films themselves or even detailed synopses like those of the previous period, any analysis of aesthetic development which is not confined to the well-charted contribution of a few outstanding individuals must be a history of ideas rather than of practice. How far the films succeeded in artistic experiment can be estimated in general terms only, and the search for "firsts" and "bests," which can soon become an obsession, is usually vain except in so far as new developments and outstanding achievements were recorded by contemporary observers. It is more honest to analyse the formation of theory and the emergence of serious artistic intention, for which ample evidence exists. *The Lady of Shalott*, for example, almost certainly was not a great film and may not even have been strikingly original. Its significance is that from this and other productions, as well as from remarks by and about him, Elwin Neame is shown to be one of a growing number who believed in the artistic future of the film and were searching, many of them consciously, for its appropriate use. Hepworth and Barker and the other successful

¹ *Bioscope*, February 20, 1913, p. 575.

pioneers, who had empirically developed film technique in a way of which they could scarcely have dreamed, were being joined by a new type of filmmaker. Herkomer the narrative painter, Furniss the black-and-white caricaturist, Elvey the young stage intellectual, and Merwin the magazine writer were other film makers who have been quoted not because they made the best films—a new judgment on this will never be possible now—but because they gave strong expression to the views of those who were being drawn to the film for its possibilities as a medium of expression in spite of its despised status. Others with passionate faith in it, among them George Pearson, were already slipping unobtrusively into the industry. The more serious reputations were welcomed by a trade still joyously on the side of art, a word which had not yet become suspect; but how strong their belief and how brave their spirits can only be appreciated against the background of the film's social and artistic isolation. George Pearson, who came to films from school teaching in 1912, tells how several years later he met a former colleague who asked with pained surprise how he could have so degraded himself. The attitude was typical. But to be in the industry at this time, to see the film growing and changing in one's hands, to know that a new medium of expression was emerging with a technique of its own to be shaped and explored, must have made such prejudice seem trivial. It must have been worth while snapping one's fingers at the world, to be in the industry at such a time.

SOUND

The sound film of the late 1920's had many precursors during the period under review, whether in the form of life performances or reproduction, and whether provided by exhibitor or producer. Sound on disc was the earliest commercially successful system of reproduction, and had a considerable vogue in this country throughout the period. The "Chronophone," the first make on the English market, had been demonstrated at the London Hippodrome towards the end of 1904.¹ By 1906 it was being exploited in the provinces and film subjects for it were selling at 1s. a foot, with 7s. 6d. for a 10-inch disc and 10s. 6d. for one of 12 inches. This early machine apparently sold well and was followed at the end of the year by an improved model called the "Chronomegaphone," which was also shown at the Hippodrome² and ran there for months with great success.

The "Chrono" was widely adopted by provincial and fairground showmen and shared its popularity with a number of rival gramophones, more or less imperfectly synchronized with various projectors. In February 1907, the *Optical Lantern and Kinematograph Journal* stated³ that films and records were being supplied by Edison, and that Pathé was working on a system, which was eventually tried out in England more than a year later.⁴ The firm of Walturdaw had its Cinematophone, which appeared on the market in the early spring of 1907⁵ at a cost of £72 for the three parts of projector, gramophone and synchronizer. Other names were soon to be heard—Filmophone, Replicaphone the Simplex Kinematograph Synchronizer and the Appollogramophone—but little importance attached to any but the Vivaphone, Cinephone and Animatophone. The Vivaphone, which was put out by the Hepworth Manufacturing Company, was widely known by the end of 1907 and still in evidence at the end of the period. Made to fit any projector, it cost only £5 5s.⁶ The Warwick

¹ November 21, 1904.

² December 10, 1906.

³ *Optical Lantern and Kinematograph Journal*, February 1907, p. 107.

⁴ *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, June 18, 1908, p. 103.

⁵ *Optical Lantern and Kinematograph Journal*, March 1907, p. 130.

⁶ *The Vivaphone*, published by the Hepworth Manufacturing Co. Ltd. in 1909.

Cinephone was patented by Harold Jeapes and was being used for sound topicalities by the latter end of 1909.¹

A more spectacular reputation was enjoyed by the Animatophone, which was greeted in some quarters as the first really successful system. The Animatophone Syndicate began trading in 1910, having been formed by A. Thomassin and Harry Nathan to take over the business of a company registered slightly earlier² to exploit Thomassin's invention, the Simplex Synchronizer.

The Syndicate was wound up in 1911³ and although it seems that the shortness of its life was due more to financial miscalculation than to waning popularity, it is not difficult to explain the sound film's failure to become general at this date. Other companies persisted with their methods and, in films such as Walturdaw's *Mikado*⁴ and the Vivaphone songs and dances by the stars Florence Turner and Tom Powers,⁵ endeavoured to supply some interest other than the mere fact of sound. But for the most part sound films were merely unpretentious turns by music-hall artists, thus remaining stationary at one of the very earliest stages of the development of film technique. The technical obstacles to any change on this pattern were formidable. Not only was the actual sound reproduction often faulty and indistinct, but the size of the disc tended to restrict the duration of the film to a few minutes. The much-discussed synchronization of sound and picture, moreover, was necessarily poor where there was no automatic regulation of the speeds of the four different machines needed to record and project sound and picture.

Under such conditions films with disc accompaniment could be little more than novelties, increasingly isolated from the rapid advance of film technique. The reproduction of dialogue was especially difficult, although the improvements in mechanical synchronization which took place in the middle of the period seemed to suggest that this long-cherished ideal was soon to be realized. In late 1908 Thomas Bedding addressed the London and Provincial Photographic Association on the "talking photograph."⁶ Some eighteen months later Edmund Seal Donisthorpe, son of an early

¹ *Bioscope*, December 23, 1909, p. 9.

² *Kinematograph Weekly*, March 18, 1909, p. 10.

³ *Bioscope*, January 4, 1912, p. 49.

⁴ *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, June 27, 1907, p. 107.

⁵ *Bioscope*, March 19, 1914, p. 257.

⁶ *Ibid.*, December 31, 1908, p. 5.

