

Literature Music Art

WITH THE PHILOSOPHERS

Longevity

To every normal individual life is a precious and most beautiful thing, and most of us, old or young, can sympathize with the princes of old times, who would gladly barter their kingdoms for the elixir of life. For a great many generations the majority of us have accepted the statement that the span of a man's life is three score and ten, and that old age means decrepitude and disease with stolid fatalism. During the last few years, however, some modern scientists have led us to believe that we can refute the above claims and steadfastly believe in a happier order of things. The article from which we quote below was written in the *British Medical Journal* nearly twenty years ago, and investigations since may be said to not only have strengthened, but confirmed the author's opinions. There is no doubt at all that a proper mode of living, when the appetites are held in check, and hygienic rules followed, when the faculties are cultivated and kept practise-perfect, will lengthen a man's life, until its normal span is a century or more, and when even the centenarian will not suffer from decay, senile or otherwise, but will finish his years as a healthy man finishes his day's work, serenely content in the fulfilling of his duty, and in the rest that shall be his.

Centenarians are not now the rara aves which they were once supposed to be. In England and Wales in 1889 the deaths of seven-hundred and sixty-five centenarians were reported, and of late years a great number of cases have been strictly inquired into, which there could be no reasonable doubt that life has been prolonged beyond 100 years. And these cases have been inquired into, not only as to the legitimacy of their claims to have made out their century of life, but also as to their bodily and mental characteristics; so that we now know something of centenarian pathology, and recognize the fact that those who live to a hundred do so by virtue of their freedom from degenerations, and succumb to inevitable old age, which may be described as simple and general atrophy. But this simple and general atrophy, although of gradual invasion, need not very seriously cripple the centenarian until close upon his term of dissolution, and cases might be quoted of much activity and enjoyment in life even beyond the hundred years age.

According to our estimate, a man at 80 has a fifth of his life before him, and in twenty years what may not happen? Sir David Brewster married at 76. Four years ago, in Vienna, Janos Meryessie, aged 84, attempted suicide, his reason being that he could no longer support his father and mother, who were aged 115 and 110, respectively; and in the *British Medical Journal* of May 9 last, there was given the portrait of a brave old man, who at 102 had undergone an operation for cancer of the lip without anaesthetics and without flinching.

The atrophic changes which have been enumerated as characteristic of old age are not altogether beyond remedial treatment. Curable, perhaps, they can scarcely be called, but much may be done by change of climate, by regulation of diet and habits of life, and by therapeutic agents, to slacken their progress or arrest their advance. You will be able in many ways to lessen the frailties of your senile patients, although you will not be able to confer upon them that rejuvenescence which many of them, and those generally the most dilapidated, will expect of you.

There is no short cut to longevity. To win it is the work of a lifetime, and the promotion of it is a branch of public medicine. Perchance, one of these days we may have an International Congress on Old Age, with an exhibition of dotards for warning, and of hale and hearty centenarians for encouragement. At any rate you may rest assured that it is by steady obedience to the laws of health that old age may be attained, and by judicious regimen that it may be prolonged. The measures necessary for the promotion of old age on the large scale lie beyond the control of the medical profession. We cannot change the spirit of the age, abolish avarice, vainglory, and the lust of power, or quell even the gratuitous excesses of the struggle for existence that rages around; but we can do something by pointing out to those who will listen to us some great perils that may be avoided by inculcating the principles of mental hygiene; and we can give the weight of our support to all movements calculated to promote the betterment of our race.

BOOK NOTES

Jack London, whatever his faults, cannot be accused of a lack of versatility or energy. A newspaper report published a few days ago described him as having been taken prisoner while leading a band of insurgents in Mexico; and the same day we receive a copy of his new book, and learn that he is at work upon another soon to be given to the press. Mr. London has had experiences many enough and varied enough to supply him with material for scores of good stories, and we can say without any hesitation that this last volume of his, the title of which we take exception as being nothing if not blasphemous, is the best thing he has yet written. The first story, "When God Laughs," is rather a remarkable one, and there are several others happily distinguished by a lack of lurid London details, though few readers could find it possible to forgive the brutality of "The Francis Spaight." There is

a year of touching pathos running through "The Apostate" and grim-humor in the tragic tale of "Just Meat."

