

The Value of the Gramophone

By Golan E. Hoole

SOME would-be musical people seem to imagine that a tolerance and liking for light, trifling music is a sign of "plebian taste"; of weak musical powers; they think that no one can be really musical who does not entirely eliminate this class of music from his musical bill of fare. This idea, however, is not true to life. The writer, on one happy social occasion, in the Glasgow Art Club, Scotland, saw the felicity of hearing three well-known musicians (a pianist, a violinist and a singer), give an extemporaneous performance on a comic song; the singer sang the song, the pianist played an accompaniment that was fantastic in the extreme, and the violinist gave the wildest kind of obligato imaginable. The combination was most delightful. Can it be wondered at that such a performance still lives vividly in the memory?

The music of the great masters, when it has given to it its right interpretation, is often intense and passionate and permeated throughout with a considerable amount of anguish and tragedy; hence, many educated musical people, during these trying times when almost every home is a throbbing centre of bruised and broken hearts, find relief in listening to light and pleasant music; it takes their minds away from the tragedy of everyday life.

Some of our friends say, that at the present time, they cannot listen to serious music without a lump rising in the throat and tears welling in their eyes. Even the professional musician must, at times, seek relief from the strain of strong, virulent music and indulge in light-hearted stuff, which, though simple and jolly, is not necessarily vulgar.

On the prairie homestead, the gramophone nowadays, is often the first musical instrument imported into the home, other instruments following in due course, as funds permit and as teachers can be found to teach them.

Anyone from the city, going into one of these prairie homes, would be surprised to find what taste and judgment had been used in the selection of records. The prairie dwellers invariably select the best they can understand. Though they may not venture into the region of Italian Opera, they will buy good songs sung in English by first-rate singers and instrumental selections of equally good calibre. Anyway, folksongs and popular songs well sung, and violin and pianoforte solos well played, make a fine start for an intelligent interest in, and appreciation of music, even though the weird wail and sob of the ukelele may have special fascination for many.

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As the gramophone and its records became more perfect, the music publishers and music stores began to fear that the people would stop buying music and be content to sit and listen. It, however, has had the opposite effect; on all sides it has stimulated the study and growth of music. Parents without special musical sympathies now find that their boys and girls want to learn to play and sing. In homes where music was part of the daily educational life, a greater interest is being awakened; the children of their own accord aiming to play like someone they have heard. The professional student also now makes a critical study of famous players and singers. The sales

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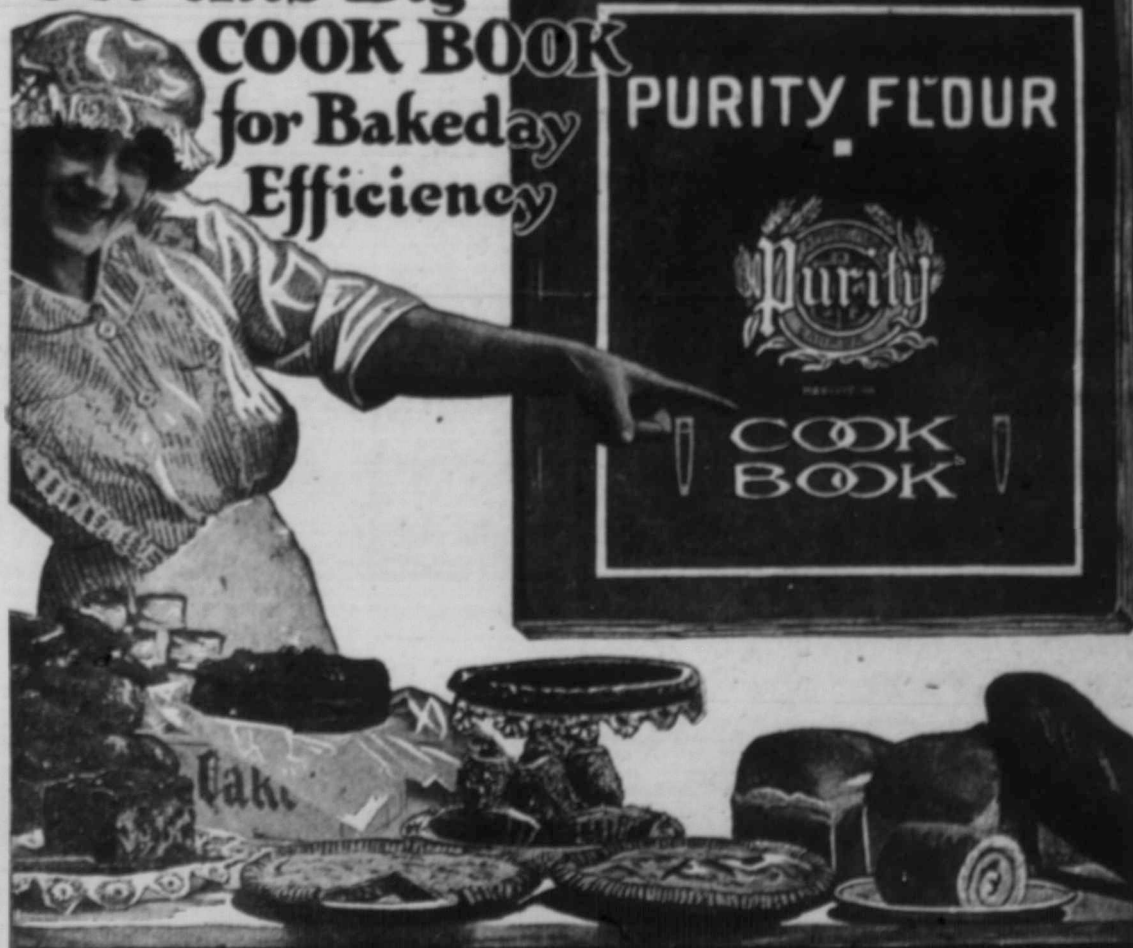
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