

Literature Music Art

IN THE WORLD OF BOOKS

No woman, nor man either, for that matter, though the book appeals more to the feminine than the masculine mind, can fail to be interested and amused by Cora Harris' story, "Eve's Second Husband." Very few readers will accept Eve's wholesale condemnation of the male sex, although it is a tolerant sort of condemnation, almost, one might say, kindly, but there are not many women who have not had experiences something akin to Eve's, and these are they who will smile over the heroine's philosophical acceptance of facts as they are.

The following quotations give a fair idea of the tenor of the tale; it is a monologue rather than a story:

"You can save your husband now and then from the consequences of his folly, but you cannot reform him or re-create him in your own moral likeness—not if he is worthy of the name of man. He can be just as moral as any woman, but he has three or four virtues not common to us, just as we have five or six not common to him. However, when you add up, the totals are about the same. . . . When a woman begins to get the use of words like 'anguish' and 'resignation,' she has really got her own little sniveling divorce, and if she is living with her husband at all, it is in a relation as ugly as though it were illicit. She has ceased to be his better half, and is working on her crown of thorns and practicing her role of martyrdom. She does not know it, but she has really turned against him. This is the most common form of marital infidelity. After a young wife passes out of the wedding-ring glamor of the first year of her marriage, she is more apt to be in a state of a chicken with the head off. Her wings keep on moving, but her mind does not. It is during this crucial period that she makes the mistake of hardening her heart against a husband who has developed scandalous imperfections that the lover never showed, or of clinging to his stubborn neck and weeping and pleading with him to 'Stop!' It is best not to do either. In the first place, you cannot exasperate a man to toward righteousness unless he is a poor creature whom you could not respect even after he got there. But he has much the nature of a mule, and once he learns the use of the kicking hind legs of his disposition in the matrimonial traces, you have simply ruined him for the race. He balks and he is forever damaging the dashboard of your affections. In the second place, a man's moral nature is very nearly a fiction anyhow; and it is one of the most important duties of a wife never to let her husband discover this fact, but to instill into him a noble, false impression of his character. If you are shrewd enough and honest enough about it, he will do his best every now and then to live up to it. . . . The men who are making history now in this country are the capitalists and engineers. The politicians, preachers, editors and social reformers are only those who are following them or fighting them. . . . And married life for woman, like all Gaul in ancient times, is 'divided into three parts.' The first is the pedestal period, before she has any children, and when she is engaged with naive simplicity in trying to be what her husband wants her to be, which, of course, is being what is easiest for him to live with, being himself unmodified as much as possible. Almost any young wife would rather be praised by her husband than to be right. Her little tinkling beatitudes all go to the fulfilling of his 'ideal.' As a matter of fact, I doubt if there is yet a man in creation who knows what an ideal wife ought to be. Often she has to be a drastic, difficult person, reaping where she has not sowed and carrying things with a high hand generally.

"The second period begins when she becomes the mother of his children, feels a new set of responsibilities, gets nervous over them, and shows her real nature and temper by kicking her young angel-wife pedestal out of the way, and by getting down to those duties of life for which she was more particularly created—that is, the nursing and bringing up of her children, even if she neglects both her hair and her husband to accomplish this.

"The third and last period comes after it is all over; after the husband and wife have ceased to idealize each other and have accepted each other literally, without entertaining any more foolish hopes for the better. It is a time of peace and of easy, lengthy, unstrained silences between them. Love is a habit, and no longer needs to be cultivated with quarrels and tears and reconciliations. They get acquainted, this middle-aged husband and wife, and are far more dependent upon each other than they were in their youth.

"And marriage is a queer state, anyhow; much queerer than those people think who try to get into it—and being in, strive to get out. It is not so everlastingly happy as unmarried lovers suppose it is. That sweet-hawthorn, blue-eyed, romantic look of marriage on the outside is the wise life Nature tells to get them into the yoke of it. Neither is it a sacrament. Because in that case too many bonded modern marriages would be sacrilegious. Neither is it merely a 'contract,' such as some head-end Socialists claim. It is a relation, like any other—only nearer. You may get into it sacredly or sacrilegiously, or with no end of sentimental foolishness about not staying together in it one hour after the glory and glamor of love is past. But when either the one or the other gets out, is divorced, both are maimed for life. They experience a death of some immortal member, like love. I have known good women,

utterly blameless, who were divorced from their husbands for the best of decent reasons, but I never know one who could be normal. Something that you cannot see, but which you know and observe, limps forever afterwards. And the same thing is true of men.

