

CURRENT OPINION

July, 1919

MR. GRIFFITH'S NEWEST
MOVIE MASTERPIECE

“Broken Blossoms” the Result of Intensive Cultivation in the Field of the Films

ONCE again has David Wark Griffith delved into his seemingly inexhaustible bag of trick and brought out another novelty in the way of a film to intrigue the public and amaze his rivals. This time it is a film version of one of Thomas Burke's sophomorically grewsome tales of London's Limehouse district. It is called “Broken Blossoms” and is what might be termed a bit of intensive cultivation of film possibilities. Shown at the George M. Cohan Theater, which has been garnished and saturated with “atmosphere,” the new Griffith picture attracts crowds of sophisticated New Yorkers who are only too willing to pay \$2.50 a seat (and the additional war tax) for the privilege of judging the latest achievement of the greatest master of “movie” showmanship.

The picture itself inaugurates what one might term the fully elaborated short story of the screen. It consumes about eighty minutes. It abounds in pictorial and so-called “artistic” effects of photography—artistic in the sense of that dimming and blurring and unfocussing of the negative so that a photograph may look like anything but a photograph. Perhaps Mr. Griffith will soon catch up with the real photographers who are not ashamed of being photographic. However that may be, there can be no doubt that Mr. Griffith possesses the power of making critics and public take his work seriously. Thus we find the conservative critic of the *N. Y. Evening Post* noting:

OldMagazineArticles.com



A LIMEHOUSE ROSE

In "Broken Blossoms" Lillian Gish is seen as little Lucy, the Dickensian daughter of a new Bill Sykes.

The film is based upon Thomas Burke's class of "Limehouse Nights" entitled "The Chink and the Child."

"If there are more to come like it discriminating devotees of the film have something to look forward to. For whatever that much-abused word art may have come to mean or come not to mean by much application, "Broken Blossoms" has certainly a strong claim on it in its prime significance. First, because of the delicacy and directness with which the pathetic, horrible, exquisite story has been adapted for the screen; second, for the acting of Lillian Gish and Richard Barthelmess; third, for the photography, which has caught a beautiful effect throughout the whole piece.

"The picture has been taken from 'The Chink and the Child,' the first of the 'Limehouse Nights' stories by Thomas Burke. Its scenes are laid in the dim-lit alleys of the London 'Chinatown,' where the girl, 'li'l Lucia,' twelve years old, having been beaten almost to death by her father, the prize-fighter, Battling Burrows, is taken in and cared for by Cheng Haun, a young Chinaman. Sheng has watched her sufferings silently for a long time. His little room over his shop he fits up with silks and satins in honor of her coming. For three days he nurses her there back to health, tending her as his princess. Then the prize-fighting father gets wind of where the child has disappeared, and the tragedy follows quickly. Not, however, before some bits of almost lyric loveliness had penetrated through the sordid atmosphere of the tale."

MOVIE MASTERPIECE

A movie tragedy—not a movie melodrama, is how the newest Griffith *opus* is described by the *Times*—“a sincere human tragedy.”

“Mr. Griffith chose a tragic story of impossible love, love impossible in this world of passions and prejudices and brutal forces; he absorbed it in its full meaning, recast it in his mind pictorially, translated it from the written words of the author into the scenes and action of a photoplay, added what was needed to make it live in pictures, left out what pictures could not have adequately expressed—and ‘Broken Blossoms’ came to the screen, a masterpiece in moving pictures.

“Bare narration of the story cannot hope even to suggest the power and truth of the tragedy that Mr. Griffith has pictured. All of his mastery of picture-making, the technique that is preeminently his by invention and control, the skill and subtlety with which he can unfold a story—all of the Griffith ability has gone into the making of ‘Broken Blossoms.’ Many of the pictures surpass anything hitherto seen on the screen in beauty and dramatic force. The whole is a photoplay that cannot fail to impress anyone who looks at it in any mood short of the most resolute hostility.”

**CURRENT
OPINION**