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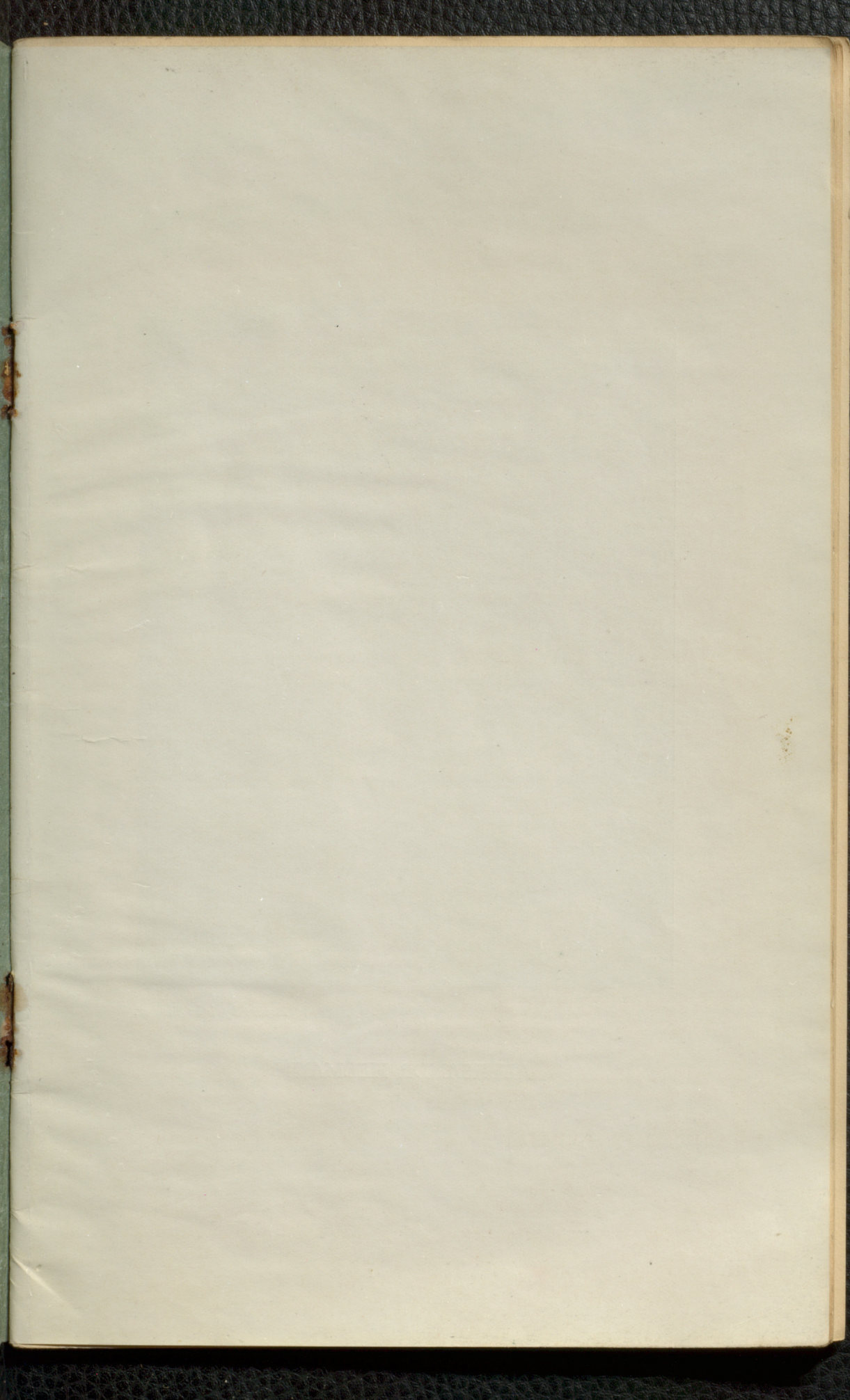
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Picture by John Flower.