"Outside there were the flowers that had lived and bloomed in the family so long they had become a part of it. When you have gathered the same colored roses from the same bush for, say, twenty years, it is no longer just a shrub; it is your sister, the rose, who has shared your confidences upon sad days and happy days, as you came and went and sometimes paused beside it through the thickening years. At first you were a bride, a woman rose, beside it. Then you were a mother, whose baby leaped at the sight of the red beauty of it. And then you were middle-aged and wise in all the troubles and illnesses of roses and babies. You have an intimacy with the old thorn-legged lady by this time that is closer than that with your human next-door neighbor, who may also be a trifle thorny herself. . . ."

RANDOM NOTES

For the first time in human history the supremacy of Paris as the deft improver of Nature is threatened seriously. But it is not any external enemy that has stolen a march on the French fashion creators; it is their own fancies run wild. Vienna's efforts to wrest the silken sceptre from Paris have heretofore merely provoked good-humored laughter. But now her chances of success are greater, thanks to the blunders committed by Paris. The worst enemies of most people and institutions in the world are themselves. And so it is with Paris, the queen of the world of fashion.

The first of the blunders was the creation of the directoire robe. That was a jarring note imported into soothing harmony. Then came the chateaucr hat and dress, which can hardly be said to have ever been popular. But these were only venial mistakes. The mortal sins began with the 'hobble' skirt. This vision of ugliness was universally condemned as soon as it was conjured up. For not only did it hurt the artistic eye, but it was a source of physical danger to the gentle wearers. It was a thing of ugliness, discomfort and danger, a mockery, a delusion and a snare. Almost every dancer who wore it was caught tripping. The result was that, to use a Hibernianism, sudden death trod with merciless hand this curious blossom of Parisian taste.

Yet bad was the hobble-skirt, the 'harem' skirt is incomparably worse, and one may look upon it as the last straw that breaks the camel's back. All the world was unanimously and emphatically against the Turkish innovation. 'Bloomers' were a curse to both sexes; they ruined the eternal feminine in woman, and made man's choler rise. Leisurely ladies who, reckless of public opinion, perambulated the streets in the harem bloomers were hissed and hooted by juvenile representatives of common sense and good taste. Last week a courageous Russian female pioneer bought a ticket for the Imperial theatre in St. Petersburg, and appeared at the door attired in a 'harem' skirt. She carried her head high in the air, conscious that she was a daring performer, and marched proudly along the corridor towards the wardrobe. But ere she could reach this refuge for overclothing, she was accosted by a polite official, who requested her to retrace her steps. The lady asked him why. His look was anguish and his thoughts turned on the imponderable, the inexpressible. The lady blushed, and well knowing now that the bloomers were, so to say, on their last legs, sadly quitted the theatre. And this first rose of summer was left blooming alone. The world's faith in Paris as the law-giver of fashion is indeed shaken.

In spite of all experience, people will talk and write as if one kind of up-bringing, one kind of life, was the best for all women. No one supposes that all men are equally fit for business, or the army, or the church. But we habitually lose our tempers over discussions as to whether all women ought to marry, or ought to have homes provided for them, or ought to earn their own living like men. All which theories are patently absurd. Some women will be happiest and most use in a simple, secluded, homely life, and some others will be revolting in every sense unless they are allowed to learn to 'take care of themselves.'

The danger of the moment is that we should regard this ability to look after yourself as the fine flower of human nature. Strong nerves and hard heads are the only wear. Anyone who can be cheated or scared is without honor. And this fashion is running to extravagance. A hard head is a useful thing enough, and so is a sledge hammer, but neither represents the best of which humanity is capable. Tenderness and kindness are not vices which should be eradicated. If you care for anything but the most vulgar forms of success, you will have to admit that some of the people you most admire have been singularly inefficient. Mr. Pickwick, for example, was magnificently unable to take care of himself. Even if he had learned to ride a bicycle—a joyful thought—he would have remained invincibly guileless. But the world will always pronounce Mr. Pickwick a more useful member

of society than Mr. Gradgrind. And the world is right.

