

A DIAMOND

— Not in the Rough

By ANITA DELGLYN

FROM the land of Cecil Rhodes comes a diamond—a smooth diamond—in no sense “in the rough.” Not the Koh-i-noor or the Great Mogul, but a South African jewel of priceless value and exquisite polish—the Basil diamond.

You’ve guessed it—I’m referring to Basil Rathbone, cultured English actor, world traveller, cinema star, and a real, honest-to-goodness “he-man” beneath it all. One of the screen’s greatest lovers, and a man who has no equal when it comes to pouring him into one of those ready-made drawing room scenes. He fits like the paper on the wall!

If you had seen him, as I did, in the play dealing with the life of Catherine of Russia—seen him make love to Doris Keane as passionately, as smoothly, and as thrillingly as has ever been done upon the American stage—you would not wonder why I, like so many others of my sex, get the “palps” when Basil Rathbone makes a stage or screen

appearance. As a young Cossack officer who rose to fame and power because of the warmth of his love-making to

Constance Bennett

Basil



Basil Rathbone

With Ruth Chatterton



the Czarina of all the Russias, he won a place in the hearts of both men and women and left a new appreciation and an understanding of at least that phase of the world’s history.

So eloquent was his voice and so passionately beautiful his gestures that it needed but little imagination to complete the imagination’s portrayal of the physical act of love. Blase New York, brusque Chicago, staid Philadel-

phia, and Puritanical Boston were shocked, thrilled and pleased in turn. Those who had come to scoff remained to praise, and I am personally inclined to believe that the profound impression Mr. Rathbone created upon his New York and Chicago audiences at that time was the turning point for great successes in the United States. And of course, throughout the world, for intensely patriotic citizens of the British Empire will never refuse to view a film in which a South African is starred or featured.

I am also certain that his success in "The Czarina" was largely responsible for his being cast in films later on. I've only seen one picture in which I felt a wee bit uncomfortable, feeling that he was miscast, and that was in M-G-M's attempt to do "The Bishop Murder Case." I really believe that the public couldn't quite take to what they called a "substitute" for Philo Vance in the person of William Powell in the S. S. Van Dine detective stories. He gave the best that was in him to the part, however, and M-G-M had no regrets on his account. He proved an excellent drawing card, however, in "A Lady of Scandal" in which he played opposite Ruth Chatterton.

Making love to Kay Francis and Billie Dove in "A Notorious Affair" was one of his high-spots in the picture, a production which didn't prove to be a real success—that in spite of his splendid work. In Pathe's "Sin Takes a Holiday" he again scored a distinct hit; and in "A Lady Surrenders", in which he appeared with Rose Hobart and Genevieve Tobin, he was pronounced by the critics as "accomplished", "gifted", "rare ability", "excellent", etc. I shall ever recall that never-to-be-forgotten kiss he gave Rose Hobart in that picture; it will be a constant reminder that the polished, smooth drawing room manners may be but the velvet covering of a masculine volcano. Basil Rathbone has the shoulders of a football player, the strength of a lion in his hands and wrists, and all of the grace and superb manners of the perfect cavalier. But let me just give you a few facts about this "diamond in the smooth."

Basil Rathbone, leading man under long term contract with Metro-Goldwyn - Mayer, was



Rose
Hobart

born in Johannesburg, South Africa. He went to school in England, and began his stage career there at the age of eleven, playing in Shakespearian productions.

Basil
Rathbone

Rathbone had shown his bent for the stage when he was eight years old, however. He went through a whole scene of a play in which he had heard Sir Henry Irving in the parlor of his home on the following day. In London Rathbone played in "George Sand" "He Who Gets Slapped" and "Peter Ibbetson," and made one of his greatest successes as Iago in "Othello." He came to the United States in 1912 and became one of the foremost figures on the New York stage by his work in "The Czarina," with Doris Keane, "The Swan", "The Captive" and "The Command to Love". He was co-author and star of the play "Judas".

Rathbone's first appearance in motion pictures was in "The Masked Bride" for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in 1925. He played opposite Mae Murray in that film. After that he returned to Broadway, where he remained until the development of talking pictures made him one of the most sought after of dramatic actors. There isn't a picture company operating which wouldn't be more than glad to add his name to their professional staff.

Rathbone is married to the beautiful Onida Bergere, scenarist and



With Billie Dove

playwright. He is six feet, one and one half inches tall, weighs one hundred and sixty-five pounds, possesses a handsome profile, has black hair and hazel eyes. Frank Benson, the actor, is a cousin of Rathbone. What picture will he do next? I do not know; I should like to see him in "The Czarina" if Will Hays will permit it to be done the way it should be produced. . . . However, whatever he does, you may rest assured that it will be a worthy effort.