ALEKSANDR HELMANN

ALEKSANDR HELMANN—An appreciation

by NANCY PRICE

IT is difficult to convey an idea of this magnetic and complex personality. To know him even slightly,—so young in years, yet old in knowledge—is an exhilarating and illuminating experience. He has a unique appeal which is quite indefinable, it is elusive—will o' the wisp. He is compelling, tender, fierce, compassionate, and all these are linked together by a terrific vitality which scorns food and sleep and the bodily necessities of ordinary mortals. That is the danger. He refuses to consider himself except in so far as his art is concerned. This he values to the full and its wide capacity. His knowledge and comprehension not only of his own art but the other arts and sciences is quite extraordinary and his interpretation of his particular art is original and revolutionary. The memorising of twelve hundred compositions, which he has in his repertoire, is itself a proof of his outstanding mental capacity.

He was born October 12th, 1912, in Vilna, Russia (now Poland). Both parents were musicians; his father was a pianist and later Professor of Piano in the Imperial Conservatoire of Ukraine and Kuban, North Caucasus; his mother was a singer of note. Even at the age of three, Helmann preferred the piano to toys. At six, thanks to his own improvisations, he showed such ease in manipulation of the piano keyboard that his father was persuaded into giving his music serious attention and instruction. At six and a half he made his first public appearance at the Conservatoire of Ekaterinoslav (Ukraine), where his playing of Chopin's Funeral March (in a special arrangement for small hands) created a deep impression on an audience composed mainly of the staff and students of the conservatoire. Then followed a period of study under his father's guidance. Then came a concert tour.

Helmann's childhood cannot be sketched out without the dramatic background of the Russian Revolution. Its most volcanic scenes form the very essence of his first impressions. They are as deep-rooted as only child impressions are. He is in truth a child of the tempest, a child of turbulence and upheaval. When his family finally emigrated to the United States, young Helmann found a new home of turbulence—the turbulence of unharnessed modernity. His family settled in New York, where his father decided that further concerts for Sascha (as he was then called) were detrimental to the child's development, and so came schooldays.

But music was not forgotten; in the course of a normal life without the strain of recital tours, it seasoned and matured, but few people knew or appreciated Helmann's objectives. His father was the first to realise the originality of his work.

Then came the New York debut. It was almost a complete failure as far as the critics were concerned, notwithstanding a tumultuous response from the audience. But the very critics who at first abused his work because of its lack of convention soon gave it delighted praise, realising that in this original interpretation there was genius.

There is a rich variety in Helmann's criticisms, one reads a variety of adjectives from "distorted" to "magnificent." "Pleasing" or "adequate" are not his adjectives. I add three extracts from his American criticisms:

"There is no consciousness of technique, execution, form, or planned effect in Mr. Helmann's playing. While all those things are there, presented with care and finish, one hears music, alive and pulsing, real and singularly beautiful. There is depth in his musical attitude, force and brilliance, sensitiveness and poetry."—(*The Washington Post*, June, 1934.)

"... His is a rare pianistic talent, poetic and fiery, delicate and thunderous in refined understanding of the works he presents. An amazing technique permits him unlimited choice of material, but, in reality, this is the least impressive part of his performance, for his immersion in the content of the music, the unique and original angle of his interpretations and the rare musical spirit that he possesses are what give joy to the listener. . . ."—(*The Washington Star*, June, 1934.)

"Aleksandr Helmann, a new pianistic star of first magnitude, gave an amazing recital last evening.

"Helmann has everything at his command that a brilliant virtuoso should have and more than many a famous master of the keyboard.

"Intensive thinking about acoustic problems of the piano has made him a mature musician, notwithstanding his youth. His touch alone is of such beauty as one has seldom an occasion to enjoy.

"His fiery temperament enhances his playing to an extent that this recital was one of the most exciting affairs the writer has witnessed on a concert stage in recent years. The audience acclaimed Helmann with rare enthusiasm, calling for encore after encore."

