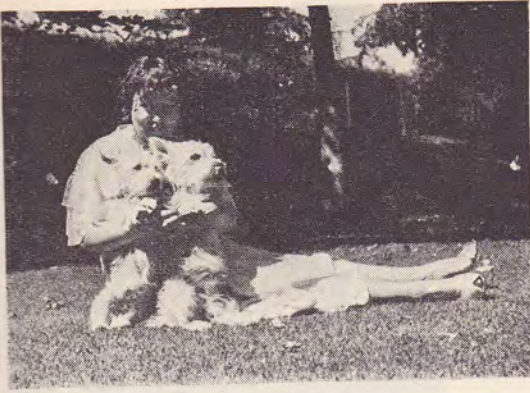


Basil Rathbone's

You'd think a Hollywood actor would want to forget all about "Pictures" when his day's work is done. But here's a fine player whose idea of diversion is to spend all his spare time shooting camera studies!



By
Ruth Tildesley



Basil Rathbone has made some splendid photographs, and we show you a representative group. Reading from top to bottom: Mrs. Rathbone with the family pets. "Emotion in Nature." "Happy," the dog, with geraniums. The "spirit picture" from "Romeo and Juliet." Now, see opposite page: top, a study of Marlene Dietrich by Mr. Rathbone. Courtyard and fountain in "Romeo and Juliet." Location scene from "Garden of Allah." An action shot.

IMAGINE Basil Rathbone as a Man with a Message!

"Solution to boredom!" he explained, his dark eyes shining, his lean face aglow as though someone had flashed a silver reflector into it. "Get yourself a camera and *do something different!*"

We sat in the Rathbone sunroom, where the color scheme of light blue and henna makes you think of ice and flames, a giant album open before us, while he expounded his views.

"You see this one—I shot that through a fountain. Water was showering down from above, and beyond were the birds dipping in and out. I didn't know whether I'd get anything or not. Now all the other camera fiends point me out as the man who shot that fountain thing.

"I got that on the set during 'Romeo and Juliet.' On that picture so many of us had cameras, little sixteen m.m. movies or still cameras, that they nearly shut down on us. There were Leslie Howard, Reginald Denny and myself shooting whenever we weren't in the scene, and dozens of people who either had small parts or were visiting the set taking shots. 'After all, just who is making this picture?' they inquired.

"But among us, we got some excellent stuff. Sometimes I think amateurs have more than their share of luck, or else they're not hampered by knowing exactly what they can or cannot do, so they take chances.

"My spirit pictures were accidents, it must be admitted. I had no idea what I was getting. The set was lit, the company was ready to go into the ceremonial dance. As I shot, they moved—and their figures are just sufficiently blurred so that they look transparent. The torches on the walls, the reflections in the polished floor, are all there clearly, only the figures seem to be spirits! I wonder under what conditions I could do that again?"

He stabbed at the air with an eager forefinger.

"There!" he cried, "that's what I mean! Making pictures takes hold on your imagination. Having a camera opens a new door on life. You see everything, not only with the ordinary human eye, but with the camera's eye as well. A scene, a person, a piece of action isn't any longer merely pleasing, displeasing, or uninteresting; it's a problem in pictorial values.

"At the most boring moment, you can sit back and speculate on what you'd do if you had to make a picture of whatever it is that's going on. You find yourself forgetting to be bored. You think, 'Now, if I let in a little more light from that window,' or 'If I moved that chair farther forward,' or 'That's an interesting arrangement of shadows on her face—' and so on.

"Next thing you know, you discover you've learned something about composition, lighting, framing your subject and what not."

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"Busman's Holiday"

It's not yet a year since this latest recruit to the army of Hollywood camera fiends joined up.

"I talked about taking pictures for a long time before I actually did it," he confided. "I believe it's almost essential for anyone in this business to learn to shoot a camera, because in that fashion you find out things you'd never know when you merely perform before one. But I talked and talked until last Christmas Mrs. Rathbone gave me my cameras—movie and still—and I was off.

"I'm interested in my movie camera, too, of course, because I can use color. But I believe we're on the threshold of great advances in pictures. Think of the excitement of getting your color eye to work. Think of the interesting things you could do with color contrast or harmony!

"I'm very new in the amateur picture field. I'm no authority. I believe the best thing anyone who isn't an expert can do is to learn all the makers can tell you about your particular camera—it really doesn't matter so much whether it's an expensive model or not—and then follow directions about timing, light, distance and so on. When you break the rules, do it for a reason.

"It's sometimes nice to catch a person who has a lot of character in his face, just sitting doing nothing, completely relaxed. It's also a good idea to catch him when he's occupied doing something that interests him keenly.

"If you can manage not to have your people move, so much the better; but there are times when you see you haven't enough light, or the composition is wrong, and you feel you must shoo them over to the other side of the lawn. The best effects, though, are usually unstudied."

The Rathbones were about to leave for England.

"Part of my joy in the trip is that I'll be able to take pictures," he exulted. "I've been studying various art publications. Have you noticed the shots they use where all you see is a part of a mast and maybe three ropes—and that's a ship? I'd like to get something on that order.

"I hope, too, to get some famous people in an informal way. I rather like the shots I have made of visitors to sets. While they are watching the scene, I shoot them. One day I got Sir John Masfield, Hugh Walpole and James Hilton."

Traveling with a camera fiend, according to the actor, isn't unalloyed joy.

"Once you are bitten by the camera bug, you're a menace to people who want to make time on the road," he smiled. "You see something and you say to the driver: 'Stop! I must get this!' or, if you're driving, you pull up crying: 'Wait. Here's something!' You can't bear to pass a possible picture.

"On the way back from Lake Tahoe, I got my pet picture of cattle grazing below snowclad mountains. I'm proud of that shot. But I must admit I followed directions exactly.

