

Film Record—by Gordon Miram

The Amazing Adventures of Gary Polo

*A Fairy Story, With
Humblest Apologies To
Sam Goldwyn*

I FIND it hard to treat Samuel Goldwyn's "Adventures of Marco Polo" with quite the reverential awe usually accorded to anything that has so obviously cost such an enormous amount of money. Still, I doubt if Mr. Goldwyn himself would expect us to regard his film as a serious contribution to history; and the latitude which he has shown in producing it will, I trust, not be grudged to me in reviewing it.

One might, of course, try the poetic approach (with apologies to S. T. Coleridge):—

*In Hollywood did Goldwyn (Sam)
A super-spectacle decree. . . .*

No, that's going to be too difficult; so if Miss C. A. Lejeune (and Mr. Goldwyn) will pardon the liberty, I think I'll humbly borrow Miss Lejeune's priceless technique of the critical questionnaire:

Eastward, Ho!

Q.: Who was Marco Polo?

A.: Marco Polo was a handsome young American whose real name was Gary Cooper, and he went to China seven centuries ago.

Q.: But there weren't any Americans seven centuries ago, were there?

A.: No, of course not, silly. Don't be so factless. In this story the young American was supposed to be a Venetian.

Q.: Why did he go to China?

A.: Because his father told him to, and also because the Love of Adventure was in his blood. You see, he was the world's first travelling salesman.

Q.: And did he know any good stories?

A.: He must have. All the pretty Goldwyn girls in Venice were in love with him.

Q.: How did he get to China?

A.: First he went by boat, but there was a terrific storm and the boat sank, and two Arab horsemen pulled him and his travelling companion out of the Brown Sea.

Q.: What do you mean—the Brown Sea?

A.: Well, it looked brown. The whole picture was brown. Sepia, they call it, but it's really brown.



"... They met in a garden." Gary Cooper and Sigrid Gurie, Goldwyn's Norwegian "discovery," in a scene from "The Adventures of Marco Polo."

A Long Walk

Q.: What happened after they were pulled out of the Brown Sea?

A.: They rode on horses till there was a sandstorm in Persia, and then they walked to Peking.

Q.: All the way?

A.: So I gathered.

Q.: It must be a terribly long picture?

A.: Oh, no, not when you have a director who knows how to photograph maps and weary feet and mountains and roads and more maps. They reached Peking about five scenes and ten seconds later.

Q.: Still walking?

A.: Well, Gary Polo was carrying his funny friend on his back. His friend had sore feet and wanted to lie down and die, but they couldn't let the Comic Relief die so early in the picture.

Q.: I suppose they felt very strange when they got to Peking?

Little Black Bag

A.: Oh, not at all! They found that the Chinese and the Venetians and the Americans all spoke the same language. And almost the first person they saw was a monk out of "The Lost Horizon," only he'd got married and raised a family since then.

Q.: What else was he doing?

A.: Making gunpowder and talking

Chinese epigrams like Charlie Chan. He gave Gary Polo some fire-crackers and some spaghetti to put in his little black bag. That was Very Symbolic, you know. It meant he had to bring back a blessing and a curse to Western Civilisation. Also it cleared up that silly legend about Roger Bacon introducing gunpowder to Europe.

Q.: What's all this about a little black bag?

A.: I forgot to tell you that. It was what Marco Cooper had to carry the little things that change history. His father gave it to him before he started hiking. Later on he put a piece of coal in it—another clever Chinese invention.

Q.: When are we coming to the Love Interest?

Khan and Cur

A.: Patience! Culture comes first. Next they went to the stately pleasure dome that Samuel Goldwyn decreed and met dear old George Barbier, dressed up like an Oriental Father Christmas.

Q.: What for?

A.: Because he was Kublai Khan and ruled an empire measureless to man. But there was dirty work afoot—particularly dirty work. It was Basil Rathbone. He was a Saracen and his name was Ahmed, and he kept vultures and lions in his living-room and fed them on mutinous Mongols. Anyone but George Barbier would know at once he was not at all a suitable Prime Minister.