—(Dr. Kurt Hetzel in *The Washington Times-Herald*, 1934.)

It has been my privilege to hear and know most of the great pianists of my age but none of them have moved me so profoundly as Aleksandr Helmann. He takes his art as a sacrament, gives it infinite preparation, bodily self-denial, offers it his soul. He gives himself utterly in his music, strips, devastates himself.

All artists are dependent upon us to feed their art, to keep it alive, but what we give them is returned to us a hundredfold.

You will be awakened by Aleksandr Helmann's music, you will sit upright and agape. It will fill your mind and your heart.

ON INTERPRETATION AND COMPOSER'S INTENTION

by

ALEKSANDR HELMANN

THE intention of the composer in regard to execution and interpretation lies fully expressed in the tonal pattern and indications of dynamics in the musical score. In other words, the harmonic, melodic and rhythmic design, as well as indications of intensity and speed, comprise all the clues to the manner in which the composer intended his work to be interpreted.

Behind the sum total of all these musical indications, is the ultimate objective of producing musical effect. When I say effect, I do not mean any programmatic connotation—I mean simply musical effect.

If it is true that the composer visualised a manner in which his composition was to be interpreted (and that is clearly demonstrated by his painstaking care in indications of dynamics) his visualisation was one of effect upon a specific audience he had in mind. Therefore the problem before the interpreter is one of bringing to an audience of his own time the interpretative intention of the composer.

But in dealing with eighteenth and nineteenth century music he encounters grave difficulties. Here he must decide for himself which of the composer's intentions he wishes to retain. A composer of the eighteenth century who sets down indications for interpretation has in mind a certain psychological make-up on the part of his hearers. He therefore is guided in the interpretative indications by his sense of awareness of what an audience of his time would find effective. If an interpreter of to-day were to retain the interpretative indications of the composer as they stand, he would retain the composer's indications effective for an audience of the composer's time, but he would not in truth retain the intentions of effect which were behind the interpretative indications. Just as the composer had to base his indications on the knowledge of his audience, so must the interpreter reconsider the audience, acknowledge the changes, and revise the score in order to retain the composer's intention of effect.

My reader may question at this point the validity of my claim that an audience's reaction to musical effect undergoes historical change—to which I advance the following argument.

Industry and mechanisation have introduced millions of new sounds and noises into modern life, enlarging considerably the compass of aural awareness. The massing together of millions of people in huge metropolises, roaring infernos of contrapuntal din, has softened the meaning of *fortes* and sharpened the impressions of *pianissimos*.

Running away from this noise some of us seek eighteenth and nineteenth century music as a means of escape from to-day; there, I think, art is being introduced into the body as an opiate. The days of tranquility and euphony in music are over, just as the days of tranquility and enphony in life. Art must perforce mirror and reflect the life around it, just as the individual who makes the art must perforce mirror his environment. In this environment he finds an ever-increasing perfection of machinery and meticulous precision, which develop in modern man an ever-increasing criticism of the imperfections in his craftsmanship. There was in the nineteenth century a decided tendency among interpreters to compete with the speed of the machine; to-day we realise the futility of such endeavour and strive to learn the more sensible lesson taught by the machine—that of precision. When we do, we shall attain greater clarity and lucidity in treatment of details in our arts and crafts.

All this, however, points to the fact that the ways of producing effect upon an audience do change with history and social environment, and in interpreting compositions of classicists and romanticists the interpreter has the choice of treading in one of two roads—either to present a classic or romantic composition in a historic vein, that is he will follow the composer's indications which were meant for an audience of the composer's time, and thereby prove himself a scholar; or he will take the road which is less safe, but so much more dramatic—the road which will resurrect the composer's foremost desire, the desire to bring to an audience the living and throbbing representation of his thought.

In conclusion, in defence of the changes and concessions which we must make to modernity, I would like to say that whether or not modernity has taught is a beneficial lesson, I do not know. But whether or not it has taught us a lesson, I do know: it has. And I know that its effects are plainly visible, not only in the things we leave behind,—our arts—but in our faces. And in our faces there is strength and determination.

