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Case Of The Three Million

1926 75 min. Silent B&W Rental: \$35.00

Directed by Yakov Protazanov; screenplay adapted by Protazanov from the story and play, "The Three Thieves" by Umberto Notari; photography by Pyotr Yermolov. With Igor Ilinsky, Anatpli Ktorov, Mikhail Klimov. English titles.

Although frowned upon by the authorities as nothing more than an "ordinary drawing room comedy", *The Case Of The Three Million* proved extraordinarily popular with the public when it was released in 1926. The story, set in Italy, has to do with the comic

interactions of several types of crooks—a banker-speculator, a gentleman-thief, and a ragamuffin street thief—who accidentally find themselves in the same proximity to 3,000,000 rubles swindled by the banker in a land deal. When the film was released in New York in 1933, the official state censors ordered nine specific cuts (restored in this print), eliminating scenes or shots which they defined as "sacrilegious", "indecent", or "will tend to incite to crime."

Perhaps *The Case Of The Three Million* is slightly amoral in its good-natured satire of high society decadence and inveterate thievery, but it remains a good example of Protazanov's skill in the comedy genre. The popular Soviet stage and screen comic, Igor Ilinsky, gave one of his inimitably eccentric performances as the petty thief. (TL, YB)

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