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cinematograph inventor and patentee, produced a mechanical synchronizer which could be fitted to any projector and gramophone for £3.¹ In May 1912, Gaumont's "film parlants" were demonstrated at the Pavilion and later in the year Donisthorpe, coming to the fore again with a gramophone called the "Stentorphone," stated that talking films were now commercially practicable and that the time had come for the film industry to decide whether they would be of any ultimate value.² But the eventual solution, sound photography, was still at the experimental stage although the 1915 issue of *Kinematograph Year Book* contained this enthusiastic paragraph:

Meanwhile, in his own quiet way, M. Eugene Lauste, an elderly French experimenter and former assistant of Edison himself, has succeeded in constructing a wonderful apparatus whereby sound waves may be *photographed* upon a kinematograph film in such a way that the kinematograph record is capable of being made to reproduce the original sound again, not through contact of any needle or sapphire, but by the simple action of light acting through it upon an electrically energised resistance cell. When you have sat and heard the *Temptation Rag* played to you in rousing style through the means of an arc light, a kinematograph film, and a couple of telephone receivers you begin to realize something of what Shakespeare had in mind when he wrote: "There are more things in Heaven and earth than are dreamed of in your philosophy." [Sic]

Reproduced sound at this stage was thus quite outside the general stream of artistic development and although dialogue, effects and musical accompaniment all acquired greater importance during the period they did so only because they could be satisfactorily conveyed by other means. At first it was the exhibitor who supplied all three, within the theatre itself. For by the beginning of this period the lantern-lecturer had his successor in the picture theatre-lecturer, whose lively and often extempore commentaries were supported by many curious arguments:

Verbal explanation is necessary, firstly, because it is impossible to place on the screen real pathos and real humanness—these must be preserved from the full glare of people's eyes or the effect is lost; secondly, because spectators will not trouble to look for these latent qualities unless the search is suggested to them; and, thirdly, because educational travel pictures minus an explanation

¹ *Bioscope*, June 16, 1910, p. 35.

² *Ibid.*, August 15, 1912, p. 460; October 17, 1912, p. 211.

³ *Kinematograph Year Book*, 1915, p. 37.

of why they should be considered important enough to occupy the screen tend to make interest wane and eventually to fade away altogether.¹

Slightly later the provision of voices within the theatre, to supply such dialogue as the exhibitor thought fit, lasted only a few years and was by no means widespread. The producers at last secured control of the verbal element in their own dramas by the use of sub-titles.

In a somewhat similar way musical accompaniment passed from the exclusive province of the exhibitor to the partial influence of the producing company. The important music of the period was that of the piano, and it was here that artistic intentions were most clearly expressed. But although good advice to pianists was as abundant as that to aspiring plot writers, for some years there was far too little effort to fit suitable music to the pictures. With the pianist playing from 2 to 11 p.m. for his 25s. or 30s. a week,² and frequently doing odd jobs in the mornings, it was hardly surprising if an occasional comic rattled through to the sound of Schumann's *Trumerei*, or scenes of winter sports to Mendelssohn's *Spring Song*.³ Some earned more, particularly those good at improvisation, and £3 10s. a week is mentioned in one place; on the other hand a young girl might earn as little as 15s.⁴ Under such conditions many pianists had no money to buy new music and no time to learn new pieces, or even to see the films in advance of the first performance.

In addition to the pianos there were orchestras in the more prosperous halls, and automatic musical instruments with names which proclaim the same search for impressive showmanship as those of the picture palaces which housed them—the Clavist-Violina, the Cinfonium, Cinechordeon, Biokestra and Orchestrion. The outburst of organs, zithers and bells from about 1910 onwards was considered marvellously artistic. At the same time the appearance of several large and expensive machines for providing sound effects made many showmen enthusiastic participators in the artistic success of the films. The Allefex machine, put on the English market at £29 15s. by A. & H. Andrews, in late 1909,⁵ included running water, breaking china and puffing engines in its many accomplishments, but was hardly more ambitious than the humble "artiste in effects" who

¹ *Bioscope*, December 10, 1908, p. 5.

² *Ibid.*, March 18, 1909, p. 19; October 14, 1909, p. 48.

³ *Ibid.*, March 11, 1909, p. 13.

⁴ November 30, 1911, p. 633.

⁵ *Bioscope*, March 18, 1909, p. 19; October 14, 1909, p. 48.

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sought realism with sandpaper and a tin tray. The emotional value of "realistic" sound effects, like the emotional importance of the right kind of music, became an issue as a result of the well-intentioned efforts of the picture theatre staffs. Effects were to remain in their hands. But by the end of this period both renters and producers were taking a larger part in suggestions for music and even, for more important features and exclusives, provided music which had been specially composed.

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BRITISH FILMS OF THE PERIOD

The following 283 films, put on the market between January 1906, and August 1914, represent the more considerable productions of the English companies during this period.

Films have been included for various reasons. "Feature" films, exclusives, films of unusual length or even short films which their makers considered worthy of extra publicity, are all here. It may be said that most films of 1,000 ft. or more in length have been included; so have any films whose players, and sometimes even writers and producers, were disclosed to the trade by name. On the other hand many Hepworth films—frequently short and almost anonymous—have been listed on the grounds that each was given unusual publicity and added to this firm's reputation for "quality" work. Thus although no single criterion can be given it may be hoped that the list mentions all British films of any importance, except short factual films, released during these eight years.

The title of the film is followed, in most cases, by its length in feet or number of reels. Where a film was simply a version of a stage production, sponsored by a company not a producer in the sense of having its own studio and staff, this has been indicated by the word "Agent" after the company's name, followed whenever possible by the name of the company whose production facilities were used. The date given is that of release except where the date of the Trade Show was the only one available, in which case it is followed by the letters "T.S."

The list is as full and accurate as it has been possible to make it, but credits, lengths and release dates are frequently hard to ascertain and corrections and additions will be welcomed for inclusion in a later edition.

