

"Birth of a Nation" Thrills Tremendous Atlanta Audience

Wonderful Tribute Is Paid
to the Masterly Genius of
David W. Griffith—Atlanta
Throws Decorum to the
Winds.

By Ned McIntosh.

Ancient Greece had her Homer. Modern America has her David W. Griffith. It was for Homer to show the glory and the grandeur and the heroes of war. It is for Griffith to show the horrors and hideousness and hell of it. So moves the world on apace! Griffith's "The Birth of a Nation" opened at the Atlanta theater last night and was seen by one of the largest audiences that ever crowded through the doors of the Atlanta theater. Never before, perhaps, has an Atlanta audience so freely given vent to its emotions and appreciation as last night. Spasmodic at first, the plaudits of the great spectacle at length became altogether unrestrained. The clapping of hands was not sufficient, and cheer after cheer burst forth. He who gets standing room at "The Birth of a Nation" during the remainder of this week which the pictures plays here will be lucky.

It makes you laugh and moves you to hot tears unashamed. It makes you love and hate. It makes you forget decorum and forces a cry into your throat. It thrills you with horror and moves you to marvel at vast spectacles. It makes you actually live through the greatest period of suffering and trial that this country has ever known.

To say that "The Birth of a Nation" is based on "The Clansman" is correct as far as it goes, but it doesn't go far enough. Griffith takes Dixon's teapot-tempest and builds a tornado.

The art on conception of the man is wonderful.

With such scenes as a kitten and a puppy playing together, Griffith, in the beginning, relaxes the imagination and makes the mind forgetful of any preconceived idea or prejudice concerning the picture.

From this mental attitude, almost of dalliance, Griffith awakens the memories of childhood; warms the heart with romance; quickens the pulse with patriotism; forces the exultant cheer from the lips in the midst of great battles; turns the heart sick with scenes of bloodshed; dims the eyes with tears for woman's sufferings; relieves the tension of emotions with a timely humorous incident; makes you tremble for the peril of a mother passing through the lines to reach a wounded son; interests you with a faithful reproduction of Ford's theater and the assassination of Lincoln—and when Griffith has done all these things he has just begun!

You are ushered into an ante-chamber in Washington where a misguided man is plotting a black regime among white people—where a mulatto woman dreams of empire. You live through a period of ruin and destruction in the country where you were born. You see the plot executed and that same country humiliated and crushed under a black heel. Former happiness is shattered by the arrogance of ignorance. You sicken at the sight of an attempt to enforce marital racial equality. Again and again the unbearable hideousness of the days of reconstruction is borne in upon you. History repeats itself upon the screen with a realism that is maddening. You could shriek for a depiction of relief and—yes, retribution. Thus, over and over, does the picture grind and pound and pulverize your emotions.

But the end is not yet.

The insufferable reason for the Ku



DAVID W. GRIFFITH.

Whose master mind brought forth "The Birth of a Nation."

here. Justice is at hand! Retribution has arrived!

The scene is indescribable. "The Birth of a Nation" is built to arouse your emotions, and it does it. It is designed to educate you, and it does so more than many hours of studying books. It is not designed to arouse your prejudices, and if you are fair-minded and not predisposed, it will not do so.

Any mention of "The Birth of a Nation," however, is not complete with comment on the picture alone. The picture is not all. There is with the picture an orchestra of a score or more pieces and it is a good orchestra. The music is wonderfully adapted to the picture. The score of an opera could not more perfectly express the sense of the lines than does this music interpret the situations, thought and spirit, of "The Birth of a Nation." When the theme is love the music breathes romance. From a lullaby, the music surges upward to the crashing crescendo of battle in the next scene. Comes now the wild, barbaric strain of half-breed lust and unjustified ambition. When you would resist the tears of the picture, the orchestra will not let you. When you would be silent under the tremendous strain of the situation on the scene, the orchestra wrests a cry from your throat.

"The Birth of a Nation" has been criticised and attempts have been made to suppress it. If history should be suppressed in schools for children, "The Birth of a Nation" should be suppressed in a theater of thinking people. The picture is vindicated by historical facts, and does not attempt to misinterpret or warp these facts for the purpose of dragging from their graves prejudices that have been dead long since.

The world has long waited for the American Hugo who could write the "Les Miserables" of the war between the states. Many writers have tried and failed. But the great novel of the civil war has at last arrived—and when it got here it was a moving picture and not a book!