

BUT NOT

WHEN a trio of widely-separated little boy babies first blinked unseeing eyes at a strange world some forty-odd years ago, their adoring parents had no inkling that years later the world would come to hate—on the screen, of course—their respective offspring.

"Aha," beamed Signor Ciannelli, in Naples, Italy, as he gazed enraptured upon young Eduardo, "the bambino shall become a great surgeon."

"A famous statesman, surely, Claude will grow to be," murmured Mrs. Rains, in a London slum, cradling her new-born babe in delicate young arms.

"Yes," responded mining engineer Mr. Rathbone to his wife's question, down there in Johannesburg, South Africa. "I hope Basil will take after me; or, better still, be a captain of industry."

Of course, as each of the trio—Eduardo Ciannelli, Claude Rains and Basil Rathbone—lay in his crib, he hadn't very much to say upon the subject . . . but at the time it sounded pretty swell.

Why not, they probably asked themselves—that is, if they had been old enough to think—such a future would be top-hole . . . we shall see what we shall see.

But all that was some forty-odd years ago. Their fortunes varied thereafter, but each arrived through devious means at the same station in life . . . each achieved the position of top-ranking actor, specializing in villainous roles that caused him to be hissed and hated for his roguery. No more adept or rascally "heavies" exist on the screen today than this trio whose lives and careers we're about to delve into, for the sake of paralleling their merits.

"My father wanted me to be a doctor," states Ciannelli, whom you'll recall for his Trock in "Winterset" and his Johnny Van-ning in "Masked Woman," with Bette Davis. Of medium height and rather stocky build, with intense hazel eyes and dark hair through which his strong slender fingers often ran in restless fashion, he spoke in a voice that was soft, his lined mobile face expressing as much as his words. "My father studied medicine himself and believed that a great future lay ahead for me in this field.

"But it was no use. I studied for several years, in Italy, but the urge to sing surged within me too strongly to be ignored, so I turned to opera singing. I sang in every capital in Europe."

Deep in his heart, the Italian—only half Italian, by the way, for his mother was English—had known since boyhood that eventually he would be a singer. All his time and energy as a lad had been expended toward this end, albeit unconsciously. As he grew older he came to realize this, and finally made the decision that was to mould his life.

Educated both in South Africa and England, Basil Rathbone entered business at the behest of his father, but, like the younger Ciannelli, he found his tastes ran elsewhere. Commerce held absolutely no allure for him, but the stage became an all-absorbing interest. So, to the stage he directed his attention, with the result that he made his dramatic debut in Shakespeare.

Both Ciannelli and Rathbone were born of prosperous parents. On the other hand, Claude Rains' early life was one of privation and hardship.

At ten, to provide for his mother, he became a call boy in a London theatre. Less than a pound a week the job paid, but it stirred the desire to act.

"I made up my mind the very first day I was in the theatre someday to be a great actor," Rains says, "and that beacon never left me all the years I was fighting for recognition. Carpenter, property man, prompter, stage manager . . . I was all of them, and each taught me something new, something valuable about acting. I was a skilled performer when finally I got my chance to appear before the public years later."



Eduardo Ciannelli as he is in real life and (left) as a sly, black-hearted menace. The semi-circle shows Claude Rains in a part in which he created a personality entirely different from other roles that he has played.



Tremendous force characterized each of this trio as they embarked upon their chosen profession. For Ciannelli, he had to vie with the greatest voices in Italy: Rathbone was obliged to contend with many young actors possessed of far more experience than he in the interpretation of Shakespeare; and Rains was handicapped by an impediment in his speech in the pursuit of his goal. That all, through sheer determination and hard work, succeeded in their individual aims is proof of their terrific driving power, a quality which even today is one of their greatest traits. Stubbornly ambitious, all were fighters of extraordinary fibre.

The World War retarded their respective careers. Although of artistic temperament, each joined the colors at the very outset of the conflict . . . and emerged with honors and distinction. Shortly thereafter, Ciannelli came to America, Rains and Rathbone following later.

"I had been in most parts of the world, but never the United States," the Italian relates. "I came over to sing, possibly for a few months. I have been here ever since.

"America amazed, thrilled me. It was so vast. In Europe, one can go from one country to another within a few hours. Here, in America, the journey across the continent required days. I decided I would make my home here.