THE HISTORY OF THE BRITISH FILM

TITLE	NAME OF PRODUCING COMPANY	CREDITS	RELEASED OR TRADE SHOWN
<i>Adrift on Life's Tide.</i> (1,750 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		1.9.13
<i>Adventures of Dick Turpin, The (I)</i>	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Percy Moran Frank P. Pollard Bert Murray Harry Missouri Raymond Cox E. A. Trumingham Harold Houghton Madge Thorpe	1912
<i>Adventures of Dick Turpin, The (II)</i> <i>Gunpowder Plot, The</i>	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Percy Moran Douglas Payne George Foley Jack Houghton W. Gladstone Haley Harold Brett Herbert Trummer Olympia Sumner	1912
<i>Adventures of Dick Turpin, The (III)</i> <i>Two Hundred Guineas Reward: Dead or Alive</i> (1,147 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Percy Moran Harry Paule Tom Shelford Frank Pollard Raymond Cox Harry Missouri Mabel Clarke Dorothy Foster E. A. Trumingham	20.10.12
<i>Aerial Anarchists, The</i> (700 ft.)	Kineto		9.11.11
<i>Anarchists Doom, The</i>	Barker Motion Photography		
<i>Apache, The</i> (600 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Harry Buss	25.8.12
<i>As a Man Soweth</i> (3,400 ft.)	Barker Motion Photography		1914 (T.S.)
<i>Ascent of the Matterhorn</i> (1,500 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.		
<i>As the Sparks Fly Upward</i> (2,400 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		26.3.14
<i>At the Eleventh Hour</i> (975 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Gladys Sylvani	12.9.12
<i>At the Foot of the Scaffold</i> (1,925 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Alec Worcester Chrissie White Harry Royston Harry Gilbey	9.2.13

BRITISH FILMS OF THE PERIOD

TITLE	NAME OF PRODUCING COMPANY	CREDITS	RELEASED OR TRADE SHOWN
<i>At the Prompting of the Devil</i> (2,025 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		27.3.13
<i>Autumn Roses</i> (913 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Austin Milroy Rollo Balmain W. Manning Bessie Armitage Antonia Reith Florence Winston	27.10.12
<i>Bachelor's Love Story, A</i> (1,140 ft.)	London Film Co.	Henry Ainley Lillian Logan	6.7.14
<i>Bachelor's Ward, The</i> (875 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Harry Gilbey Gladys Sylvani	25.7.12
<i>Battle of Gettysown-bak, The</i> (820 ft.)	Folly Films, Phoenix Film Agency		18.5.14
<i>Battle of Waterloo, The</i>	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Producer: Charles Weston	7.13 (T.S.)
<i>Beauty and the Barge</i> (1,242 ft.)	London Film Co.	Producer: Harold Shaw Cyril Maude Lillian Logan Gregory Scott	26.2.14
<i>Belle of Bettws y Coed, The</i> (1,015 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Dorothy Foster C. Fisher Percy Moran W. Gladstone Haley O'Neil Farrell	6.6.12
<i>Bells, The</i>	Gaumont & Co.	H. B. Irving	
<i>Bernardo's Confession</i>	Planet Film Co.	Producer: Charles Vernon Bransby Williams Sidney Kearns	10.6.14 (T.S.)
<i>Big Game Hunting in the North Pole Ice-fields</i>	Francis-Clare Bamberger Enterprises Ltd.		
<i>Bill's Reformation</i> (950 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		9.5.12
<i>Black-Eyed Susan</i>	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Producer: Maurice Elvey Elizabeth Risdon Fred Groves Gray Murray	

THE HISTORY OF THE BRITISH FILM

TITLE	NAME OF PRODUCING COMPANY	CREDITS	RELEASED OR TRADE SHOWN
<i>Black Spot, The</i> (2,417 ft.)	London Film Co.	By Bannister Merwin Producer: George L. Tucker	11.5.14
<i>Blind Fate</i> (2,000 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Alma Taylor Jamie Darling Alec Worcester	2.3.14
<i>Blind Man's Dog</i> (600 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		29.2.12
<i>Bold Venture, A</i> (1,050 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		12.12.12
<i>Book, The</i> (1,200 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		6.3.13
<i>Bosun's Mate, The</i> (1,130 ft.)	London Film Co.	W. H. Bessy Mary Brough Wyndham Guise	26.2.14
<i>Branscombe's Pal</i>	London Film Co.	Producer: Harold Shaw Arthur Holmes- Gore Lillian Logan	20.4.14
<i>Brass Bottle, The</i> (4 reels)	Theatrical & Gen. Filming Co. (Agent: filmed by the Hepworth Company)	Adapted by Sidney Morgan Holman Clark Lawrence Gross- smith Alfred Bishop Vane Featherstone Denis Lytton Rudge Harding Tom Mowbrow Mary Brough	29.1.14 (T.S.)
<i>Breaking Point, The</i> (1,725 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		16.7.14
<i>British Army Film, The</i>			12.13
<i>Broken Chisel, The</i> (2,986 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Ernest Batley Marie Pickering	20.10.13
<i>Broken Oath, The</i> (1,650 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		
<i>Broken Sixpence, The</i> (1,900 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		22.1.14
<i>Brother's Atonement, A</i> (2,000 ft.)	Barker Motion Photography		1.14

BRITISH FILMS OF THE PERIOD

TITLE	NAME OF PRODUCING COMPANY	CREDITS	RELEASED OR TRADE SHOWN
<i>Burglar Helped, The</i> (400 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		9.6.12
<i>Cage, The</i> (2,010 ft.)	London Film Co.	By Hesketh Pritchard Producer: George L. Tucker Charles Rock Gerald Ames Lillian Logan	21.5.14
<i>Captain Jack, V.C.</i> (1,750 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		14.7.13
<i>Case for Solomon, A</i> (1,300 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		19.6.13
<i>Child O' My Heart</i> (1,920 ft.)	London Film Co.	Producer: Harold Shaw Lewis Gilbert Edna Flugrath	29.6.14
<i>Chimes, The</i>	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Producer: Thomas Bentley	7.14
<i>Christmas Carol, A</i>	London Film Co.	Written and Produced by Harold Shaw Franklyn and George Bellamy Mary Brough Arthur Cullin Wyndham Guise Ashton George	
<i>Christmas Strike, The</i> (1,300 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		22.12.13
<i>Clancarty</i> (1,760 ft.)	London Film Co.	Lillian Logan Charles Rock Walter Gay Edward O'Neill	22.6.14
<i>Cloister and the Hearth, The</i> (4,725 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Jamie Darling	12.13
<i>Codicil, The</i> (1,050 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		15.12.12
<i>Coiners' Den, The</i> (850 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Alec Worcester Gladys Sylvani	2.5.12
<i>Convent Gate, The</i> (2,715 ft.)	Clarendon Film Co.	By the Marchioness of Townshend Dorothy Bellew	24.11.13

