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# AND THE LIGHT WENT OUT 1914

The wholesale merchant Werle and his ward Gerd are both trying to win the love of Inge, a guest in Werle's house and the daughter of a friend who is a shipowner. When the older man notices that Inge is interested in Gerd, he quickly sends his ward to the colonies on business, and later intercepts all of Gerd's letters to Inge. The girl does not know what to make of Gerd's sudden disappearance and subsequent silence, but then she marries Werle since her father has gone bankrupt.

When Gerd writes to his guardian that he is returning home because he misses Inge, Werle grows panicky. He hires two miscreants and steals out with them into the night, in order to destroy the beacon in the lighthouse at the entrance to the harbor so that Gerd's ship will run aground. But Gerd nonetheless manages to reach his guardian's house and to talk with Inge in private. Together they come to realize that they have been the victims of Werle's treachery. The merchant makes one more desperate attempt to escape justice, but fate allots him his well-deserved punishment and leads the lovers to happiness.

The film's title already draws the viewer's attention to the theme of light, which, along with the *tinting*, underscores and conditions the story. The flashing beacon, the kerosene lamps in the fishermen's tavern, the candles at a genteel dinner party, the torches with which the scoundrels illuminate the scene of their crime, and finally the fire from the furnaces in the bowels of the ocean liner – all these artificial sources of light are juxtaposed with the bright daylight of the outdoor scenes in the harbor, Gerd's silhouette against the dawn, and the reflection of the last of the sun's rays on the sea.

The transition from day to night is carefully celebrated in the film. A blue-*tinted* scene shows fishermen drinking in the tavern, and the lighthouse is visible through an open window in the background. Suddenly the landlord climbs up on a table and lights the lamp hanging in the middle of the room; the *tinting* is now yellow, and the lighthouse beacon begins to flash. With the fall of darkness Werle enters the tavern; his sinister plans can be carried out only under cover of night.

Werle's office is the most frequently used interior; and the lighthouse can always be seen through the window – curtains have compressed the view into a diamond shape. As its significance increases, the lighthouse becomes ever more prominent in the picture. In the first takes of Werle's office the view of the lighthouse is half-covered by the curtains, so that we can hardly recognize it. Only when Werle asks Gerd into his office to tell his ward that he is sending him overseas does the beacon flash its way directly into our field of vision. And when Werle receives the news of Gerd's imminent return, he gazes out of the window, toward the lighthouse. The sequence with the assault on the lighthouse keeper is little short of breathtaking. First we see the man tending and regulating the fire. It smolders in a great glass bulb which is alternately covered and uncovered by a revolving screen provided with cut-out sections. After the scoundrels have subdued the lighthouse keeper, they stop the screen during the bulb's dark phase; and an intertitle announces that »... the light went out.« Meanwhile the giant steamer is approaching, and the unsuspecting Gerd is impatiently waiting for the moment when he can disembark. On the bridge anxiety has already broken out, and down in the boiler room the stokers are feverishly shoveling coal.

The charm of UND DAS LICHT ERLOSCH lies in the careful direction of individual scenes, whereas the sensationalistic story-line is held together only with difficulty by the intertitles.