"I find that it's well to use a filter—sometimes called a 'diffuser'—on the camera when the light is bright. In that way, you get more detail.

"Sometimes I try for an effect in a shot that isn't merely light and shadow, but mood. Heat on the desert, for example. I shot a group of Arabs, sitting in the shade against white hot sky and sand. There was no light thrown on them—I wanted them in silhouette against the intense light.

"I never use extra light outside, no reflectors, no flashes, nothing but sunlight varied by filters. But I'm a beginner. Except where the studio has sets already lighted, I've never bothered with lights indoors, either. I've used sunlight coming in through a door or a window and made my picture accordingly.

"However, there are undoubtedly many interesting things that can be done with lights and reflectors. When I'm more expert, I shall go into that."

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Henry Fonda and Frances Seymour Brokaw. Their romance enhances the Society-Hollywood entente.

world"), who visited the Lionel Atwills; the Countess of Warwick, who is at present the house guest of the Douglas Fairbankses. Her husband, the seventh Earl of Warwick, has recently been signed by Metro for pictures and is due to report at the studio in a few weeks. Strange to say, Royalty and Society have never made a success in pictures; the public, unlike Hollywood, simply doesn't go for them. But perhaps the young Earl will prove an exception. Of course the racing season brought out Jock Whitney and his sister Joan Whitney Payson, Lord and Lady Cavendish—she's Adele Astaire, Fred's sister—and many others. Alfred G. Vanderbilt could be found dancing at the Troc almost any evening when the day's races were over with Florence Rice or Betty Furness. Barbara Hutton of the Woolworth millions dropped in for a friendly look-see, (Jimmy Stewart was her escort), before she married Count Haugwitz von Reventlow. The Honorable Mrs. Tanis Montague liked Hollywood so well she has taken a house here indefinitely. Oh,

really now, one just cawn't enumerate all the Society that has swooped upon us, one cawn't. There was a day, I faintly recall, when people stood for hours watching for a Gould, or a Vanderbilt, or an Astor to emerge from his Fifth Avenue Frontage, but not now; all the Goulds, Astors and Vanderbilts are in Hollywood gaping at movie stars.

The most social-loving of the movie stars are the Freddie Marches, who recently entertained the German Prince and Princess Zu Lowenstein. And the Bing Crossbys, who entered Society via the racetrack, which is a *bona fide* way to enter. Bing and his wife Dixie Lee are frequent week-enders at the Lin Howards' in Del Monte, the Lin Howards being the swanky polo crowd. Miriam Hopkins does all right with Society and only last month was entertained by King Edward. Connie Bennett, Claudette Colbert, Marlene Dietrich, Loretta Young, Kay Francis, Joan Crawford, Carole Lombard, Ricardo Cortez, Dick Barthelmess, Gary Cooper, and Clark Gable are favorites of the blue bloods.

And what has the result of this social invasion been? Well, you can imagine. It has gone right to the pretty little heads of half of the Hollywood populace. Movie stars have completely lost their perspective. They take Royalty big, and they themselves have become distressingly stiff and formal. They can't relax any more. They shouldn't forget Prince George. It was not pomp and circumstance he wanted in Hollywood, it was a bit of hey nonny nonny. But I suppose we shouldn't be too hard on the poor dears. After all, they're only human; and if an Astor, a Vanderbilt, a Countess, and a Duke called you before you'd even had your second cup of coffee you couldn't help but feel a bit uppity, now could you? But oh, what a dreadful mistake Hollywood is making to take Society so seriously. Society can go Hollywood all right, but it is most important that Hollywood should not go Society. When a movie star "goes Society" she, (or he), immediately loses her audience, and once she has estranged her fans she forfeits her stardom, and when she has lost her stardom you can be quite sure that Society wants no part of her either. Beware of Celebrity-chasing Society!

Basil Rathbone's "Busman's Holiday"

Continued from page 63

Basil Rathbone, being an infant in the amateur game, doesn't develop or print his own films.

"I'll get around to that, in time, perhaps," he said, thoughtfully, "but I feel that I must master the camera first. When I know all about that, I'll be ready to experiment with the film. I believe I should have a real dark-room, fully equipped. I should also have more spare time than I possess at the moment. I can scarcely manage time to shoot all the pictures I want, to cut the movie film, and to plan effects, as it is. But when the time comes, I shall enjoy the experiment.

"Do you notice that so many foreign films cut the tops off the characters' heads? Probably this is an effort to bring out some interesting feature or expression. I must see what can be done about that.

"I believe you can use a mirror in a number of ways, if you are after something different. I took some shots of Director Boleslawski shaving on location, shooting directly into the mirror he was facing. It took some maneuvering to eliminate my own reflection, but I finally got the man and his shaving bowl."

If you have had trouble getting the sort of pictures you'd like to have of Grandma, Aunt Emma or the twins, perhaps there's a hint for you in the Rathbone method. Do something different! Get Grandma in her sunny kitchen, stirring something in a bowl, perhaps with a dab of flour on one cheek. Surprise Aunt Emma when she's taking the dogs for a run, or listening to the radio, or doing something that turns her attention away from your little black box.

As to the twins, if you must get them out into the sunshine in order to have the right light, pretend to take the picture very solemnly, and when they think it's all over, click the shutter.

"In fact," elaborated Basil, with a swift gesture taking in the universe, "all you need to make pictures is a good clear lens, a lot of imagination, and the ability to work out the thing first in your mind. When you've made some experiments, discovered your mistakes, learned what to avoid and what to include, you're ready.

"Thinking the thing through beforehand saves a lot of film. But whether you achieve what you aim for or not, taking pictures is a hobby worth riding."