THE HISTORY OF THE BRITISH FILM

TITLE	NAME OF PRODUCING COMPANY	CREDITS	RELEASED OR TRADE SHOWN
<i>Cornish Romance, A</i> (1,000 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Dorothy Foster Wallett Waller Ruth Sampson Sidney Norcliffe O'Neill Farrell Fred Percy	19.5.12
<i>Creatures of Clay</i> (2,350 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Alice de Winton	1.6.14
<i>Creatures of Habit</i> (800 ft.)	Turner Films	Florence Turner Tom Powers	13.4.14
<i>Cry of the Captive,</i> <i>The</i> (2,075 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Edward Lingard Stewart Rome Violet Hopson	22.6.14
<i>Cup Final Mystery,</i> <i>The</i> (2,600 ft.)	Motograph Film Co.	Douglas Payne Elizabeth Risdon Jean Morgan Fred Groves Maurice Elvey	
<i>Curate's Bride, The</i> (750 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Chrissie White Alma Taylor	26.1.13
<i>Curfew Must Not</i> <i>Ring Tonight</i> (1,100 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Alec Worcester Alma Taylor	15.9.12
<i>Daisy Doodad's Dial</i> (580 ft.)	Turner Films	Florence Turner	18.6.14
<i>David Copperfield</i> (7,500 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Producer: Thomas Bentley Eric Desmond Len Bethel Kenneth Ware H. Collins J. Hulcup Jamie Darling Edna May Amy Verity Alma Taylor Cecil Mannering Ella Fineberg Miss Harcourt Tom Butt Miss West Shiel Porter T. Arnold Harry Royston Marie de Solla	

BRITISH FILMS OF THE PERIOD

TITLE	NAME OF PRODUCING COMPANY	CREDITS	RELEASED OR TRADE SHOWN
<i>David Garrick</i>	London Film Co.	Gerald Lawrence Charles Rock	
<i>David Garrick</i>	Ruffell (Agent: filmed at the Hepworth studio)	Charles Wyndham James Blakely Bertram Steer Chrissie White T. N. Walter Mary Moore Louis Calvert	
<i>David Garrick</i> (3,000 ft.)	Zenith Film Co.	Seymour Hicks Ellaline Terriss (Coliseum Theatre Production)	16.9.13 (T.S.)
<i>Deception, The</i> (975 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Chrissie White Alec Worcester Gladys Sylvani	11.4.12
<i>Descent into the Crater of Vesuvius</i> (1,600 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.		
<i>Dick Turpin and the Death of Bonnie Black Bess</i> (two reels)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.		11.8.13
<i>Double Life, A</i> (800 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Flora Morris	6.6.12
<i>Drake's Love Story</i>	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Hay Plumb Chrissie White	6.4.13
<i>Dr. Fenton's Ordeal</i> (2,100 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		10.8.14
<i>Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde</i> (two reels)	Kinemacolor Ltd.		
<i>Dr. Trimbull's Verdict</i> (1,100 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		28.8.13
<i>Drawn Blind, The</i> (1,515 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.		29.6.14
<i>Duty</i> (1,150 ft.)	London Film Co.	By Bannister Merwin Producer: Harold Shaw George Bellamy Gregory Scott Edna Flugrath	4.5.14

THE HISTORY OF THE BRITISH FILM

TITLE	NAME OF PRODUCING COMPANY	CREDITS	RELEASED OR TRADE SHOWN
<i>East Lynne</i> (6,500 ft.)	Barker Motion Photography	Fred Paul Blanche Forsythe Rachel de Solla May Norton Fred Morgan Lindsay Fincham	27.5.13 (T.S.)
<i>East Lynne</i> (1,500 ft.)	Precision Film Co.		27.11.10
<i>Eleventh Commandment, The</i> (3,000 ft.)	Kirschbarker (Agent?)	James Welch Gladys Cooper Vincent Clive Leonard Notcutt	27.8.13 (T.S.)
<i>Emperor's Messenger, The</i> (950 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		29.9.12
<i>Engagement of Convenience, An</i> (1,075 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Cyril Morton Alma Taylor Marie de Solla Harry Royston	27.4.14
<i>England's Menace</i>	London Film Co.	By Bannister Merwin Producer: Harold Shaw Photo: Ernest Palmer Charles Rock Arthur Holmes-Gore Gerald Ames Vincent Clive George Bellamy Edna Flugrath	19.6.14 (T.S.)
<i>Eugene Aram</i> (4,000 ft.)	Cricks & Martin		5.14
<i>Exploits of Three-Fingered Kate: The Pseudo-Quartette</i> (1,011 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	W. Gladstone Haley Edward Durrant Charles Calvert Ivy Martinek	13.10.12
<i>Exploits of Three-Fingered Kate, The: The Case of the Chemical Fumes</i> (1,070 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Harold Brett Edward Durrant Charles Calvert Alice Mosely Ivy Martinek	8.9.12

BRITISH FILMS OF THE PERIOD

TITLE	NAME OF PRODUCING COMPANY	CREDITS	RELEASED OR TRADE SHOWN
<i>Exploits of Three-Fingered Kate, The: Wedding Presents</i> (940 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Ivy Martinek Fred Paul Charles Calvert Alice Mosely Olympia Sumner Bessie Booker George Gray	11.8.12
<i>Fighting Parson, The</i> (3,000 ft.)	Barker Motion Photography		
<i>Finger of Destiny, The</i> (2,200 ft.)	Motograph Film Co.	Producer: Charles Raymond Babs Neville Elizabeth Risdon Douglas Payne Florence Turner Tom Powers	
<i>Flotilla the Flirt</i> (575 ft.)	Turner Films		25.5.14
<i>Fool, The</i> (3,343 ft.)	Big Ben Films (Pathé)	Producer: George Pearson Godfrey Tearle James Carew Mary Malone	12.1.13
<i>For Love of Him</i> (1,400 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		15.12.13
<i>For Marion's Sake</i> (1,550 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		20.11.13
<i>For the Honour of the House</i> (1,150 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		3.11.13
<i>Fraudulent Spiritualism Exposed</i> (2,840 ft.)	Motograph Film Co.	Douglas Payne	
<i>Gentleman Ranker, The</i> (975 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Dorothy Foster Wallett Waller Fred Paul Clifford Marle	14-18.5.12
<i>George Barnwell, the London Apprentice</i> (2,900 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		13.3.13
<i>George Robey Turns Anarchist</i>	Burns (Agent)	George Robey	14.7.14 (T.S.)
<i>Ghosts</i> (1,125 ft.)	Ivy Close Films	Producer: Elwin Neame Ivy Close	20.4.14
<i>Gift, The</i> (3,500 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Alec Worcester Chrissie White	16.10.13
<i>Girl Alone, A</i> (1,025 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Gladys Sylvani	7.3.12