"But, first of all, I had to learn the language. I knew Italian, naturally, and French and some Russian . . . but, despite my mother's nationality, I had never learned English. So, for weeks, months, I studied, until I could properly express myself. And the longer I remained in this country the better I liked it. It was so



beautiful, so democratic, so informal . . . the people so friendly. It was what I had always dreamed of finding."

While Ciannelli embarked for America on his own, so to speak, Rains and Rathbone were sponsored by New York stage producers. Rains appeared in "The Constant Nymph," and Gilbert Miller brought Rathbone to this country to make his Broadway debut opposite Doris Keane in "The Czarina." Both players had acted in America before the War—Rains on Broadway, Rathbone with a touring Shakespearean company—but their re-

SO WICKED

Three Unscrupulous Villains,
Upon Analysis, Turn Out To
Be Gentlemen Of Culture.

By Whitney Williams

spective efforts after the War provided the necessary impetus to establish each as a highly capable actor.

You're wondering how Ciannelli became an actor, why he abandoned opera singing for the stage? The circumstances are typical of the man and show clearly his mettle.

"I hadn't been in America long before I realized there was little opera over here," is the way he explains the step. "When I arrived in New York, I had hoped I would find many companies. Instead, I found only one . . . the Metropolitan.

"I sang here and there, but in America my heart wasn't in grand opera. I looked about me, and finally Henry Savage, the producer, asked me if I would like to take a part in a musical comedy. I assured him I would, and he cast me in 'Lady Billy,' with Mitzi. I liked it so well that I decided I would remain in this newer and more sprightly medium. After 'Lady Billy,' I sang one of the principal roles in 'Rose Marie.'"

Is it difficult to associate this man whom you know as a master-menance with musical comedy? Consider, then, his impersonation of Telegin in "Uncle Vanya," some years later, a part filled with sympathy and appeal. And the deeply emotional Dr. Agramonte in "Yellow Jack."

Strange as it may seem, each of the three actors under our microscope first won fame for his straight interpretations. Rathbone for years was known as a romantic idol, Rains one of the Theatre Guild's leading stars and Ciannelli an actor who could wring the hearts of any audience with his dramatic intensity.

"Until 'Winterset,'" Ciannelli discloses, "I was never considered a heavy. I had played a few menacing characters, notably Diamond Louie in 'The Front Page,' but principally my work had been strictly dramatic.

"Guthrie McClintic, the playwright-producer, called me in one day and asked if I would do Trock in his production of 'Winterset.' At first, I didn't

want to do it . . . the character was so revolting, so against all principles and human nature, that I was fearful of its reaction with the public. But the part was so gripping that I felt I couldn't refuse."

It was his splendid work in this play that led directly to his being called to the screen. Burgess Meredith, the star, and Margo had been signed to enact their roles in the film version of "Winterset," and it was only just and fitting that Ciannelli should appear, too. With his enactment of Trock the screen saw one of its most sinister characterizations, and movie fans the country over realized that here was one of the most macabre figures they had ever viewed in a picture.

Claude Rains, too, made his screen debut in a "heavy" role, although not until the last scene did audiences see his face. He portrayed the title role in "The Invisible Man," and the part truly carried out the theme of the title. While not at first linked with villainous parts, Basil Rathbone, shortly after entering films, became identified with this form of acting.

So our trio now is in Hollywood—after years of distinguished service on the Broadway stage—where they are acknowledged leaders in the field of screen villainy. For his acting in "Winterset" and "Marked Woman" alone, Ciannelli would be hailed anywhere as a monster . . . cinematically speaking, of course.

Rains would be hissed in any language for his evil slyness in "Anthony Adverse," "Crime Without Passion" and "They Won't Forget." And Rathbone's infamy in such pictures as "David Copperfield," "Tale of Two Cities," "Love from a Stranger" and "Confession" places him in the same category.

Deep-dyed heavies, all of them, they are, at the same time, velvet-handed villains!

Many a mark of similitude knits these three actors together, as they pause in their persecutions of the hero and heroine in whatever films they may appear. Each is intensely serious, studious, retiring.

"I have no time nor inclination for the social life of the colony," Ciannelli expresses himself, and in this statement is reflected the attitude of Rains, too. Like Rathbone, they are both married, but Rathbone entertains occasionally upon a rather grand scale. However, these affairs which he and his wife tender their friends are few and far between. Generally, he prefers the quietude of his home, with his wife (Ouida Bergere, the scenarist) and his son, of a former marriage, who has recently come over from England to live with his father for a while. It is rumored that he may follow in Rathbone's footsteps and carve out a career for himself on the screen. Ciannelli has two sons, one of whom is very fond of drawing, but they are both too young to come to any definite conclusions about so far as future professions are concerned.