“How sour sweet music is
When time is broke, and no proportion kept.”

King Richard II—Shakespeare.

THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE ROSE.

By OSCAR WILDE.

“SHE said that she would dance with me if I brought her red roses,” cried the young Student; “but in all my garden there is no red rose.”

From her nest in the holm-oak tree the Nightingale heard him, and she looked out through the leaves and wondered.

“No red rose in all my garden!” he cried, and his beautiful eyes filled with tears. “Ah, on what little things does happiness depend! I have read all that the wise men have written, and all the secrets of philosophy are mine, yet for want of a red rose is my life made wretched.”

“Here at last is a true lover,” said the Nightingale. “Night after night have I sung of him, though I knew him not: night after night have I told his story to the stars and now I see him. His hair is dark as the hyacinth-blossom, and his lips are red as the rose of his desire; but passion has made his face like pale ivory, and sorrow has set her seal upon his brow.”

“The Prince gives a ball to-morrow night,” murmured the young Student, “and my love will be of the company. If I bring her a red rose she will dance with me till dawn. If I bring her a red rose, I shall hold her in my arms, and she will lean her head upon my shoulder, and her hand will be clasped in mine. But there is no red rose in my garden, so I shall sit lonely, and she will pass me by. She will have no heed of me, and my heart will break.”

“Here indeed is the true lover,” said the Nightingale. “What I sing of, he suffers: what is joy to me, to him is pain. Surely love is a wonderful thing. It is more precious than emeralds, and dearer than fine opals. Pearls and pomegranates cannot buy it, nor is it set forth in the market-place. It may not be purchased of the merchants, nor can it be weighed out in the balance for gold.”

“The Musicians will sit in their gallery,” said the young Student, “and play upon their stringed instruments, and my love will dance to the sound of the harp and the violin. She will dance so lightly that her feet will not touch the floor, and the courtiers in their gay dresses will throng round her. But with me she will not dance, for I have no red rose to give her;” and he flung himself down on the grass, and buried his face in his hands and wept.

“Why is he weeping?” asked a little Green Lizard, as he ran past him with his tail in the air.

“Why indeed?” said a Butterfly, who was fluttering about after a sunbeam.

“Why, indeed?” whispered a Daisy to his neighbour, in a soft, low voice.

"He is weeping for a red rose," said the Nightingale.

"For a red rose?" they cried; "how very ridiculous!" and the little Lizard, who was something of a cynic, laughed outright.

But the Nightingale understood the secret of the Student's sorrow, and she sat silent in the oak-tree, and thought about the mystery of Love.

Suddenly she spread her brown wings for flight, and soared into the air. She passed through the grove like a shadow, and like a shadow she sailed across the garden.

In the centre of the grass-plot was standing a beautiful Rose-tree, and when she saw it she flew over to it, and lit upon a spray.

"Give me a red rose," she cried, "and I will sing you my sweetest song."

But the Tree shook its head.

"My roses are white," it answered, "as white as the foam of the sea, and whiter than the snow upon the mountain. But go to my brother who grows round the old sun-dial, and perhaps he will give you what you want."

So the Nightingale flew over to the Rose-tree that was growing round the old sun-dial.

"Give me a red rose," she cried, "and I will sing you my sweetest song."

But the Tree shook its head.

"My roses are yellow," it answered; "as yellow as the hair of the mermaiden who sits upon an amber throne, and yellower than the daffodil that blooms in the meadow before the mower comes with his scythe. But go to my brother who grows beneath the Student's window, and perhaps he will give you what you want."

So the Nightingale flew over to the Rose-tree that was growing beneath the Student's window.

"Give me a red rose," she cried, "and I will sing you my sweetest song."

But the Tree shook its head.

"My roses are red," it answered, "as red as the feet of the dove, and redder than the great fans of coral that wave and wave in the ocean-cavern. But the winter has chilled my veins, and the frost has nipped my buds, and the storm has broken off my branches, and I shall have no roses at all this year."