THE HISTORY OF THE BRITISH FILM

TITLE	NAME OF PRODUCING COMPANY	CREDITS	RELEASED OR TRADE SHOWN
<i>Girl at Lancing Hill, The</i> (1,125 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		25.9.13
<i>Girl from the Sky, The</i> (1,200 ft.)	Ivy Close Films	Producer: Elwin Neame Ivy Close	30.3.14
<i>Gold</i> (700 ft.)	London Film Co.		8.6.14
<i>Gorilla, The</i>	Big Ben Films (Pathé)		
<i>Great Anarchist Mystery, The</i> (2,040 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Derek Powell Charles Seymour Percy Moran Dorothy Foster	1.9.12
<i>Great Bank Robbery, The</i> (2,300 ft.)	Barker Motion Photography		
<i>Great Bullion Robbery The</i> (2,110 ft.)	Barker Motion Photography		1.9.13
<i>Great Gold Robbery, The</i> (2,300 ft.)	Motograph Film Co.	Babs Neville Sydney Smith Douglas Payne	
<i>Great Poison Mystery, The</i> (three reels)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		
<i>Greater Love Hath No Man</i> (3,500 ft.)	Barker Motion Photography		
<i>Grimaldi</i>	Planet Film Co.	Producer: Charles Vernon	10.6.14 (T.S.)
<i>Grit of a Dandy</i> (2,520 ft.)	Herkomer Film Co.	Sybil Sparks Leonard Ceiley Clarissa Selwynne Archibald Forbes	9.2.14
<i>Guest of the Evening, The</i> (1,100 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Stewart Rome Alice de Winton	6.7.14
<i>Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot</i> (two reels)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Caleb Porter	5.11.13
<i>Hamlet</i> (3,100 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co. for Gaumont	Johnston Forbes-Robertson Gertrude Elliott (Drury Lane production).	12.13 (T.S.)
<i>Harper Mystery, The</i> (3,100 ft.)	Turner Films		12.13 (T.S.)
<i>Harvest of Sin</i>	Cricks & Martin		
<i>Heart of Midlothian, The</i> (four reels)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Cecil Mannerling	4.14

BRITISH FILMS OF THE PERIOD

TITLE	NAME OF PRODUCING COMPANY	CREDITS	RELEASED OR TRADE SHOWN
<i>Helping Hand, A</i> (1,100 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		18.8.13
<i>Henry VIII</i>	Barker Motion Photography	Producer: Louis N. Parker Sir Herbert Tree Violet Vanbrugh Arthur Bouchier Edward O'Neill	27.2.11
<i>Her Awakening</i> (1,075 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		14.11.12
<i>Her Children</i> (1,071 ft.)	London Film Co.	Producer: Harold Shaw Arthur Holmes- Gore George Bellamy	27.4.14
<i>Her "Mail Parent"</i> (725 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		27.6.12
<i>Heroes of the Mine</i> (3,375 ft.)	Big Ben Films (Pathé)	Producer: George Pearson Percy Moran	27.11.13
<i>Her Only Son</i> (1,100 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		1.12.12
<i>Hidden Witness, The</i> (2,790 ft.)	Big Ben Films (Pathé)		29.3.14
<i>His Choice</i> (2,275 ft.)	Herkomer Film Co.	Producer: Sir Hubert von Herkomer	22.1.14
<i>His Reformation</i> (1,270 ft.)	London Film Co.	Producer: Arthur Holmes-Gore Frank Stanmore	20.7.14
<i>Hon. William's Donah, The</i> (900 ft.)	Ivy Close Films	Producer: Elwin Neame Ivy Close	14.5.14
<i>House of Temperley, The</i> (4,000 ft.)	London Film Co.	Producer: Harold Shaw Ben Webster Charles Rock Charles Maude Lillian Logan Edward O'Neill Wyndham Guise	19.9.13 (T.S.)

THE HISTORY OF THE BRITISH FILM

TITLE	NAME OF PRODUCING COMPANY	CREDITS	RELEASED OR TRADE SHOWN
<i>Humanity</i> (3,000 ft.)	Magnet (Agent; filmed by Barker Motion Photography)	John Lawson	
<i>Importance of Being Another Man's Wife, The</i> (2,000 ft.)	Kinematograph Trading Co. (Agent: filmed by the Hepworth Mfg. Co.)	Arthur Roberts	14.9.14
<i>Indian Woman's Pluck, An</i> (950 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		4.7.12
<i>In the Grip of Ambition</i> (2,025 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		17.8.14
<i>In the Grip of Iron</i> (3,250 ft.)	Brightonia Film Co.	Fred Powell Nell Emerald	
<i>In the Hands of London Crooks</i>	Barker Motion Photography	Fred Paul Dora de Winton T. H. Macdonald J. H. Batson Blanche Forsyth	
<i>Ivanhoe</i> (8,000 ft.)	Zenith Film Co.	Producer: Fredk. and Walter Melville (Lyceum Theatre production)	22.7.13 (T.S.)
<i>Ivy's Elopement</i> (1,000 ft.)	Ivy Close Films	Ivy Close	3.8.14
<i>Jean's Evidence</i> (1,800 ft.)	Turner Films	Producer: Larry Trimble Florence Turner Jean	20.10.13
<i>Jim All-Along</i> (1,000 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Alec Worcester Flora Morris	1.8.12
<i>Jim the Fireman</i> (two reels)	Barker Motion Photography		
<i>Jimmy Lester, Convict and Gentleman</i> (1,100 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Alec Worcester Gladys Sylvani Harry Royston	7.10.12
<i>"Jo" the Wanderer's Boy</i> (1,000 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Marie de Solla Harry Gilbey	17.11.12
<i>Julius Caesar</i>	Co-operative (Agent)	F. R. Benson Co.	25.3.11