The news received from Biarritz a few days ago of the death of Mr. Otto Goldschmidt led to the statement that the deceased gentleman's 'first wife was Jenny Lind.' The famous singer's husband died in 1907. His namesake, the announcement of whose death will have been read with regret, acted for many years as the late Senor Sarasate's accompanist and secretary, and married the well known pianist, Madame Bertha Marx, to whom sympathy will be extended.

Under the title of "Il Cavaliere della Rosa" Strauss's latest and much-discussed opera has been heard in Milan, at the famous Scala, where its production seems to have excited an enormous amount of interest. Seats were sold, one learns, at fabulous prices, and in the crowded audience were Puccini, Mascagni, and other Italian composers. But apparently the work did not succeed in making a very favorable impression on the Milanese public. At any rate, it was greeted, we are told, 'with more hisses than applause, and the success of the opera, if success there was, was entirely due to the splendid handling of the orchestra by Signor Serafini.' Apropos of 'Rosenkavalier,' a critic, in his notice of the recent production at Munich, concluded with the remark that 'the opera could not fail to benefit greatly from a thorough rewriting of the whole.' No doubt Dr. Strauss will be most happy to oblige him.

It is possible that you never heard of a rest lunch. The thing, nevertheless, exists. A rest lunch is not, as you had supposed, for the good of the body, but for the soul. When you are spiritually weary of the world and all that therein is, when you feel that existence is a dolorous burden, you take a rest lunch. That is to say, you lunch alone on whatever you prefer. The menu is nothing to the purpose. Your diet may be what you choose. The essential is solitude.

Now this prescription answers to a common and very natural need. Who is so fond of her kind as to profess that she has never wanted to be without them? Who has never groaned sotto voce over the necessity of being amiably conversational when to invent one single phrase is an excruciating effort? Who has never felt the mere presence of someone else, however inoffensive, however agreeable that someone may be, as an intolerable bore? This is no evidence of misanthropy or hysteria. It is found in people who enjoy society to excess, and who, in a general way, hate solitude passionately. We might even guess that it is just such people, just those who depend most on others for entertainment, and who have the smallest resources in themselves, who at times suffer most keenly from the yearning to be alone.

Certainly it is such people for whom the rest lunch is designed. After a brief period of holiness they will naturally return with passionate delight to their old ways. They will enjoy the chatter of crowds more than ever till they get tired again. But there are others for whom your rest lunch is likely to be less satisfactory—people who never get very much entertainment from the bustle and din of large parties, though they are not apt to be exasperated thereby to the pitch of hating the world and all its works. For them such a trivial thing as a rest lunch is likely to be at once too little and too much. They will find no particular refreshment in a ritual of solitude, and yet they will need much greater periods of quiet than a mere lunch can provide. The rest lunch seems to be designed for those who find spiritual comfort in affection.

But the principle of it, the value of solitude, is much more important. The world is very important. The world is very much too much—with us in these days. We are far too fond of getting into crowds. And the natural consequence is a tendency to excitement, to wild enthusiasm about everything new. Because thought, which is the great antidote to hysteria and the great barrier against stupid fashions and hare-brained theories and reckless innovations, requires leisure and quiet.

Sir James Crichton Browne has said a dreadful thing. Thus: "All bad cooks should live exclusively upon their own productions, so that they may be eliminated gradually from the face of the earth." What we complain of is not the ferocity of this declaration. Why should anyone have mercy on a bad cook? But we are alarmed for his consequences. If we fed all the bad cooks on their own cookery, some of them, no doubt, would die—horrid deaths, and thereby free us from their iniquity. But some—so tough is the human organism—some would develop the faculty of thriving on leathery meat and leaden pastry, and in a generation or two we should have amongst us a race adapted to all the infamies of cookery.

