

## Document Citation

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## TRANSLATION

### CASE OF THE THREE MILLION CASE

#### Plot

Ornana, the Banker, decides to take advantage of the famine which has resulted from several bad harvests in northern Italian provinces, ~~and~~ to speculate. To do this, he needs a large sum of money. He sells his house for 3 million to a religious commune after having bribed the "holy fathers". The banker's wife hears of the deal and sends her lover, Guido, a letter saying that there is 3 million in the banker's house. The letter falls into the hands of the adventurer Cascarilla. He breaks into the house and runs into his friend, Tapioca, the thief. The two friends joy is interrupted by the inopportune appearance of the banker. Tapioca escapes, and Cascarilla hides in Noris' (banker's wife) room. By threatening to give her letter to him to her husband, Cascarilla gets Noris to keep her husband busy until he gives her the signal. Noris is forced to oblige. Cascarilla breaks into the strong box, takes the money and flees. Shortly after, the police arrest Tapioca. He is held for the theft of the 3 million. Out of respect for the size of the sum stolen, Tapioca is accorded much respect and attention (by the police). Many people are interested in his trial, and his case is covered extensively in the newspapers.

The day of the trial, Cascarillo appears in the court room. He declares himself responsible for the theft of the money. The "cream of society" make sarcastic remarks, and he replies by throwing bundles of fake money at them. They all scramble for the money. Cascarillo and Tapioca take advantage of the confusion and slip away.

In the film's epilogue, we see a thief stealing Tapioca's gloves (Tapioca has since become rich). Tapioca catches the thief in the act and lectures him on the "sacred principle" of private property.

#### SOVIET OPINIONS

The small thief or the vagrant who steals a piece of bread from the bakery is not in the same class as the gentleman who steals a pearl necklace or who forges a 6 figure sum on a check. And yet, they're all criminals in the eyes of the "honest" banker who relieves his neighbors of their money in the name of the sacred principle of property. This fundamental truth of bourgeois society was told once again with wit and humor in the comic play THE THREE THIEVES which has recently run in Moscow theaters with Igor Ilinskii in the title role..... THE CASE OF THE THREE MILLION is a step forward in the "westernization" of our film industry. Our best directors compete with "western" cinema, apply its form, method, and even it's style, but this ~~must~~ must not be our main goal. Yet, on the whole, we get stimulation, we learn, when this is put in expert hands

----Kolstov (1926)

There was a time when the play adapted from V. Notari's story THE THREE THIEVES was performed on Soviet stages and cited as an example of revolutionary satire. This was due to external factors and not because of the play's inherent qualities: rather, there just was no revolutionary theater.

Today, THE THREE THIEVES has stepped down from the stage, and this discarded play has been picked-up by the cinema. We won't try to guess why this was done.. For a while we nurtured the hope that if Soviet cinema chose to pick-up Notari's "rose-water" theme, it was with the purpose of developing it more sharply and adding



## THE THREE MILLION CASE (Soviet Opinions con't)

some substance so that it rises into the ranks of a good social satire.

But this hope has not been realized. No one changed anything in the old story, they only added a love story. In the play the relationship between the banker's wife and the thief Cascarilla is only alluded to, whereas in the film this relationship develops into an amouros intrigue, played by O. Jizneva, and other nonsense found in bourgeois drawing room comedies.

Thus Notari's light humour satisfied Protazanov who wrote the script and directed the film. That the fat banker is a thief won't distrub the Soviet spectator very much. The Soviet film should have seized this theme and presented it more forcefully, ~~drive~~ home the point the point more sharply. THE THREE MILLION CASE driving

CASE is not the film it could have been. It's a soft film, with no meanness; completely inoffensive. The film was carefully made. It is obvious the director tried to match western standrards. It acheived it's goalThe film was no worse than a decent average film made in Germany.

~~xxxx~~

Creative daring, researching new ~~possibilities~~ possibilities -- these are not Protazanov's strengths. Essentially his strength is eclectic. He has been fertilized by different polens. In some scenes THE THREE MILLION CASE (the final ruckus--the banker's bal) he gives us perfect framing. The trial scene is badly used. We are reminded of an extraordinary use of such a scene in a film by J. Feyder, CRAINQUEBILLE. Protozanov presents the verdict in the manner of protocol -- grey and dry. Ilinskii plays ~~the~~ Tapioca as if he were on stage. He has less sparkle on film, and yet it is one of his best film roles. No excesses, no extra effort to produce laughter. The actor fits his part well. He stepped into it as if he ~~w~~ were stepping into a well tailored suit. His performance therefore, is simple, natural and full of expression. Ktorov found himself playing -- an "aristocratic thief". He wers the clothes very well and strikes villaneous attitudes that will go down in the hisotry of cinema.

Rabinovitch has built sets reminiscent of AELITA