BRITISH FILMS OF THE PERIOD

TITLE	NAME OF PRODUCING COMPANY	CREDITS	RELEASED OR TRADE SHOWN
<i>Just a Girl</i> (1,875 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.		28.7.13
<i>Justice</i> (2,400 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		
<i>King Charles</i> (4,000 ft.)	Clarendon Film Co.	Adapted from H. Ainsworth by Low Warren Filmed by G. Malins	16.9.13 (T.S.)
<i>King Robert of Sicily</i> (1,100 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Alec Worcester	15.12.12
<i>Lady Letmere's Jewellery</i>	Gaumont & Co.	Written and produced by George R. Sims	
<i>Lady of Lyons</i> (3,500 ft.)	Co-operative (Agent)	Cecil Mannering	20.10.13
<i>Lady of Shalott, The</i> (800 ft.)	Ivy Close Films	Producer: Elwin Neame	7.11.12
<i>Last of the Black Hand Gang, The</i> (450 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		23.6.12
<i>Last Round, The</i> (2,650 ft.)	Barker Motion Photography		
<i>Lawyer Quince</i> (1,078 ft.)	London Film Co.	Charles Rock Mary Brough Lillian Logan Gregory Scott	26.2.14 (T.S.)
<i>Legend of King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid</i> (625 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Ivy Close	16.1.13
<i>Lt. Daring and the Ship's Mascot</i> (1,120 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Dorothy Foster Percy Moran Sam Jones Fred Raines	2-5.5.12
<i>Lt. Daring, R.N., Defeats the Middle-Weight Champion</i> (1,190 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Percy Moran Charles Calvert Jack Stokes Edward Durrant Ivy Martinek B. Harold Brett	18.8.12

THE HISTORY OF THE BRITISH FILM

TITLE	NAME OF PRODUCING COMPANY	CREDITS	RELEASED OR TRADE SHOWN
<i>Lt. Daring, R.N., Quells a Rebellion</i> (1,177 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Percy Moran Ivy Martinek O. Ceano J. H. Houghton F. Barrington J. Wills B. Plant	22.9.12
<i>Lt. Pimple and the Stolen Submarine</i> (950 ft.)	Folly Films, Phoenix Film Agency	Fred Evans	16.2.14
<i>Lt. Pimple's Sealed Orders</i>	Folly Films, Phoenix Film Agency	Fred Evans	25.5.14
<i>Life of Shakespeare, The</i> (five reels)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.		
<i>Lights of London</i> (four reels)	Barker Motion Photography	Producer: George R. Sims Phyllis Relph Arthur Chesney F. Paul J. H. Batson	
<i>Little Child Shall Lead Them, A</i> (2,420 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Dorothy Batley	16.3.14
<i>Little Lord Fauntleroy</i> (four reels)	Kineto	Master Gerald Royston F. Tomkins Bernard Vaughn H. Agar Lyons (Made in Kinema- color)	6.4.14 (T.S.)
<i>Little Mother</i> (1,670 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.		
<i>London by Night</i> (3,500 ft.)	Barker Motion Photography	T. H. Macdonald J. H. Batson Doreen O'Connor Roy Travers Joan Scaddan	13.10.13
<i>Lost in the Woods</i> (550 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Rover	13.6.12
<i>Love Wins in the End</i> (1,000 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		22.8.12

BRITISH FILMS OF THE PERIOD

TITLE	NAME OF PRODUCING COMPANY	CREDITS	RELEASED OR TRADE SHOWN
<i>Lucky Stone, The</i> (875 ft.)	Turner Films	Florence Turner	1.12.13
<i>Lunatic and the Bomb, The</i> (500 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		12.5.12
<i>Luncheon for Three</i> (720 ft.)	London Film Co.	Lillian Logan Judd Green	15.6.14
<i>Lure of London, The</i> (4,000 ft.)	Co-operative (Agent: filmed by the Hepworth Co.)	By Arthur Aplin Ivy Close	2.14
<i>Lure of the Footlights, The</i> (1,025 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Madge Campbell Alec Worcester George Gilbey	23.5.12
<i>Macbeth</i> (1,360 ft.)	Co-operative (Agent)	F. R. Benson Co.	9.4.11
<i>Man and a Serving Maid, A</i> (775 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Chrissie White	11.1.12
<i>Man or His Money, The</i> (1,000 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		26.6.13
<i>Man Who Dared, The</i> (6,000 ft.)	Cherry Kearton Co.		
<i>Maria Marten</i> (2,850 ft.)	Motograph Film Co.	Producer: Maurice Elvey Elizabeth Risdon Fredk. Groves Nessie Blackford Douglas Payne	
<i>Marie Lloyd at Home and Bunkered</i> (300 ft.)	Kinematograph Trading Co. (Agent)	Marie Lloyd	
<i>Mary Has Her Way</i>	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Harry Buss Gladys Sylvani	16.5.12
<i>Master Crook, The</i> (3,240 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Arthur Finn	29.12.13
<i>Master Crook Outwitted by a Child, The</i> (2,559 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.		20.4.14
<i>Master Crook Turns Detective, The</i> (2,929 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.		23.7.14

THE HISTORY OF THE BRITISH FILM

TITLE	NAME OF PRO- DUCING COMPANY	CREDITS	RELEASED OR TRADE SHOWN
<i>Message from Mars, A</i> (four reels)	United Kingdom (Agent: filmed by Urban Co.)	Produced and adapted by Wallett Waller Charles Hawtrey Holman Clark Hubert Willis Frank Hector Chrissie Bell Kate Tyndale Evelyn Beaumont By Walter Howard	24.7.13 (T.S.)
<i>Midnight Wedding, The</i> (3,400 ft.)			11.5.14
<i>Mighty Atom, The</i> (1,090 ft.)	Cricks & Martin		30.11.11
<i>Miser and the Maid, The</i> (750 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		16.5.12
<i>Mist of Errors, A</i> (1,000 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		8.5.13
<i>Murdock Trial, The</i> (3,400 ft.)	Turner Films	Florence Turner Richard Norton G. E. Collonna W. Felton Lucy Silbey	4.5.14
<i>Mysterious Philanthropist, The</i> (1,200 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		29.5.13
<i>Mystery of Mr. Maks, The</i> (2,275 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		8.6.14
<i>Mystery of the Diamond Belt, The</i> (3,500 ft.)	I. B. Davidson	Producer: Charles Raymond Percy Moran Harry Grahame Lewis Carlton Philip Kay	8.14
<i>Mystery of the Old Mill, The</i>	Big Ben Films (Pathé)		
<i>Napoleon and the English Sailor</i> (430 ft.)	Gaumont & Co.	Producer: Arthur Collins Herbert Darnley Arthur Page	6.7.08
<i>Night Bell, The</i> (1,075 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		6.4.14
<i>Night of Perils, A</i> (550 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		4.2.12