"One red rose is all I want," cried the Nightingale, "only one red rose! Is there no way by which I can get it?"

"There is a way," answered the Tree; "but it is so terrible that I dare not tell it to you."

"Tell it to me," said the Nightingale, "I am not afraid."

"If you want a red rose," said the Tree, "you must build it out of music by moonlight, and stain it with your own heart's-blood. You must sing to me with your breast against a thorn. All night long you must

sing to me, and the thorn must pierce your heart, and your life-blood must flow into my veins, and become mine."

"Death is a great price to pay for a red rose," cried the Nightingale, "and Life is very dear to all. It is pleasant to sit in the green wood, and to watch the Sun in his chariot of gold, and the Moon in her chariot of pearl. Sweet is the scent of the hawthorn, and sweet are the bluebells that hide in the valley, and the heather that blows on the hill. Yet Love is better than Life, and what is the heart of a bird compared to the heart of a man?"

So she spread her brown wings for flight, and soared into the air. She swept over the garden like a shadow, and like a shadow she sailed through the grove.

The young Student was still lying on the grass, where she had left him, and the tears were not yet dry in his beautiful eyes.

"Be happy," cried the Nightingale, "be happy; you shall have your red rose. I will build it out of music by moonlight, and stain it with my own heart's-blood. All that I ask of you in return is that you will be a true lover, for Love is wiser than Philosophy, though he is wise, and mightier than Power, though he is mighty. Flame-coloured are his wings, and coloured like flame is his body. His lips are sweet as honey, and his breath is like frankincense." The Student looked up from the grass, and listened, but he could not understand what the Nightingale was saying to him, for he only knew the things that are written down in books.

But the Oak-tree understood, and felt sad, for he was very fond of the little Nightingale who had built her nest in his branches.

"Sing me one last song," he whispered; "I shall feel very lonely when you are gone."

So the Nightingale sang to the Oak-tree, and her voice was like water bubbling from a silver jar.

When she had finished her song, the Student got up, and pulled a note-book and a lead-pencil out of his pocket.

"She has form," he said to himself, as he walked away through the grove—"that cannot be denied to her; but has she got feeling? I am afraid not. In fact, she is like most artists; she is all style without any sincerity. She would not sacrifice herself for others. She thinks merely of music, and everybody knows that the arts are selfish. Still it must be admitted that she has some beautiful notes in her voice. What a pity it is that they do not mean anything, or do any practical good!" And he went into his room, and lay down on his little pallet-bed, and began to think of his love; and, after a time, he fell asleep.

And when the Moon shone in the heavens the Nightingale flew to the Rose-tree, and set her breast against the thorn; all night long she sang, with her breast against the thorn, and the cold crystal Moon leaned down and listened. All night long she sang and the thorn went deeper into her breast, and her life-blood ebbed away from her.

She sang first of the birth of love in the heart of a boy and a girl. And on the topmost spray of the Rose-tree there blossomed a marvellous rose, petal following petal as song followed song. Pale was it, at first, as the mist that hangs over the river—pale as the feet of the morning, and silver as the wings of the dawn. As the shadow of a rose in a mirror of silver, as the shadow of a rose in a water-pool, so was the rose that blossomed on the topmost spray of the Tree.

But the Tree cried to the Nightingale to press closer against the thorn. "Press closer, little Nightingale," cried the Tree, "or the Day will come before the rose is finished."

So the Nightingale pressed closer against the thorn, and louder and louder grew her song, for she sang of the birth of passion in the soul of a man and a maid.

And a delicate flush of pink came into the leaves of the rose, like the flush in the face of the bridegroom when he kisses the lips of the bride. But the thorn had not yet reached her heart, so the rose's heart remained white, for only a Nightingale's heart's blood can crimson the heart of a rose.

And the Tree cried to the Nightingale to press closer against the thorn. "Press closer, little Nightingale," cried the Tree, "or the Day will come before the rose is finished."