What more awful prospect can you conceive? We have had a good many speculations about the future of humanity. If we were compelled to look forward to people who had utterly lost the taste for a good dinner

and heartily enjoyed a bad one, we should have to surrender to pessimism. Men and women living on leather—what a grotesque climax for human evolution! Even if it were certainly coming true, we should have to disbelieve in it. For we could not go on living if we thought that were the horrid future before our children.

To continue the tale of horror, we direct your attention to the Minnesota State Training school, U. S. A. Your ignorance of its existence is wholly inexcusable. For it is the home of one of the most amazing masterpieces of human ingenuity. Or so they say. But what they say extends beyond the limits of the credible. Observe 'whipping machines' are said to have been used at the Minnesota State Training school, U. S. A., which held boys immovable while they received from 50 to 200 lashes. An inquiry has been ordered by the legislature. The legislature's interest in the progress of mechanical invention is wholly laudable.

But we fear that it is doomed to disillusion. A machine, whether for whipping or any other purpose, which holds boys immovable for any appreciable space of time is as unlikely as perpetual motion. Still, on the assumption that there is something a little ingenious in the way of whipping-machines at the Minnesota State Training school, U. S. A., we commend that institution to the notice of the author of the following advertisement: "Uncle, afflicted with sole guardianship of healthy nephew, aged 12, would be glad to receive information of a school conducted on good old-fashioned lines, free from all maudlin modern ideas, and where the sound rule of 'Spare the rod and spoil the child' is strictly observed."

"The man who can say the right thing at the right moment under agitating and probably provocative circumstances is one in ten thousand." When you hear that Mr. Bernard Shaw said that you will doubtless search it through to discover some mysterious hidden meaning. For on the surface it appears to be a simple ordinary truth of the genus platitudes. Probably it suffers from too little emphasis. The man who has the correct repartee when someone has deceived him about a train or when his motor car has inopportunist broken down is one in a million rather than one in ten thousand. For he is a genius. And even genius is not always at its best.

Nor is it any satisfaction to be assured by another sage that 'the language of a civilized people grows every week; the language of savages stands still.' For what we lack in our retorts is not sufficiency of epithets, but the power of instant choice. They say that Napoleon excelled all other men in this in-seant command of all his faculties. It is therefore consoling to remember the tale of Napoleon and the little dog. Napoleon was on horseback, where, in spite of experience, he was never wholly comfortable. There came a little dog and yapped at him. He became uneasy; in fact, he became infuriated with apprehension. For his horse was growing restive. So he pulled out a pistol for that little dog and fired. As you have divined, the little dog was not hit. From which you rightly deduce that it was sometimes very irritating to be Napoleon. An admirable moral.

MUSICAL NOTES

The Coronation Concerts

"All British." There is the keynote of the enormous scheme of the concerts to be given at the Festival of Empire at the Crystal Palace, in May, June and July next. All British are the composers, though this does not mean that the composers represented are all the British composers we possess! Indeed, the majority of the composers whose works are to be heard belong to the earlier generation, and it would be easy to draw up a list of the younger men, such as Hubert Eath, York Bowen, Cyril Scott, for example, who are not represented, yet who are musicians well worthy of consideration. But, as all the world knows, it is impossible to include all men in such a scheme, and more than impossible, so to speak, to satisfy everybody.

There is something appropriate in the selection of Dr. Charles Harris to be conductor-in-chief of the opening concert of the Festival of Empire, for Dr. Harris, the most active propagandist of British music, is by birth and education an Englishman—he is not an alumnus of St. Michael's College, Tenbury?—though for some years his domicile has been in Canada. Yet he has travelled farther to carry on his propaganda than probably any musician ever yet travelled for a similar purpose, and even at this moment is urging the cause he has so much at heart with thoroughly characteristic energy. He has already gathered together a chorus of some 4,000 voices, selected with scrupulous care from a hundred choral societies and choirs mostly established in London, and he has—or the directors have—engaged the Queen's Hall Symphony Orchestra, so that there should be no room for nervousness as to the fit and proper performance of the various compositions on the part of the public or of the composers.

The following is the programme for the Canadian concert:

Canadian Concert (May 30).