BRITISH FILMS OF THE PERIOD

TITLE	NAME OF PRODUCING COMPANY	CREDITS	RELEASED OR TRADE SHOWN
<i>Old Curiosity Shop, The</i> (5,300 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Producer: Thomas Bentley Alma Taylor E. Felton Mai Deacon Willie West Jamie Darling S. May Billy Rex Moya Nugent Bert Stowe F. Langley	I.14
<i>Old Gardener, The</i> (960 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Harry Raneo George Laundry Ivy Clifford S. P. Goodyer Kettle Lillie Smead	9-13.6.12
<i>Old St. Paul's</i> (3,000 ft.)	Clarendon Co. Film	Adapted by Low Warren	
<i>Old Wood Carver, The</i>	Herkomer Co. Film	By Sir Hubert von Herkomer and Siegfried von Herkomer Maud Milton May Blaney	
<i>Oliver Twist</i> (3,700 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Producer: Thomas Bentley Harry Royston Alma Taylor Flora Morris Miss Millaise Mr. McMahon E. Rivarze Willie West	24.10.12
<i>On the Brink of the Precipice</i> (1,775 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Harry Gilbey	28.7.13
<i>One Fair Daughter</i> (1,625 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		10.11.13
<i>Our Bessie</i> (1,025 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Hay Plumb Gladys Sylvani	21.3.12
<i>Partners in Crime</i> (2,275 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Alma Taylor Harry Royston Harry Gilbey	11.8.13

THE HISTORY OF THE BRITISH FILM

TITLE	NAME OF PRODUCING COMPANY	CREDITS	RELEASED OR TRADE SHOWN
<i>Passing of the Old Four Wheeler, The</i> (875 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Warwick Buckland Flora Morris	23.6.12
<i>Paying the Penalty</i> (2,000 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Alec Worcester Alma Taylor Harry Gilbey Harry Royston	2.6.13
<i>Peasant Girl's Revenge, A</i> (975 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		15.8.12
<i>Pedlar of Penmaenmawr, The</i> (860 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Charles Seymour George Trumpeter O'Neill Farrell Dorothy Foster Lady Georgina St. George Sidney Kearns W. Gladstone Haley	30.6 to 4.7.12
<i>Petticoat Perfidy</i> (1,000 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		23.6.13
<i>Pimple, Anarchist</i> (950 ft.)	Folly Films, Phoenix Film Agency	Fred Evans	3.8.14
<i>Pimple as Ivanhoe</i> (950 ft.)	" "	" "	8.12.13
<i>Pimple in Society</i> (910 ft.)	" "	" "	29.6.14
<i>Pimple's Battle of Waterloo</i> (595 ft.)	" "	" "	25.8.13
<i>Pimple's Fire Brigade</i> (415 ft.)	" "	" "	19.1.14
<i>Pimple's Inferno</i> (720 ft.)	" "	" "	27.10.13
<i>Pimple's Sporting Chance</i> (495 ft.)	" "	" "	4.8.14
<i>Pirates of 1920</i> (945 ft.)	Cricks & Martin		16.2.11
<i>Precious Cargo, A</i> (1,125 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		22.9.13
<i>Price on His Head, A</i> (1,900 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Master Eric Desmond	23.2.14
<i>Princess Clementina</i> (2,000 ft.)	Barker Motion Photography	H. B. Irving Dorothea Baird	8.5.11
<i>Promise, The</i> (1,450 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Chrissie White	7.8.13

BRITISH FILMS OF THE PERIOD

TITLE	NAME OF PRODUCING COMPANY	CREDITS	RELEASED OR TRADE SHOWN
<i>Prop's Angel</i> (1,050 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		20.4.13
<i>Queen of the London Counterfeiters</i>	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Lillian Wiggins F. Morgan	
<i>Question of Identity, A</i> (1,150 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		2.2.14
<i>Rachel's Sin</i> (900 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Hay Plumb Gladys Sylvani	9.12.11
<i>Red Light, The</i> (1,050 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		15.9.13
<i>Retribution</i> (1,125 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		
<i>Richard III</i> (two reels)	Co-operative (Agent)	F. R. Benson Co.	1911
<i>Ring and the Rajah, The</i> (1,170 ft.)	London Film Co.	Producer: Harold Shaw By: Anne Merwin Arthur Holmes-Gore Edna Flugrath Edward O'Neill Vincent Clive	13.4.14
<i>Road to Ruin, The</i> (4,000 ft.)	Big Ben Films (Pathé)	George Gray	26.1.14
<i>Robbery at Old Burnside Bank</i> (750 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		20.6.12
<i>Robin Hood</i>	Kinemacolor	H. Agar Lyons Miss Hatton	
<i>Robin Hood Outlawed</i> (1,186 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	A. Briant Plant Edward Durrant George Foley Ivy Martinek J. H. Houghton H. Lorraine	6.10.12
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> (1,240 ft.)	Gaumont & Co.	Godfrey Tearle Mary Malone (Lyceum Theatre production)	
<i>Rose of Surrey</i> (2,000 ft.)	Turner Films	Producer: Larry Trimble Florence Turner Frank Powell Millicent Vernon Arthur Rodney	29.9.13