The first story, which might just as well, if not better, have been called "When the Gods Laugh," and been no desecration, tells of a man and a woman, the latter "Holy as Love and sweeter, just a woman, made for love; and yet—how shall I say?—drenched through with holiness as your own air here is with the perfume of flowers." The two married. "Love was desire, they held, a delicious pain. He was ever seeking easement, and when he found that for which he sought, he died. Love denied was Love alive; Love granted was Love deceased. Do you follow me? They saw it was not the way of life to be hungry for what it has. To eat and still be hungry—man has never accomplished that feat. The problem of satiety. That is it. To have and to keep the sharp famine-edge of appetite at the groaning board. This was their problem, for they loved Love. Often did they discuss it, with all Love's sweet ardors brimming in their eyes; his ruddy blood spraying their cheeks; his voice playing in and out with their voices, now hiding as a tremolo in their throats, and again shading a tone with that ineffable tenderness which he alone can utter."

"They were all this that I have said, and they were made for joy, only they achieved a concept. A curse, on concepts! They played with logic, and this was their logic—but first let me tell you of a talk we had one night. It was of Gaudier's *Madame de Maupin*. You remember the maid? She kissed once, and once only, and kisses she would have no more. Not that she found kisses were not sweet, but that she feared with repetition they would cloy. Satiety again! She tried to play without stakes against the gods. Now this is contrary to a rule of the game the gods themselves have made. Only the rules are not posted over the table. Morals must play in order to learn the rules."

"Well, to the logic. The man and the woman argued thus: Why kiss once only? If to kiss once were wise, was it not wiser to kiss not at all? Thus could they keep Love alive. Fasting, he would knock forever at their hearts."

"As he said (I read it long afterwards in one of his letters to her): 'To hold you in my arms, close and yet not close. To yearn for you, and never to have you, and so always to have you.' And she: 'For you to be always just beyond my reach. To be ever attaining you, and yet never attaining you, and for this to last forever, always fresh and new, and always with the first flush upon us.' However, after all, the self-sacrifice of these two was wholly unavailing, for 'one day the drowsy gods ceased nodding. They aroused and looked at the man and woman who had made a mock of them. And the man and woman looked into each other's eyes one morning and knew that something was gone. It was the flame-winged one. He had fled, silently, in the night from their anchorites' board."

"They looked into each other's eyes and knew that they did not care. Desire was dead. Do you understand? Desire was dead. And they had never kissed. Not once had they kissed. Love was gone. They would never yearn and burn again. For them there was nothing left—no more trembling and flutterings and delicious anguish, no more throbbing and pulsing, and sighing and song. Desire was dead. It had died in a night, on a couch cold and unattended; nor had they witnessed its passing. They learned it for the first time in each other's eyes."

Macmillan & Co., Toronto, Canada.

We have received a charming book for children by E. Nesbit, than whom there is no more popular author among the boys and girls. It is called "The Magic City," and tells of the wonderful adventures of a delightful little lad in dream life and in real life. Macmillan & Co., Toronto, Canada.

MISPRONUNCIATION IN SINGING

The mispronunciation of the language in singing, which we have called singers' English, is not a mere matter of taste or of individual defect or of general slovenliness, but a much more serious evil which does not seem to be recognized. It is based on a radical misconception of the nature and function of singing, and it is systematically imparted to pupils and students as part of their training. In other words, a practice which negates the very purpose of song is regarded as a necessary part of it. And this is a recent thing. Mr. Anstice has reminded us that Sims Reeves never uses singers' English himself or allowed his pupils to use it; nor did any of the great artists of his generation and the next to it. Some remain to prove it. There are, for instance, Mme. Patti and Sir Charles Santley; their diction is always pure and straightforward. They do not roll their r's and distort the vowel sounds in the modern fashion. Sir Charles Santley has asked many hundreds of times why the people imagine a vain thing, but it has never occurred to him that they imagine a vain thing, which is as near to the current pronunciation as spelling can get. Individual singers may have taken liberties here and there, with some particular vowel falling on a particular note, but that was because it presented a special difficulty to them. Sopranos, for instance, generally find it difficult

