

TALKING OF TALKIES.

Two of England's Greatest Films

"Blossom Time" and "Chu Chin Chow"—Story of Old Vienna Brings Richard Tauber to the Screen as Franz Schubert—George Robey as Ali Baba in Oscar Asche's Triumph

I SAW in one evening last week two of the most spectacular films to come out of England—"Blossom Time," produced by British International Pictures, and "Chu Chin Chow," produced by Gaumont-British. The first is made memorable by the singing of Richard Tauber, the second by the face of George Robey. The first sparkles like some fine Hungarian wine, the second flames with barbaric splendour.

But Vienna and Bagdad make strange bed-fellows, and it would perhaps be wiser to look at one film at a time. "Blossom Time" is as fragrant as the fields of hay through which the schoolmaster-composer, Franz Schubert, marches with his troop of schoolboys. It has no sordidness, but rather tells a tale of unrequited love that finds solace—perhaps a greater solace—in the composing of music. And it has a humour that is never blatant, but lingers on the tongue like some rare spice. But, above all, it has the glorious music of Schubert—and sung by one of to-day's greatest singers, Richard Tauber. Since he appeared in "The End of the Rainbow," Tauber has advanced a whole lifetime in acting ability. In his first picture he sang just as beautifully as he does to-day; in "Blossom Time" he not only sings splendidly but he plays his part in the manner born. The whole of the film is in English, and the singer has mastered our native tongue in a truly remarkable manner.

To discuss "Blossom Time" is mainly to discuss Tauber. When his beautiful voice steals out from the greys and whites of the screen, whether the scene be his humble room in a Viennese lodging house or the stage of the big theatre where he wins fame, one forgets the mechanics of the whole business—the little film on which Tauber's voice is but an irregular line—the fact that, on this very night, the same voice is being heard in a hundred theatres all over the world; he is there singing, singing Schubert's glorious "Thine is My Heart," and nothing else matters very much.

The story, in its essentials, is similar to that of "Lilac Time," the delightful play that New Zealanders saw a few years ago. Franz Schubert is a poor schoolmaster, composing music in his spare time. On the floor below him lives Vicki Wimpassinger, daughter of a dancing master, and the star and inspiration of Schubert's life. But to Wimpassinger's house one night comes Rudi, Count von Hohenberg, for a dancing lesson. The young count has recently been appointed to the regiment of dragoons of which the Archduchess Maria Victoria is patroness, and he discovers that it is essential to be able to dance the new Viennese waltz with the duchess. And so to the dancing master's house in great haste goes Rudi, only to leave, after he has set eyes on Vicki, with some reluctance.

There blossoms a romance between the young count and the dancing master's daughter, a romance which saddens the heart of Schubert. He goes on with his music, however, and from his love for Vicki springs that lovely melody, "Thine is My Heart." He sings it at a big concert, together with "Red Roses," "Hark! Hark! The Lark," "Faith in Spring" and Schubert's "Ballad," and the crowd acclaims him with ardent fervour. And the picturegoer, watching "Blossom Time" will acclaim him too, for this concert gives the audience a taste of the real Tauber—a show inside a show, as it were.

The picture draws on to its climax—

the magnificent wedding scene when Rudi and Vicki go up to the altar and poor Franz Schubert stands among the choirboys singing though his heart would break. This scene, and the one at the Archduchess's ball, are truly wonderful and possibly the most spectacular the talkies have ever known. The lesser parts in the film are admirably played—Jane Baxter is Vicki, a delightful girl with an equally delightful voice; Carl Esmond is Rudi, the young officer who wins the girl; the archduchess is Athene Seyler, one of the most accomplished of English actresses; and Wimpassinger is played by

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At the top is the singer who has become a fine actor—Richard Tauber as he appears in the role of Franz Schubert in the English film "Blossom Time." With him is Jane Baxter. Below are George Robey and Thelma Tuson in a scene from the spectacular "Chu Chin Chow."