

▶▶ The Movies ◀◀

▶▶ "The Camera Man"

PERHAPS we're easily amused, but we laughed immoderately at some of the scenes in "The Camera Man." We also found ourselves no little affected by some of the other scenes and we enjoyed immensely the picture as a whole. "The Camera Man" is a Buster Keaton comedy and has to do with the misadventures and ultimate triumph of an aspirant for the position of newsreel photographer with the M-G-M folks.

The youth, needless to say, is out of luck throughout almost the entire action, otherwise he wouldn't be played by Buster Keaton. He goes to the Yankee Stadium to get some baseball shots, only to find that the Hugmen are pursuing the pennant elsewhere that day.

So he wanders out onto the deserted diamond and puts on a one-man ball game purely for his own benefit—there is not another soul in sight. He impersonates first the pitcher, then the batter; he delivers the imaginary ball with telling effect in his first capacity and knocks a homer in the second, and we thought the stunt one of the most beautiful pieces of pantomime we've ever seen. Chaplin could have done it and so, perhaps, could Harry Langdon; but neither one could have invested the episode with more of the mirth which hides the furtive teardrop than does Buster Keaton.

In another sequence—that in the public baths—Keaton's undressing act, in the same cubby hole with his rival for Marcelline Day's affections, is a grand piece of wordless funmaking; it seems incredible that they can keep it going for so long without overdoing it. Again, Keaton's expression of crafty malevolence as he pursues a lay bather, whose nether garment he purposes to purloin, is what the profession vulgarly calls a "belly laugh."

We can see no reason why we should not recommend "The Camera Man" as one of the best comedies Keaton has ever made, and, therefore, one of the best comedies any one has ever made.

And so, having given a good deal of

By A. M. SHERWOOD, JR.

deep thought to the matter, we thus recommend it.

▶▶ "The Docks of New York"

The plot of this piece is totally inadequate to the amount of celluloid which it uses up; but so adroit is the direction of Josef von Sternburg and so colorful the histrionics of his hired hands that the defection goes for little.

Gerge Bancroft is the star, and there is something about George Bancroft's acting which is hard to define but which, whatever it is, nearly always



BUSTER KEATON

rings the bell. Perhaps it is that he counterfeits the sort of direct-action roughneck which every man secretly wants to be and every woman to know. Does Mr. Bancroft ever knock on a closed door? No. He kicks it open; will he so much as give a thought to arbitrating a slight difference of opinion? Positively not, men—not that boy! One sock, and the argument is over.

In "The Docks of New York" he gets plenty of opportunities to demonstrate his forthright methods and also to make engagingly crude love to a surprisingly rejuvenated Betty Compson, who plays a lorn stray of the wharves with conviction and much tenderness.

The actress named Baclanova, who is slated to succeed Polo Negri in the Paramount ranks, gives her standard performance in this picture; it's a good performance, all right, but before we get enthusiastic about the lady, we'd like to see her do something besides open her handsome eyes very wide and then throw her head back in a fit of derisive laughter. Fun's fun—but there is such a thing as a change of pace, once in a while.

"The Docks of New York" is not entirely a picture for the young person, but it's good adult stuff for the not overly squeamish.

▶▶ "The Whip"

We remember when this old Drury Lane melodrama was first put on a New York stage; it was many years ago, and we were young enough to be pleasurably agitated by the realistic automobile accident, the train wreck, the horse race, and the incredibly sustained villainy of Greville Sartoris.

On the screen, however, despite a cast which includes Dorothy Mackaill, Ralph Forbes, Lowell Sherman, Anna Q. Nilssen and Marc McDermott, the old thriller seems curiously tame. On the stage, the mechanical effects which caused the thrills were interesting to more seasoned patrons of the drama than our then callow self, because every one wondered how they were done; in the movies, no one cares much how anything is done, any more.

As a consequence of this present-day sophistication "The Whip" must seem to most people a conglomeration of long, explanatory subtitles, disconnected scenes and a brand of melodrama which more than borders on the ludicrous. Horse lovers (we are one) will not find its racing and fox-hunting scenes very stimulating; the gas tanks and trolley poles of Hollywood are too palpably in the immediate offing.

But in terms of pleasant acting, lavish presentation and good, standard villainy, "The Whip" isn't such a bad picture, dashed if it is.

Wagner in Venice

Venice

By EUGENE BONNER

IT is a curious and amusing fact that while certain famous places may owe their reputation to stirring events or illustrious personages, who by their high ideals, heroism or statesmanship have left their mark on all they touched, a not inconsiderable number of people who travel will value those same cities, towns or buildings for some quite trivial association, an association often ludicrously out of keeping with the really great happenings which have made forever famous the names in question.

Thus many visitors to this wonderful and well-nigh unbelievable city in the sea (who was it that called Venice a "city of marble and of mud"?) are far more interested in the lovely little Contarini-Fasan palace with its exquisitely carved balconies on account of its having been dubbed the "House of Desdemona" than they are in the intrinsic beauty of the palazzo itself or its history.

