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KING VIDOR

September 1 - November 13, 1972

Saturday, September 2 (5:30) **

Thursday, September 21 (8:00) *

Friday, September 22 (2:00) **

(PROUD FLESH. 1925. Metro-Goldwyn Pictures. Directed by King Vidor. Scenario by Harry Behn, Agnes Christine Johnston, from the novel by Lawrence Rising. Photography by John Arnold. Assistant director: David Howard. Courtesy MGM. ca. 75 minutes.

Cast: Eleanor Boardman (Fernanda), Pat O'Malley (Pat O'Malley), Harrison Ford (Don Jaime), Trixie Friganza (Mrs. McKee), William J. Kelly (Mr. McKee), Rosita Marstini (Vicente), Sojin (Wong), Evelyn Sherman (Spanish Aunt), George Nichols (Spanish Uncle), Margaret Seddon (Mrs. O'Malley), Lillian Elliott (Mrs. Casey), Priscilla Bonner (San Francisco Girl).

Eleanor Boardman had appeared on the New York stage with Laurette Taylor. Fortuitous circumstances brought her to the Goldwyn Studios in Culver City, and eventually to the role of Mrs. King Vidor. Between 1923 and 1928, she appeared in six Vidor films, PROUD FLESH being the fourth. It can, like the three which preceded it, be properly described as an Eleanor Boardman vehicle, a showcase for her charm, grace, and beauty. Miss Boardman was the kind of enchanting actress with which the silent era seemed to abound. Never as popular as Pickford or Swanson, nor as brilliant as Gish or Marsh, Eleanor Boardman still possessed an ethereal loveliness which could elevate a trifle like PROUD FLESH into something resembling art.

PROUD FLESH is the type of film which established Vidor as a bright young director. He made twenty-one such films in just over six years. Viewed in this context, it is understandable that, despite its elements of charm and effective use of San Francisco locations, PROUD FLESH offered few challenges. Thus, Vidor took a giant step, comparable in film history to Griffith's decision to leave Biograph, or to Hitchcock's and Lubitsch's emigration to America. As he describes it in his autobiography, A Tree Is a Tree: "One day I had a talk with Irving Thalberg and told him I was weary of making ephemeral films. They came to town, played a week or so, then went their way to comparative obscurity or complete oblivion...If I were to work on something that I felt had a chance at long runs throughout the country or the world, I would put much more effort, and love, into its creation."

The immediate consequence of Thalberg's acceptance and Vidor's love is the monumental epic, THE BIG PARADE. Ever afterward, the director's talent and ambition were to be engaged in intense competition, the frenzied struggle of the one to keep apace of the other. PROUD FLESH is King Vidor's gentle farewell to his passing youth.

-- Charles Silver

* Silent film, original piano accompaniment by William Perry

** Silent film, no piano accompaniment