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Clark Gable
porter, and
Colbert, the
heirress, in
It Happened C

READING TIME
7 MINUTES 45 SECONDS

- 1 star means fairly good.
- 2 stars, good.
- 3 stars, excellent.
- 4 stars, extraordinary.

★★★★/IT HAPPENED ONE-NIGHT

THE PLAYERS: Clark Gable, Claudette Colbert, Walter Connolly, Roscoe Karns, Jameson Thomas, Alan Hale, Ward Bond, Eddie Chandler, Wallis Clark, Harry Bradley, Charlie Brown, Harry Holman, Maidel Turner, Arthur Hoyt, Blanche Frederici, Irving Bacon, Charles C. Wilson, Harry Todd. Directed by Frank Capra.



THIS picture contains so much material that has been badly handled before that to explain what it is about would inevitably make it sound like a blurred copy of half a dozen of the poorer productions of the past two years. It is, on the contrary, for reasons that can best be ascertained by seeing it, one of the most entertaining comedies of the season.

The plot has to do with a hard-drinking, irresponsible reporter (Clark Gable); an heiress (Claudette Colbert) who jumps off her father's yacht in the effort to elope with her aviator fiancé; and a bus ride from Miami to Manhattan. It sounds incredible that with these ingredients It Happened One Night could be an entirely fresh and underivative narrative. It is exactly that.

The romance between the girl and the reporter—they make friends on the bus and ride North together, sleeping in tourist camps, hitching rides or stealing cars when they run out of money—is developed with a running fire of comic incidents that are without exception apt, quick, and observant. Through them the story reaches a climax that is at once improbable and entirely plausible.

Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert give what to this department seem their most engaging performances to date. Walter Connolly is as expert as usual. The dialogue by Robert Riskin is first-rate. None the less, It Happened One Night is probably, if the phrase means anything at all, a director's picture. Frank Capra—he did the same thing in Lady for a Day—has the knack of making you believe in a story by telling it as though he expected you not to. Instead of building his situations up to their punch lines, he throws them away. With the kind of situations he had to work with in It Happened One Night, this has the effect of doubling their impact.

An extraordinarily funny sequence is based on no more than Clark Gable's efforts to swap a suitcase for a tankful of gasoline. Another depends on the way Claudette Colbert looks at Gable when he is eating a raw carrot. Regardless of how Capra gets his effects, It Happened One Night is a picture you are sure to like. Good shot: passengers on the bus singing The Man on the Flying Trapeze.

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