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'BROKEN LULLABY' COMPELLING FILM

By ADA HANIFIN

"Broken Lullaby" so gripped the heart of me, that the sob of it stayed with me until way into the night. It is as impressive as the Marche Funebre of Chopin's B Flat Minor Sonata, as soul-plunging as Strauss' "Death and Transfiguration," and of almost Homeric beauty in its inspiring plea for peace.

Ernst Lubitsch in his adaptation and direction of Maurice Rostand's post-war drama, "The Man I Killed," has given the screen so magnificent a thing that the heart will give utterance to it long after the "Broken Lullaby" has been hushed on the screen. The picture came to the Paramount yesterday.

"Broken Lullaby" is set in a minor key, until the last measure of the film, when it finds its voice again and awakens the spirit of the French boy and the German parents and fiancée of the German lad, whose hearts had died when the boy soldier had died at the thrust of a French bayonet. This awakening, the transcendent moment in the picture, suggests the Greek symbol of the metamorphosis of the soul—the caterpillar leaving its dark shell to change into the butterfly—to find beauty and sunshine and life.

Its theme offers a compelling psychological study of a young French violinist who is obsessed by the picture of a dying German youth whom he killed at the front. It is presented with the artistry of rare stage drama rather than conceding to the prerogatives of screen appeal. There is little action, but emotion was never so intense or effective as it is evoked through the suppressed acting of Lionel Barrymore, Phillips Holmes, Nancy Carroll and Louise Carter, and suppressed situations which wait on the ticking of a clock or the tramping feet of former marching soldiers.

A German village and Notre Dame are wonderfully duplicated. Lionel Barrymore gives a masterful performance of the German father. And Phillips Holmes gives a sensitive and moving portrayal of the French youth.