to produce certain vowels near the top of their register; and when the tissues lose their elasticity with the lapse of years all singers are liable to some trouble of the kind, which they have to evade. In his later years Mario used to take great liberties with the words in high passages. But alterations made on that ground are compulsory, not intentional, and are entirely different from the deliberate practice of mispronouncing words on principle. That is wholly modern. The old ideal was an equal mastery of all vowels in every part of the voice and the most natural enunciation possible. It is still the ideal in other languages. The most accomplished and effective singers are those who most nearly realize it.

That this is the true ideal becomes at once apparent when we recognize the proper function of singing. The singer is saying something to the listeners, is interpreting to them the words of the poet, the dramatist, or the sacred writer, but in tones more expressive than ordinary speech. Singing is speaking enlarged or magnified. The ordinary spoken sounds are magnified in three ways—namely, in regard to (1) extension, (2) intensity, (3) inflection. That is to say, they are more sustained, louder, and more varied in pitch. This is the rule, though the modification may also take place in the opposite direction in regard to all three characters. Thus the sounds may be shorter and more rapidly emitted than with ordinary speech, as in buffo or patter songs; they may be softer, as in the use of the mezza voce; and they may be less inflected, as in monotone passages. All these variations in both directions have their proper application, but the object of all of them is to heighten expression. The same meaning is expressed as in speech, but expressed more powerfully by means of the changes indicated. Consequently the sounds themselves, the words which embody the meaning, remain the same; they may be more prolonged, louder, and extended over a wider range of pitch, but their character and formation is the same as in speech. This may be very easily tested by uttering any word on a given note, first in a whisper, then with the ordinary spoken voice, and gradually prolonging the sound until it becomes singing, with variations of loudness and softness introduced at will. The quality of the sound is the same all through and it is formed in exactly the same manner. That is the real meaning of Pacherotti's saying about speaking and breathing. He did not mean that some peculiar and unnatural way of speaking and breathing must be learnt and then the learner would know how to sing, but that singing is merely an extension of the natural action of the organs in speaking and breathing. It may be perfected by practice, but should not be altered in character.

Singers who have something to say to their audience, who feel the words they are uttering and realize the intensified expression given to them by the musical form, who desire to convey this meaning to others in the fullest measure at their command, instinctively adopt a natural diction and make the words as clear as possible. That is real singing, and that alone; it is sincere, the expression of feeling, and a true art. It reaches the greatest perfection when it is exercised with the aid of exceptional gifts, but it is not dependent on them. Moderate voices, when so used, will give more pleasure than fine ones that utter a series of sounds but say nothing intelligible. The effect of simple diction, heightened by beauty, power, and control of voice, is extraordinary. Sims Reeves could utter the simplest phrases in a way that modern English singers and audiences have no conception of; the words dropped out as if they were spoken, but with a dramatic effect of astonishing force. Nothing could be simpler either in words or sequence of notes than "The night was drear and dark" in "The Bay of Biscay," and he used to drop the words out in the most natural way but with an intensity of meaning that conjured up the whole scene—the dark night, the laboring ship, and the heaving sea; and in Samson the exclamation "Total eclipse!" uttered with the utmost simplicity on three descending notes, was made to convey the whole tragedy of blindness. Brahms had the same power. A musician has left on record the impression made by that great singer's enunciation of a perfectly simple phrase. He was taken as a boy to hear "Israel in Egypt." The performance had begun when they entered the room, and he saw on the platform a little man in a seraton wig take a tremendously deep breath and say "He turned their waters into blood" with such overwhelming expression that the whole miracle seemed to pass before his eyes. That is singing in its highest form, and it is attainable only by a perfectly direct and unaffected enunciation of the words.

