

Patriotic Music: Its Use and Abuse

By KATHERINE HALE



TO-DAY we are flooded by the inevitable tide of patriotic songs and poetry, a tide of cheap emotion which might easily swamp the more serious thought evoked from such a world crisis as the present. To few composers is it given to write a great national song. Many indeed are "called," but few are chosen.

As this is a subject in which nearly everyone is in some way interested. I asked a group of international visitors to Canada, people who study a large public, to give to EVERYWOMAN'S WORLD their opinion on the subject of so-called patriotic music, its use and abuse.

Mrs. H. H. A. Beach, the well-known American composer, believes that the function of music is healing and constructive rather than exciting. "For my part," she declares, "this war is too terrible and too far reaching for me to be able to trust my ideas as to its expression as yet. I believe that the soldiers are cheered and helped by their popular marching songs. That is as it should be. The old songs of country, blest by a thousand memories, are also invaluable. But most of the popular songs coming out of the present war are sheer rubbish."

Margaret Keyes, probably the best loved of American contraltos, has also decided opinions on this subject. "I am most careful in the arrangement of my programmes," she says. "It is so easy to excite or depress an audience by one of those waves of emotion that instantly ripple to the surface when people's hearts are tried as they are to-day, like the revivalist who plays with shallow emotions. It seems to me quite wrong to work upon the deeper feelings of people by merely sentimental means. A great war always produces melodramatic music composed under the heat of the moment. Pure patriotism is so noble a thing that it is impossible for me to cheapen it by crude appeals to mere emotion, popular though they may seem to be."

Lilian Dillingham, the Yorkshire singer, who has had hundreds of concerts all up and down the Front and has sung to the soldiers under almost impossible conditions for the last three years, says, "I give them everything but patriotic songs. They want to hear about home, and love, and children. Especially children. I cannot give them too many songs and stories about their quaint sayings and doings. The men care for that even more than for love songs, which come second in the list of favorites."

Phyllis Neilson-Terry, who recites the short speech from Drake beginning "Men of England," and has done much recruiting work for the Navy League, is an actress who believes in the power of song. But she also believes in the power of a conscious cheerfulness throughout a national crisis and possesses the art of holding this balance in her work. "These are bad times," she says, "but," the old indomitable spirit that shines in the grey-blue eyes of the immortal Ellen Terry shines also through those of this younger darling of the gods—"but let us keep jolly in our work and in our thoughts, and we'll pull through."

AND then, on the other hand, there is the great appeal of pure patriotism in music. Nationalism in the

best sense is strikingly illustrated in the songs of country used by such a conductor as Albert D. Ham, of Toronto, on his National Chorus Programme. "It comes from the Misty Ages," from "The Banner of St. George," by the English composer, Elgar; Tschaikowsky's noble "Prayer of the Russians," the singing of "The Star Spangled Banner," and "Oh, Canada," by a perfectly balanced splendid band of singers these are vehicles for the invocation of those vivid flashes of faith and zeal which build up the impregnable force of nations and lead



Mrs. H. H. A. Beach
The well-known American Composer

countries into battle with a song in the heart which is even more potent than the song on the lips.

In any city the introduction of orchestral concerts by a band of well-qualified musicians, native to the city in which they play, is a matter of importance. The very existence of such an organization means that the spirit of music is alive in that place. And so the re-appearance of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, after a silence of three seasons, means something that is more than local in its import.

Orchestral concerts should have the old support with a new element added, for after the war there is no doubt that we shall need music as a constructive force more than ever, that indeed this country of ours will begin to internalize herself (if I may coin a word) by developing her music.

It is said that just after the opening of the war, when England was beginning to realize that the Germans were everywhere, especially in music, one of the first ways of shaking off the yoke was to see to it that most of the orchestra leaders were English. I thought of that as I studied the personnel of the splendid band under the baton of that energetic Canadian, Frank S. Welsman, and saw that most of the players were native born or British. You would not think, to look at them, that there were many temperaments included in that group of men and women. But they can play! I have seldom heard a more exquisite rendering of Greig's haunting melody, "Solveg's Lament," or a more splendid series of pictures than those in the immortal "Pathétique" of Tschaikowsky's.

We need that orchestra, and an orchestra in Ottawa, in Montreal and in Vancouver, and one at least in the Maritime Provinces. And these should be endowed orchestras which can afford to give concerts at popular prices. The towns and the villages need this music more than they can realize.

JUST now one may seem to be agitating a forlorn cause. Who will help to endow orchestras when half the world is fighting for its very life? My friends, "nothing is but thinking makes it so." There are more thoughts of peace, more longings towards peace abroad in this troubled world than ever vibrated through the range of human feeling before. And peace means harmony.