"Cockaigne" Overture Elgar
Air de Ballet Percy Pitt
Canadian Rhapsody Mackenzie
"Rule Britannia" Arne-Wood

Artists, Mme. Albani, Miss Edith Millar, and the Smallwood Mercantile Choir; conductor, Sir Henry J. Wood; organist, Mr. Walter Hedgcock; accompanist, Mr. Theodore Flint.

"Der Rosenkavalier" recently produced in Germany has attained enormous popularity. The following will give an idea of the lengths to which a German audience will go in order to listen to a favorite opera.

A special train was run from Berlin to Dresden and back the other day to enable music-lovers of the former city to hear "Der Rosenkavalier." The enterprise of the railway authorities—to say nothing of that shown by those who availed themselves of it—appears to have excited a good deal of interest, for the Berlin papers gave full descriptive accounts of the journey, as well as of the performance. The "special" provided accommodation for 400, and every seat was occupied—a "full house," in short; but the happiness of the passengers seems to have been marred to some extent by the omission of the officials to supply a restaurant car. Seeing, however, that the train left Berlin at 2:30 p. m., and returned at 2:30 a. m., there was presumably time for these musical enthusiasts to get a meal. Even the delights of an opera by Strauss would scarcely justify a Lenten fast of twelve hours. Will some body kindly name the opera that will induce 400 Londoners to leave their homes early on a winter's afternoon and return to their towers 3 a. m. on the following morning?

It will come as a severe shock to perfervid Wagner-lovers to learn that the Berlin stage has just witnessed the production of a skit on the "Ring." "Die Lustige Nibelungen" is the title of this audacious work, and Oscar Strauss—he of "Waltzer Traum" fame—is its composer. The book, which is described as "mirth-provoking throughout," is by a German (what an outcry there would have been had an Englishman or a Frenchman set himself to such a task!), who writes under the pseudonym of "Rideamus." In this case the daring humorist has perpetrated, we are told, "a rollicking burlesque of the immortal 'Ring,' and Siegfried, Brunnhilde, Hagen, Gunter, and all the other figures of the original 'Nibelung,' are mercilessly caricatured in Offenbachian style." We are not at all sure what is meant by "in Offenbachian style." The composer of "La Granle Duchesse" was not a musical parodist—though burlesque humor predominated, of course, in the scheme of "Orpheus aux Enfers"—and such was his admiration for modernity in music, as is shown by his criticisms, that he would probably have been the last composer on earth to make comic capital out of Wagner. But for all we know, Oscar Strauss has left his librettist to do all the satirizing, and the latter may perhaps be excused if he has seen fit to turn the master's frequently-ridiculed menagerie to facetious account. And possibly the brilliant thought has occurred to him of converting Wotan into a "thinking" part. Certainly a Wotan who positively refused to sing would be a striking novelty. We repeat, however, that the author of "Die Lustige Nibelungen" is greatly daring. There are still a great many truculent Wagnerites knocking about, and if "Rideamus" life is not insured—well, it ought to be.

Apropos of the "Ring," an observant critic who attended the recent performances at the New York Metropolitan noticed that when Brunnhilde went to sleep in "Die Walkure" she wore a gray cloak, whereas on her awakening in "Siegfried" it had "turned bright red." A reasonable explanation would be that it had caught the color of Loge's flames. But the same hypercritical scribe was also puzzled because, when Brunnhilde arose from her rocky couch, it was noticed that she "had grown about ten inches taller during her long nap." It is difficult to provide a satisfactory solution to this perplexing problem, but the matter shall receive our careful consideration.

It is pleasant to hear of the performance at Brussels, under very interesting and auspicious circumstances, of Elgar's Symphony. The work was given on Sunday last—for the first time in Belgium—at the fifth Ysaye Symphony concert of the present season. The composer had himself superintended the rehearsals, and Mr. Ysaye, who admires the work greatly, not only paid Sir Edward the compliment of ceding him the baton for the performance, but himself led the orchestra. The audience was most enthusiastic.

The "E" string of a violin belonging to the captain of an Atlantic liner saved the life of one of the passengers on the ship when catgut ligaments in the surgeon's kit were found to be defective and the passenger's life depended upon the proper uniting of the wound made in connection with an operation for appendicitis.