The conception of singing which lies at the bottom of intentional mispronunciation starts from an opposite point of view. It regards sound not sense as the ultimate object. According to it the singer's function is not to say something to the listeners, not to interpret a meaning, but to make an extraordinary sound, which may mean nothing. This notion of singing is very widespread. A vast number of people desire to sing, and they start with the idea that the essence of it is to make some unnatural sort of sound, for which it is necessary to take an unnatural attitude, contort their features, and distort their vocal organs. The first thing they ought to be taught is that it is all wrong, and that the position

of the body and the emission of the voice should be as unconstrained and natural as possible. They are, indeed, often told so; but unfortunately the false idea with which they started is confirmed by all the would-be scientific methods, the theories of "production," and the anatomical details with which many "professors" of singing love to impress their pupils. All these modern tricks direct attention to the pupil's own person, foster self-consciousness, and confirm the belief that singing cannot be accomplished without some "unnatural proceedings." Into this scheme mispronunciation readily falls. Learners feel that they are really getting on when they alter the vowel sounds; and so they are, in the wrong direction. They take to it the more readily because it is exceedingly easy; any fool can roll an "r" and turn "a" into "ah"; and to feel that they are becoming accomplished singers without any trouble is agreeable.

Mr. Rowland Briant, whose letter we published yesterday, defends the practice to a certain extent. He says that it is impossible to sustain sound on the short vowels, and he instances the difficulty of the double and triple vowels of which we have so many in English. The latter difficulty also occurs in Italian, though not to the same extent, and the double sounds when sustained are not enunciated exactly as in speaking; but good singers come very near it. As for the short vowels, they usually occur in particles and unimportant words on which composers who know their business do not place emphasis. We have, however, admitted that individual singers come very near it. As for the short vowels, they usually occur in particles and unimportant words on which composers who know their business do not place emphasis. We have, however, admitted that individual singers have difficulties with particular vowels and particular notes. This does not touch the real point at issue, which is the aim. Mr. Briant apparently does not consider mispronunciation desirable or meritorious, but regards it as an unavoidable evil, whereas the practice we deprecate is deliberate distortion as a regular thing for its own sake without any necessity.

This practice has become general among professional singers in recent years. It is not followed by a few intellectual and artistic singers any more than by the older ones whom we have mentioned; but it is almost universal among the rest, not excluding many leading platform artists; and it is carried to extravagant lengths. The "r" is so rolled that such a word as "Lord," which occurs very frequently in oratorio, becomes "Lorrad" in two syllables, and hardly any vowel sound is left alone. Affectation is brought to a fine art and is made to cover real vocal deficiencies. The moving force behind this deplorable perversion is obscure. It does not seem to be of foreign origin. On the contrary, singers trained abroad are conspicuously freer from it than those turned out by the musical schools at home; and the few foreign singers who use English have never been guilty of it. In former days Mme. Titiens, Mme. Nilsson, and Mme. Trebelli all sang English with great purity; their singing of oratorio was irreplicable in style, and in point of means they belonged to a different class from the present. They had complete mastery of the music, which presented no difficulty to them. The same may be said of Agnesi, an operatic baritone of the first class, who used to sing at the Handel Festival. In recent years M. Maurel has sung a few English songs, though he does not speak the language, with a perfectly correct enunciation in which every word is as audible as if it were spoken. Our native users of singers' English are, on the contrary, absolutely unintelligible. In the standard oratorios it is of less consequence than in unfamiliar works, though the glaring affection takes all sincerity and consequently all emotional value out of their rendering, and English platform songs have for the most part so little meaning that the loss can be borne. But in opera, and particularly modern opera, the obscuration of sense is a grave drawback. And we gain nothing in return. It is impossible to claim for the new style superior tone, or control when most of its exponents cannot sing trying numbers such as "Hear ye, Israel," or "The Enemy Said," but only get through them with perceptible difficulty and without any of the fire, volume, ease, reserve power, and mastery which are needed to give them due effect.

