

WOMAN'S SUPPLEMENT

A FEW PAGES PREPARED TO MY LADY'S TASTE

THE EDITOR'S SCRAP HEAP

A Matter of Music

IN these days of much discussion concerning feminine aspirations and limitations, public attention is frequently drawn to the fact that woman has accomplished little in the department of creative art. "Where is the woman Shakespeare, Beethoven or Canova?" asks the social philosopher, who would remind woman of her domestic obligations. Let us be candid and admit that woman, as a great dramatist, artist or musician is hardly existent. Such philosophers forget that the feminine genius is for appreciation or interpretation, rather than for creation, and that woman is happier as listener than as composer. Go to an art exhibition, and you will find that women observers are in the majority. Attend a concert, and you will discover that women form about two-thirds of the audience. This excess of feminine interest is not, by any means, an affectation—it is woman's natural attraction to the vocal or pictorial interpretation of the beautiful. Thus, the philosopher who thinks to crush feminine ambition by commenting on the absence of a woman Shakespeare may well be answered by the many women readers who have known the dramatist's plays and by the ethereal host who inspired him and who, from Miranda to Virgilia, remain an eternal dream of fair women.

In music, woman's part is nearly always that of interpretation. It may be admitted with cheerfulness that there is no woman's name to place beside Liszt, Beethoven or Wagner. However, as we think of the queens of song, from Jenny Lind to Gadski and Melba, we need not grumble over that part of music's realm which woman has found peculiarly her own.

During the cycle of the Mendelssohn Choir concerts, it must occur to many of our Canadian hearers that the feminine share of the triumph is of no mean order. One-hundred-and-thirty members of "North America's premier chorus" are Canadian women, whose voices have been so exquisitely trained that in such a selection as the "Crucifixus" there is a supremely ethereal quality. The Canadian voice has been criticised, with some justice, for its harshness and lack of modulation. The "speaking voice" of the Canadian woman does not compare to her advantage with that of our Transatlantic kinswoman; but Dr. Vogt has made of the northern voice a wonderful instrument for all harmonies—and it has taken a master to reveal its possibilities.

If one will consider the discipline of musical taste and talent, to say nothing of nerves, required of the feminine performers in a Mendelssohn Choir programme, the splendid achievements of the soprano and alto will be recognized as a proof of unselfish devotion to art. This is emphasized, not from any desire to minimize the work of other sections, but merely to do justice to those on whom the nervous strain of practice is of greater intensity. To realize the perfect balance of our Mendelssohn Choir, one need only compare it with such an organization as the Maennerchor of Vienna, which made a tour of the United States some years ago. The male chorus, however finished and disciplined, is utterly inadequate to the higher musical triumphs, and it is only when we hear the soaring climax of the *Ninth Symphony* or Bach's *Sanctus* that we are aware of a superlative choral achievement.

Modern Chivalry.

THERE are places which cannot be vulgarized, no matter what crowds may throng to them as sight-seers, no matter what commercialism may turn their beauty into gold. To me, Niagara

is one of these, although humanity has done so much to mar its majesty and loveliness. Yet, however, the swarms of tourists may cover its banks, however the electric energy of a continent may disfigure the shores with horrors of commercial activity, there is a savage beauty of the river which remains aloof and unsullied. To many, it is a stream of terror, with a leaping cruelty in its whirling depths; but to others its fascination lies in that very violence, which flings a tumult of spray on high. It is a river of many tragedies, with stories such as few rivers of the earth could tell as they flow. Since those early days, when the Indians named it in musical syllables, it has known many an hour of stress. There is now added to its grim story a tragedy of such pathetic, human appeal as thrills the common heart with sympathy. As we read the account of how three lives were sacrificed to its wintry waters, the quiet, unfaltering heroism of the man and the

boy who refused to snatch safety while a woman's life was in danger, illumined the scene of disaster with a clear radiance. To meet a supreme crisis with steady courage is the test of our civilization—and we may well take comfort for the dormant chivalry in everyday lives when we think of the way in which Eldridge Stanton and Burrell Heacock faced the ultimate hour.

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Dickens' Heroines.

DURING the last fortnight we have had many an article on Charles Dickens—since it was one hundred years ago, February 7th, 1812, that the most popular novelist of the last century was born. Much has been written concerning the Dickens women, and the critics seem agreed that she was an impossible and hysterical person, given to tears and swooning. The more valiant of his heroines have been almost ignored. To offset the lachrymose vapouring of *Dora* we have the stalwart defiance of *Betsy Trotwood*. The critics have been somewhat too sweeping in their denunciation of the Dickens heroine, who is sometimes quite an independent young person with a will of her own. Personally, I prefer *Dolly Varden* to most of the modern young women of fiction. Was there ever such a bewildering little coquette as that winsome *Dolly*, who laughed at honest *Joe* until there came the hour of misfortune? *Beatrice Esmond*, in the days of her youth, was a bewitching maiden, but hardly so charming as the little lady of the sedan chair.

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St. Valentine.

THE day, which was once devoted to tender sentiment, has come again, and the postman has delivered the messages of St. Valentine, marked with the prosaic stamp of His Majesty's mails. Perhaps it is the tendency of each age to consider its own fashions common-place and unromantic; but we do seem a matter-of-fact people in comparison with our grand-parents, who set so much store by the valentine, all hearts and darts and fragile lace-paper. Valentines are comparatively out of fashion, it must be admitted, and the modern young person would vote the verses of old-time sentiment too highflown and remotely devoted. The comradeship of To-day is, no doubt, a pleasant relationship. Yet, when we find in an old trunk or work-box a valentine of two generations ago, there seems a tender grace in its dignified compliment, which is wanting in our world of hurry and noise. The independence of the modern women may be the cause for the decline of stately sentiment; but the ballot is a poor substitute for the valentine.

CANADIENNE.



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(See page 20)