Personally speaking, we must admit that interesting as is the history of the great family of Giustiniani, we are much more concerned with the fact that in one of their most beautiful *palazzi*, the middle one of that trio adjoining the matchless Ca' Foscari, Richard Wagner was living in 1858, and while there wrote the greatest love-duet ever written—the second act of *Tristan & Isolde*.

The first act of this opera had been finished shortly before, while he was living in Zurich with the Wesendoncks. It was after the disastrous *contretemps* precipitated by his first wife Minna which resulted in the breaking-up of that strange double ménage that he decided to come to Venice.

"I heard," he writes in his autobiography, "that one of the three Giustiniani palaces, situated not far from the Palazzo Foscari, was at present very little patronized by visitors, on account of its situation, which in the winter is somewhat unfavorable. I found some very spacious and impos-

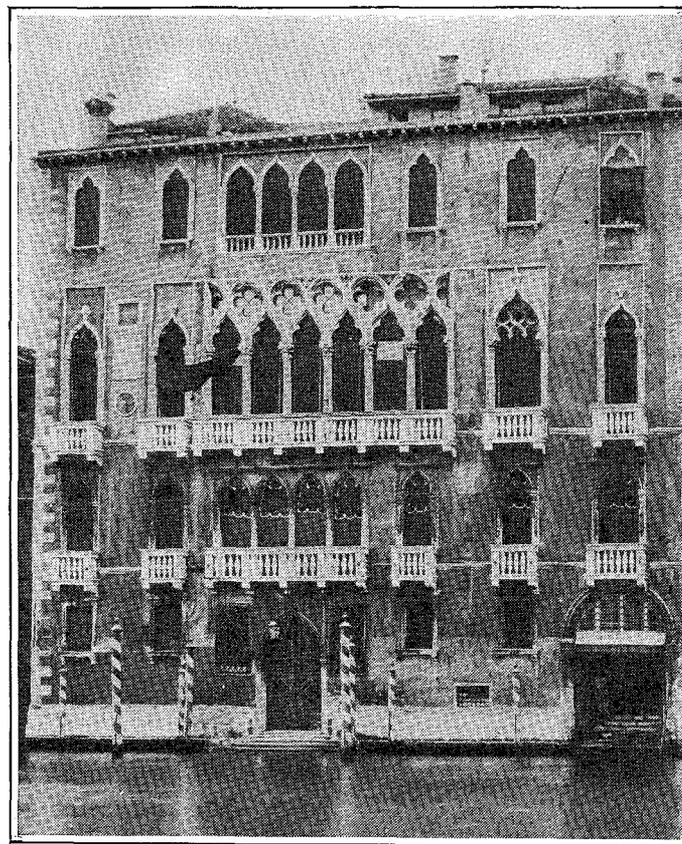
ing apartments there, all of which they told me would remain uninhabited. I here engaged a large stately room with a spacious bedroom adjoining. I had my luggage quickly transferred there, and on the evening of the 30th August I said to myself, 'At last I am living in Venice'.

Wagner also speaks of what William Dean Howells wrote so delightfully about—the extraordinary rift between the authorities and the general public, Venice being Austrian territory at that

the people were gathered round the band in thousands listening most intently, but no two hands ever forgot themselves so far as to applaud, as the least sign of approbation of Austrian military music would have been looked upon as treason to the Italian Fatherland."

As a matter of fact Wagner did not finish his *Tristan* in Venice, but he did compose and orchestrate the entire second act during his stay here. The last act was written in Lucerne, various matters necessitating his departure from Italy. However, although written elsewhere, the inspiration came while here, as there is as every one knows much of the second act in the last. In regard to a certain passage he writes:

"As I was returning home late one night on the gloomy canal, the moon appeared suddenly and illuminated the marvellous palaces and the tall figure of my gondolier towering above the stern of the gondola, slowly moving his huge sweep. Suddenly he uttered a deep wail, not unlike the cry of an animal; the cry gradually gained in strength, and formed itself, after a long-drawn 'Oh!' into the simple musical exclamation, 'Venezia!' This was followed by other sounds of which I have no distinct recollection, as I was so much moved at the time. Such were the impressions that to me appeared the



PALAZZO GIUSTINIANI

Where Wagner wrote the second act of *Tristan and Isolde*

time. Speaking of the concerts by the Austrian bands in the Piazza he says: "I was often suddenly startled towards the end of my meal by the sound of my own overtures; then as I sat at the restaurant window giving myself up to impressions of the music, I did not know which dazzled me most, the incomparable Piazza magnificently illuminated and filled with countless numbers of moving people, or the music that seemed to be borne away in rustling glory to the winds. Only one thing was wanting that certainly might have been expected from an Italian audience:

most characteristic of Venice during my stay there, and they remained with me until the completion of the second act of *Tristan*, and possibly even suggested to me the long-drawn wail of the shepherd's horn in the third act."

Twenty-five years later he was to return to Venice for another sojourn. He had been very ill, but during his stay here had seemed to recover much of his old-time vigor, even conducting at a performance at the Liceo Martello on Christmas Eve. It was however only the flash of the dying embers, and on February 19, 1883, he passed away.