THE HISTORY OF THE BRITISH FILM

TITLE	NAME OF PRODUCING COMPANY	CREDITS	RELEASED OR TRADE SHOWN
<i>Rose o' the River</i> (1,000 ft.)	HepworthMfg. Co.		5.9.12
<i>Saved by Fire</i> (3,000 ft.)	Clarendon Film Co.	Dorothy Bellew	
<i>Scapegrace, The</i> (1,825 ft.)	Cricks & Martin	By Frank Dilnotte	3.7.13
<i>Scrooge</i> (3,000 ft.)	Zenith Film Co.	E. J. Collins Seymour Hicks Ellaline Terriss (Coliseum Theatre Production)	16.9.13 (T.S.)
<i>Secret Life, A</i> (three reels)	Clarendon Film Co.		
<i>Seven Ages of Man, The</i>	Planet Film Co.	Producer: Charles Vernon Bransby Williams	10.6.14 (T.S.)
<i>Seventh Day, The</i> (two reels)	Regent Film Co.	Producer: Charles Weston	1.14
<i>Shadows of a Great City</i> (3,700 ft.)	HepworthMfg. Co.		
<i>She Stoops to Conquer</i> (3,000 ft.)	London Film Co.	Producer: George L. Tucker Henry Ainley Charles Rock Jane Gail	27.3.14 (T.S.)
<i>Sixth Commandment, The</i> (1,125 ft.)	Cricks & Martin		15.8.12
<i>Sixty Years a Queen</i> (6,000 ft.)	Barker Motion Photography	Made by W. G. Barker and Jack Smith with Collaboration of Ernest Shirley	11.13
<i>Sleeping Beauty</i> (1,000 ft.)	Ivy Close Films	Producer: Elwin Neame Ivy Close	22.12.12
<i>Son of Mars</i> (1,190 ft.)	Cricks & Martin		3.10.12
<i>Sporting Chance, A</i> (2,000 ft.)	Cricks & Martin		1.5.13
<i>Stolen Letters</i> (1,000 ft.)	HepworthMfg. Co.	Gladys Sylvani	24.12.11
<i>Street Watchman's Story, The</i>	Planet Film Co.	Producer: Charles Vernon Bransby Williams	10.6.14 (T.S.)

BRITISH FILMS OF THE PERIOD

TITLE	NAME OF PRODUCING COMPANY	CREDITS	RELEASED OR TRADE SHOWN
<i>Stress of Circumstance, The</i> (1,100 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Stewart Rome Harry Vibart Violet Hopson	20.7.14
<i>Suicide Club, The</i>	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Producer: Maurice Elvey Montague Love Fred Groves Elizabeth Risdon	
<i>Taming of the Shrew, The</i> (1,120 ft.)	Co-operative (Agent)		22.4.11
<i>Tattooed Will, The</i> (2,583 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.		2.3.14
<i>Terrible Twins, The</i> (1,100 ft.)	Ivy Close Films	Producer: Elwin Neame Ivy Close	15.6.14
<i>Terror of the Air</i> (2,300 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Henry Vibart Tom Powers Harry Royston Violet Hopson Stewart Rome	3.8.14
<i>Third String, The</i> (2,377 ft.)	London Film Co.	Producer: George L. Tucker Charles Rock Charles Vernon Frank Stanmore	26.3.14 (T.S.)
<i>Thou Shalt Not Steal</i> (1,025 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		20.4.14
<i>Through the Clouds</i> (3,150 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Marie Pickering Ernest Batley	
<i>Throw of the Dice, A</i> (1,975 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Alice de Winton Harry Royston	16.2.14
<i>Till Death Do Us Part</i> (900 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Hay Plumb Gladys Sylvani	15.6.11
<i>Tilly Works for a Living</i> (1,000 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Alex Worcester Chrissie White Alma Taylor	26.5.12
<i>Tragedy in the Alps, A</i> (3,000 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Claudia Guillot Marie Pickering Ernest Batley Henry Lorraine Mr. Foley	

THE HISTORY OF THE BRITISH FILM

TITLE	NAME OF PRODUCING COMPANY	CREDITS	RELEASED OR TRADE SHOWN
<i>Tragedy of Basil Grieve, The</i> (3,250 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Stewart Rome Violet Hopson Harry Gilbey Cyril Morton Marie de Solla	
<i>Tragedy off the Cornish Coast, A</i> (1,050 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Wallett Waller Dorothy Foster	15.2.12
<i>Traitress of Parton's Court</i> (1,050 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Alec Worcester Gladys Sylvani	25.4.12
<i>Tried in the Fire</i> (2,175 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		24.4.13
<i>Trilby</i>	London Film Co.	Producer: Harold Shaw Sir Herbert Tree Viva Birkett Charles Rock Cicily Richards Wyndham Guise	8.7.14 (T.S.)
<i>Turtle Doves</i> (815 ft.)	London Film Co.	By John Penstowe Producer: Arthur Holmes-Gore Edna Flugrath Langhorne Burton	30.7.14
<i>Two Bachelor Girls</i> (900 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Lillian Jefferies Agnes Healey Alfred Vetter Kenneth Ware	16 to 20.6.12
<i>Two Little Pals</i> (1,050 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		27.3.13
<i>Vicar of Wakefield, The</i> (3,275 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.	Marie de Solla Harry Buss	8.14
<i>Vicar of Wakefield, The</i> (three reels)	Planet Film Co.		
<i>Water Rats of London</i> (1,891 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.		13.7.14
<i>What Happened to Pimple</i> (698 ft.)	Folly Films, Phoenix Film Agency	Fred Evans	26.1.14
<i>When London Sleeps</i>	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.		

BRITISH FILMS OF THE PERIOD

TITLE	NAME OF PRODUCING COMPANY	CREDITS	RELEASED OR TRADE SHOWN
<i>White Witch, The</i> (1,690 ft.)	Herkomer Film Co.	Producer: Sir Hubert von Herkomer	22.12.13
<i>Witch of the Welsh Mountains, The</i> (990 ft.)	British & Colonial Kinematograph Co.	Sidney Kearns Dorothy Foster Lady Georgina St. George Miss de Burgh	4.8.12
<i>With Captain Scott, R.N., to the South Pole (1)</i> (3,000 ft.)	Gaumont & Co. (Agent)	Made by Herbert G. Ponting	(1) 10.11 (2) 8.12
<i>Wonkey's Wager</i> (550 ft.)	Hepworth Mfg. Co.		14.7.12
<i>World, the Flesh and the Devil, The</i> (5,100 ft.)	Union Jack (Agent: filmed by Kineto)	Filmed in Kinemacolor By Laurence Cowen Frank Esmond Rupert Harvey Warwick Wellington H. Agar Lyons	4.2.14 (T.S.)
<i>Younger Sister, The</i> (1,100 ft.)	Turner Films	Florence Turner	10.11.13
<i>Younita</i> (4,000 ft.)	Barker Motion Photography		

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