What about brass bands for villages that do not yet aspire to that finer voice, the orchestra? They really built up the English school of music, by village brass bands. In certain sections of England one can ride thirty or forty miles on a Saturday and every mile or so you will come to a village that has its own band. It plays in a barn or a public house. It has forty to sixty members, and each member pays down a half a dollar week. They get a travelling musician to come and teach them, and they play all the modern English music. Then they have competition days. Fifty or sixty bands will meet in one of the villages and compete for a prize. The music lasts all day. It is really quite Greek. The prize is only nominal, but it is considered a great honor to win it. And all this is splendid for English composers. At least they have a chance of having their work tried out. And they sell their music. The brass bands build up a market for English music. Is not this a good way to arrive at an understanding at least of national composition?

Chorus singing also does much for the musical life of a nation. I fancy that the Mendelssohn Choir has brought Canada a wider fame than many of her material enterprises. Had it not been for the coming of the war, Canada would have had a triumphal march through the British Empire and part of Europe in this most perfect choir of mixed voices.

Canadian Artists and Their Work

A YOUNG Canadian artist who has been for long in the United States, but whose portrait work is scattered throughout Canada—Ottawa and Toronto being particularly lucky in this respect—is Edith Stevenson, whose name you often see on the cover pages of magazines, generally signed under some particularly entrancing study of child-life, in the delineation of which she is happiest. The illustration—a portrait study of a little New Yorker—is a delightful example of what work along this line might be, and generally is not.

Edith Stevenson is a born portrait painter because she possesses in a marked degree a sympathy almost mystic in its force, which alone leads to that understanding that can reproduce the vivid moods of childhood. In other words, she has vision, which is a truly spiritual quality. It has been said that sincerity may find conventional truth, but sympathy alone points to individual truth, and in its genuine form is traceable to genius. When the two combine with technique and actuality, the result is creative genius.

Closely akin to actuality is swiftness. The portrait painter must give infinite transitions with an infinite rapidity. To seize and hold the almost lightning-like element of expression which, in quick gleams and withdrawals, suggests the soul of a man or woman, or the buoyant spirit of a child, is surely the secret of art.

This is the secret for which Edith Stevenson is distinguished.

BY all means the most interesting news from the Canadian art world at the present moment is the announced decision of the Government to send to the Front four of our own artists to obtain official records of the work of the Canadian troops; all information indeed that can be gathered into sketches, etchings, pictures of all sorts, the results to remain in the possession of the Government for the use of future historians, either in literature or on canvas, who will represent phases of the war. The artists will be given the military rank of Captains, and the fortunate four are C. W. Simpson, A.R.C.A., and Maurice Cullen, R.C.A., of Montreal, and J. W. Beatty, R.C.A., and Horsman Varley, of Toronto.



A CHILD PORTRAIT

I HAVE received an inquiry as to the whereabouts of the Canadian artist, Mary Riker Hamilton, who gave many exhibitions of oils and water colors throughout Canada some six years ago. Mrs. Hamilton had spent years abroad, several of her pictures being exhibited at the Salon in Paris. The last that I heard of the artist, she was painting portraits and garden pictures in Victoria, B.C., and was of the opinion that there is as much scope for the artist's brush in that soft western climate, with its wonderful rock gardens, its winter roses, and golden gorse as in the time-haunted landscapes of Italy.

A CANADIAN artist well-known in New York, is Arthur Crisp, formerly of Hamilton, Ontario, who has made a specialty of interior decorations, his large murals in the Belasco Theatre and Lunettes at the Play House on 48th Street being specially notable, also the recent decoration of a hall in the Greenwich Settlement, a building used for instruction and amusement in the heart of the most Bohemian section of New York—Greenwich Village. Mr. Crisp believes that an important phase in modern art is mural decoration. In the days of Greece and Rome pictures were painted on the walls of men's homes. There is a world of suggestion in that fact. Travellers come from all over the world to see these old frescoes and we say, "Ah! but those Italian painters were great artists. To live with mediocrity upon one's walls would be a sad fate." I agree with Arthur Crisp on the point that genuine art need not be so high-priced if the artist were kept continually busy in his own line. The large, infrequent orders are to blame for inflated prices. American artists have done much recruiting. Mr. Crisp's poster for the Navy League was a feature of that work in New York.

HORATIO WALKER, the well-known painter, has an interesting work in hand, that of the compilation of a book of etchings, contributed by Canadian artists in New York for the benefit of the permanently disabled. He asserts that there are a sufficient number of our artists in Gotham to fill a large book of excellent contributions.