

## = The Blood Red Tape of Charity =

The Blood Red Tape of Charity is a 1913 American silent short drama film written , directed and starring by Edwin August and produced by Pat Powers . August wrote the scenario with the intent to highlight the evils of organized charity while entertaining the viewers . The film focuses on William Weldon , a telegraph lineman who is injured on the job and cannot work for several weeks . The family seeks aid from charity organizations , but " red tape " regulations prevent the family from receiving timely assistance . A gentleman thief named Marx decides to do one last job for the benefit of the family . Marx forces a doctor to treat the Weldon 's invalid daughter Alice before proceeding to rob a charity ball 's attendees . Marx pawns the stolen articles and saves the family before turning himself into the police .

The film was released on September 26 , 1913 and played in theaters throughout the United States . The unbilled cast list has been stated to include Lon Chaney in the role of the pawn broker . The propaganda film was billed as a popular love story by theaters , but the production was the subject of much concern by organized charities . The Charity Organization Societies sought to produce a film to counter the negative portrayal of charities in The Blood Red Tape of Charity . P. L. Whitney stopped short of directly calling the film 's portrayal dangerous , but advocated that charity members use the media to highlight the film 's faults and exaggerations . Patricia Erens would use the surviving film still of the pawn broker , claimed to be Lon Chaney by scholars , as an example of Jewish character archetypes that were prominent in silent films . The film is now considered lost .

## = = Synopsis = =

The film 's plot survives because of Universal 's publication of the details in Moving Picture News . The official description is as follows , " Charity , through excessive organization , often defeats its own purpose . William Weldon , a telegraph lineman , is the father of a large family , and finds it a hard struggle to make ends meet on his small wages . By a fall from a telegraph pole one afternoon he sustains injuries which force a lay @-@ off for several weeks . His family is left destitute and , after a time , seek aid from various charity organizations . In each case the organization promises to make a full investigation and do what they can , but by the time all the red tape and rules are complied with , the family would starve . In the meantime , Marx , a gentleman thief who has a secret retreat in the same building in which the Weldon family live , meets the invalid daughter , Alice Weldon . She tells him of the family 's condition and Marx endeavors to aid her , although at the time he is out of ready cash himself . Taking desperate measures , he holds up a doctor and forces him to attend to Weldon . Then , in company with the female leader of the gang , he attends the charity ball . There he makes a haul ? plucking jewelry and trinkets from every one with whom he comes in contact . He pawns the stolen articles and uses the money to help the Weldons . After the family has recovered , through Marx 's aid , the charity organizations finally send a few dollars and a skimpy supply of food . Marx decides to reform ? in fact , his reformation has been intended for some time , and his last " job " was only the outcome of his desire to do a worthy charity . He goes to the police , declares himself , and surrenders . Marx is sentenced , and while sitting in his cell a vision of Alice appeared before him , repaying him for his sacrifice and charity . "

## = = Cast = =

Edwin August as Marx , a Gentleman Thief

Unknown as William Weldon

Lon Chaney as a pawnbroker .

It is possible that Mary Charleston was a part of the cast due to the Edwin August having been noted as working with her in Powers ' productions .

## = = Production = =

According to an interview with Dorothy Donnell , Edwin August wrote The Blood Red Tape of Charity with an intent on showing the evils of organized charity . August would also direct the production . Within months of completing this production , August would leave Universal . Donnell stated that August was tired of earning money for other people when he would make more under his own brand .

The film 's cast and credits were unbilled and very few details emerged , but the film has been claimed to have featured Lon Chaney by two scholars . Jon Mirsalis states that Lon Chaney has an unbilled part as a pawnbroker . Michael Blake also notes that Lon Chaney had a role in the film , but Blake also states that the film had only one reel and lists the production code as 0119 . Blake 's claim that it was a single reel is the subject of dispute because the release was originally as a two reel production in publications and many advertisements for the film .

= = Release = =

The two @-@ reel film was released on September 26 , 1913 by Universal Film Manufacturing Company under the Powers label . On August 15 , 1913 , prior to the film 's release , the Daily Capital Journal of Salem , Oregon contained a brief section on Edwin August which lists The Blood Red Tape of Charity as one of his latest successes . This occurs more than a month prior to the film 's release , is not known to have appeared in any other source or any known pre @-@ release viewing event . After the film was released nationwide , advertisements for its viewing included newspapers in El Paso , Texas , Chicago , Illinois , Indiana , Iowa , Ohio , Nebraska , Kansas , and Pennsylvania .

= = Reception = =

Jon C. Mirsalis 's website cites a review in Moving Picture World which states " There is considerable strength in the offering , but it has some bad faults . One of these is melodramatic and insincere acting . The photography is good and in spite of numerous absurdities the picture has strong moments . " Descriptive ads for the film were often informative , an ad by the Crystal Theater would indicate that August wrote and acted in the film , but also did not shy away from film 's depiction of charity organizations and instead promoted the films defining message as " Charity Organizations Pay Dearly for Incompetency " . Another advertisement would cite the New York World review detailing the propaganda film 's intent to gain public attention to incite a " regeneration " of charitable organizations . An advertisement in the El Paso Herald by the Alamo Theater described the film as " a beautiful story of love , devotion and charity . It is a strong moral lesson and should appeal to the " charity workers " in this country . " The advertisement would also say the film would make viewers more charitable and good , but the film 's critique on charity workers in particular would be far from appealing or well received .

The film provoked a response by the Charity Organization Societies because the film 's melodramatic and exaggerated depiction of the family 's suffering due to regulation delays . The response to letters about the film the Charity Organization Bulletin wished for a scenario to be written and produced to " give a true picture of the work done by organized charity . " In the book , The Charity Organization Movement in the United States : A Study in American Philanthropy , Volume 19 , the film said to be to an attack on organized charity by a distortion of the facts . These characterizations were accurate as August 's intention to instruct and entertain audiences of the evils of organized charity makes The Blood Red Tape of Charity a propaganda film by definition . Another response by P. L. Whitney , Extension Secretary of United Charities , stopped short of calling the film outright dangerous , but noted its intent and the " poetic justice " that surrounds the two secretaries , one of whom results in Marx postponing his retirement , and later takes their jewelry to provide for the family . Whitney advised the editor and readers to keep watch for the film and use the media to highlight its faults and exaggerations .

Patricia Erens would use the film still of the pawnbroker , claimed by Mirsalis to be Lon Chaney , as an example of the common depictions of the Jews in her book The Jew in American Cinema . The

film is now considered lost . It is unknown when the film was lost , but if it was in Universal 's vaults it would have been deliberately destroyed along with the remaining copies of Universal 's silent era films in 1948 .