OUR OPINION OF OUR FELLOWMEN

There is a common fashion nowadays of classifying men as if they were animals or plants, which is supposed to be scientific. It is not knowledge, but the lack of it, that produces these classifications. To the hasty European all Chinamen look alike. That is because he thinks of them, not as men, but as Chinamen. He has only one kind of relation to them, which is entirely negative. They are to him merely non-Europeans. So to the complete egotist, if there were such a man, all other men would be merely not himself. It is this kind of negative relation, based upon ignorance and lack of interest, that makes us think of whole multitudes of men as ordinary and causes us to resent their supposed uniformity. If we go about the world expecting to be amused and judging mankind by their power of amusing us, we are naturally led to condemn all who do not amuse us as com-

monplace. But the proper business of mankind is not to amuse us. We have no right to expect a pleasant and passive experience of life. We can only attain to wisdom and knowledge by an active experience of it and by entering into active relations with other men. Directly we do that, we find that all men are individuals like ourselves, not to be classified any more than we are to be classified, but each one having his own secrets of character, his own peculiar reaction against circumstances, his own process of growth and decay. The saying that no man is a hero to his valet is supposed to be cynical, but there is a truth in it that is not cynical. Every man, to those who know him closely, cannot be described by any title or label. The hero is something besides a hero, just as the ordinary man is something more than an ordinary man. He is himself, with an identity that cannot be described in terms of mere praise or blame; and those who have intimate relations with him are more aware of this identity than of any general effect produced in his public actions.

The greatest masters of drama and fiction, such as Tolstoy and Shakespeare, seldom present their characters to us in terms of praise and blame, nor do they make us feel that some of them are ordinary and some distinguished. For them there is not one law for the picturesque and another for the commonplace. They are interested in men because they are men, and their curiosity about humanity is insatiable and disinterested. They seem to have a boundless power of creation because they do not classify men according to some narrow or negative relation of their own with them. We feel that they have not gone about the world expecting to be amused, that their experience of mankind has been active, not passive, that they understand men because they have seen each one of them from his own point of view and by that means learned the secrets of his identity. The chief weakness of lesser writers is that they classify according to some system in vogue at their time. Some divide men sharply into the good and bad; others into gentle and simple. Our present novelists are very apt to insist upon the difference between the distinguished and the commonplace. If one of their characters is distinguished, he may do, with the applause of the writer, what he pleases. If he is commonplace he can do nothing that is not ridiculous. The very words "distinguished" and "distinction," so often used now, betray the nature of our classifications. We praise a man because he has evident points of difference from other men, because he catches the eye in a crowd and seems an exception to a wearisome uniformity. But it is the business of a master of fiction to see distinctions where they are not forced upon him, and, if he condemns any man as ordinary, he condemns himself for his own lack of observation. The Christian doctrine that everyman has an immortal soul has an artistic as well as a moral importance. The writer who believes it more than conventionally will feel that he is concerned with the immortal souls of all his characters; and he will realize that, when he presents a character as merely commonplace, he is only betraying the fact that he has not discovered his immortal soul, which is the one thing worth discovering about him. So it is with all of us when we find ourselves wearied with the uniformity of man. We are wearied with a delusion produced not by the delicacy of our perceptions but by their bluntness. Some men have more power of expressing themselves than others, and men of genius express themselves in all that they do or say. But the lack of expressive power does not mean that there is nothing to be expressed. Every man is aware that there is a great deal worth expressing in himself, and he may be sure that he knows himself better than he knows others.

USE OF LIGHT IN MAKING NIGHT EXCAVATIONS

Night excavation work as efficient as that done in daylight is now possible by the use of an electric headlight on derrick-operated bucket outfits. The first really successful test of the scheme was made during the rush work on the Evanston channel of the Chicago Drainage Canal. The light used was of the locomotive head-lamp type, of 3,000 cp. This was backed with an 18-in. reflector, 3-in. deep, which focused the light into a slightly divergent beam directly under the boom from which the bucket was hung. When it was necessary to obtain great diffusion of light, the reflector was put out of focus by advancing the arc a fraction of an inch, projecting the light over a large area. The lamp was mounted on the turntable of the derrick crane and was rotated with it so that it followed the bucket in all positions.

THE COWARD

The big steamer had left the pier. The young man on the tar barrel still waved his handkerchief desperately.

"Oh, what'er you waiting for? Come on," said his companions disgustedly.

"I daren't," with one fearful glance backward.

"What's the matter?"

"She has a field glass," said the young man.