While widely divergent in type and appearance, one characteristic is common to all three actors. This is . . . a powerful and vibrant voice which can, on occasion, be as soft as a

mother's caress.

Look back upon either "Winterset" or "Marked Woman," and you may recall that much of the menace in Ciannelli's presence was occasioned by the inflections of his voice. This is true, too, with all Rains' interpretations, and [Continued on page 67]



In "Make a Wish," Basil Rathbone and Donald Meek. (Above) A "close-up" of Rathbone, the man whose villainous roles make any picture intense and dramatic. (Right, above) Claude Rains, once a poor unknown boy in London, and now the sun never sets on his pictures.



But Not So Wicked

[Continued from page 29]

Rathbone is noted for his suave tones.

As gentle and as courtly off the screen as they are deadly on, each is endowed with a love for nature that is surpassed by no other quality. Ciannelli spends all his time between pictures in the open, either at the beach or tramping through the hills, and Rains and Rathbone both are confirmed hikers.

Characterized, too, by dark and piercing eyes, and faces revealing dynamic personalities, whenever either of these three flash on the screen he completely commands the attention of the audience. There is something about them that instantly causes spectators to view them in another light than that focused upon the other players, and in this individuality lies one of the secrets of their respective success.

Ask Ciannelli whether he prefers the stage or the screen, villainy or comedy, and he replies, blandly . . . "I like work." By that, he means the role's the thing. He wants to act, and he doesn't care in which medium it may be. He insists upon one stipulation only . . . the role must be meaty. In this respect, he is borne out by Rains and Rathbone.

To converse with these men, the interviewer finds Rains both reticent and explosive, and inclined to be shy. He talks with bombastic candor, as a rule; again, almost in monosyllables. Rathbone is the very reverse . . . he speaks in polished tones and words flow from his mouth with amazing rapidity. For his part, Ciannelli still retains his Italian accent, but his words are deeply convincing. Comparisons again . . . each possesses the knack of compelling the listener to hang onto his words, whether he will or not.

The future looms lustrously for this trio of players. Each a consummate actor, they already are firmly entrenched in the minds of motion picture audiences as villains par excellence . . . and whenever they appear on the screen their presence is greeted with a feeling akin to horror. And that, my friends, is the highest tribute that may be paid to an actor's ability!

To Play Is The Thing

[Continued from page 25]

unknown come to her secluded home in Brentwood to play there. Carole Lombard's cannily made chums of professional whiz Alice Marble and Alice's coach Eleanor Tennant; that shows Carole's plenty smart! Occasionally she sweeps over to Claudette Colbert's fancy court for a glamour-girl get-together. But Claudette's helpless before those fast ones of the Lombard.

Badminton, tennis with a feather on your ball, is rapidly gaining new recruits. The Tones are Hollywood's most promising exponents. Joan has only to glance at an airy shuttlecock and her sporting blood's aflame. She's going to get that feather over or else. She and Franchot practice diligently on week nights so that over the week-end they can run their guests ragged. One Sunday the terrible Tone, bounding like a Tartar from the Steppes, let Madge Evans beat him. But Madge discovered afterwards that he was just being gallant. When he trounced Robert Taylor, probably Hollywood's second-best badminton player, Madge's face began to go into a violent

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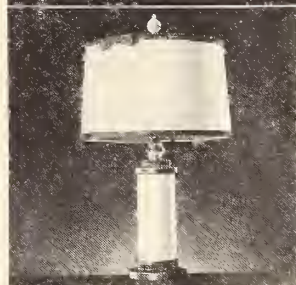
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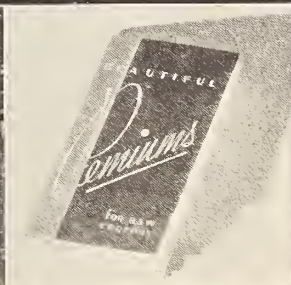
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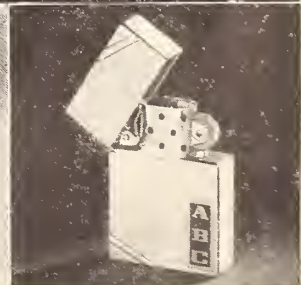
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