



The Pride of the Clan

Dir. Maurice Tourneur | USA | 1917 | N/C PG | b&w, tinted & toned | English intertitles 1h
24m + short

Performing live: Stephen Horne (piano, flute, accordion), Elizabeth-Jane Baldry (harp)

8pm on Friday 21 March 2025

Screening material courtesy of the Mary Pickford Foundation

“Originally entitled *The Lass of Killean*, it was the first of two productions for Mary Pickford that Maurice Tourneur was obliged to make when he signed with Artcraft. ... Shot on location in Marblehead, this film had a remarkable authentic look. ... [Tourneur] brought to his pictures a sense of composition and lighting so striking that you can recognize a Tourneur film by a single frame. The story of Scottish fisherfolk provided him with his favourite elements – sea, storms, birds, boats – and he made a richly atmospheric production. ... Tourneur makes no attempt to glamorize the characters with makeup or lighting. The little community, with its low thatched cabins, the pigs and geese wandering in the street, has a documentary reality. ... The art director was Ben Carré, ... whose attitude towards his craft was revolutionary. ... *The Pride of the Clan* looks so authentic it might have been made in Scotland.”

In 1916 it was not common for a Fort Lee production to mount a full expedition to a distant location for extended shooting, but such was the case for the making of *The Pride of the Clan*. An open touring car was hired, with cameraman John van den Broek in the front seat next to the driver, and Maurice Tourneur and production manager Sam Mayer in the back seat with Ben Carré sandwiched between them. Off they went to scout the ocean coastline of New England from Connecticut to Maine, at which point they boarded a night train in Portland to return to Fort Lee.

En route they stopped in Salem, Massachusetts. There they hired another car to take them to the small coastal village of Marblehead, and it was here that they found what would become the location for Killean, their story’s Scottish fishing village. It was on a rocky peninsula, Marblehead Neck, just east of the central village, that all the exterior sets were built, requiring a large amount of experienced crew and logistical support. “I had to requisition everyone, stagehands, carpenters, propmen, painters, and electricians,” Ben



recalled. "I was very enthusiastic about the possibilities; I could build a village street leading to the rocky promontory dominating the view of the ocean. There below was a cove where Mary Pickford's 40-foot boat would be beached."

According to reports, the film crew was there for 5-6 weeks. Drama wasn't always scripted. On Sunday 12 November 1916, there was a near-tragedy. The old fishing schooner that had been towed out to sea to film some key scenes, containing Pickford, Tourneur, several cast members, and the cameramen, sprang a leak. Two cameras were lost as the schooner went down. Almost everyone jumped and swam for their lives. But Pickford and Tourneur were still on board; he saved her after a wave knocked her down, and they were lucky to escape with their lives. Crowds of spectators watched the filming daily; they witnessed the drama from the shore, and it was reported in *Moving Picture World* (02.12.1916). The company had to return for retakes.



Pickford's fans flocked to see the film when it opened in New York in January 1917, eager to see their favourite as a feisty Scottish lass who becomes chieftain of a clan. *Variety* (05.01.1917) enumerated the film's strengths: "[It] is marked by many incidental details, which perhaps are not essential to the tale itself, but enrich the picture and go to the building of atmosphere. There is nothing sensational about the offering, but it has the strength of simplicity in the telling and picturesqueness of locals and character types. ... The kirk of the village is made the centre of an interesting series of character scenes, the religious life of the community supplies good genre studies, [and] the local customs are