So the Nightingale pressed closer against the thorn, and the thorn touched her heart, and a fierce pang of pain shot through her. Bitter, bitter was the pain, and wilder and wilder grew her song, for she sang of the Love that is perfected by Death, of the Love that dies not in the tomb.

And the marvellous rose became crimson, like the rose of the eastern sky. Crimson was the girdle of petals, and crimson as a ruby was the heart.

But the Nightingale's voice grew fainter, and her little wings began to beat, and a film came over her eyes. Fainter and fainter grew her song, and she felt something choking her in her throat.

Then she gave one last burst of music. The white Moon heard it, and she forgot the dawn, and lingered on in the sky. The red rose heard it, and it trembled all over with ecstasy, and opened its petals to the cold morning air. Echo bore it to her purple cavern in the hills, and woke the sleeping shepherds from their dreams. It floated through the reeds of the river, and they carried its message to the sea.

"Look, look!" cried the Tree, "the rose is finished now;" but the Nightingale made no answer, for she was lying dead in the long grass, with the thorn in her heart.

And at noon the Student opened his window and looked out.

"Why, what a wonderful piece of luck!" he cried; "here is a red rose! I have never seen any rose like it in all my life. It is so beautiful that I am sure it has a long Latin name;" and he leaned down and plucked it.

Then he put on his hat, and ran up to the Professor's house with the rose in his hand.

The daughter of the Professor was sitting in the doorway winding blue silk on a reel, and her little dog was lying at her feet.

"You said that you would dance with me if I brought you a red rose," cried the Student. "Here is the reddest rose in all the world. You will wear it to-night next your heart, and as we dance together it will tell you how I love you."

But the girl frowned.

"I am afraid it will not go with my dress," she answered; and, besides, the Chamberlain's nephew has sent me some real jewels, and everybody knows that jewels cost far more than flowers."

"Well, upon my word, you are very ungrateful," said the Student angrily; and he threw the rose into the street, where it fell into the gutter, and a cart-wheel went over it.

"Ungrateful!" said the girl. "I tell you what, you are very rude; and, after all, who are you? Only a Student. Why, I don't believe you have even got silver buckles to your shoes as the Chamberlain's nephew has;" and she got up from her chair and went into the house.

"What a silly thing Love is!" said the Student as he walked away. "It is not half as useful as Logic, for it does not prove anything, and it is always telling one of things that are not going to happen, and making one believe things that are not true. In fact, it is quite unpractical, and, as in this age to be practical is everything, I shall go back to Philosophy and study Metaphysics."

So he returned to his room and pulled out a great dusty book, and began to read.

SARAH SIDDONS

SARAH SIDDONS was a great woman apart from being a great actress. She, like Henry Irving, had to overcome difficulties, he had to fight a vocal impediment all his life. Her voice, which is remembered as having the quality and resonance of a great booming gong, was originally described as weak, and of a hopeless quality for the stage. It was diligence, concentration and control which helped them to conquer themselves and so conquer others. Through constant correction of their own weakness they learned to use their great gifts to full advantage and fire the imagination of their audience as probably few other artists have ever done.

Sarah was born in 1755. She was 27 before she achieved that success which she was able to keep at its zenith for 30 years, then she was wise enough to retire. She had amassed a fortune of £50,000, which in itself showed she had a business side. I have known many artists who think this is essential to success—it certainly gives balance. Her early life taught her the value of money, for she knew years of poverty, and when she began to make money she was wise in its distribution, she spent it sanely. The description of her houses show that she appreciated solid comfort. She would never have been able to give all the wonderful performances that have lived as great acting if she had not made money, for she suffered frequent bouts of ill-health, and it was only money that could give her those things which were her physical necessities.

She was often accused of meanness, most people are who do not die in the workhouse. It has been said that she refused her sister help during a period of ill-health and actual need. I do not believe this, she was too just and too fine a woman to descend to any form of meanness, either monetary or otherwise, but neither was she improvident. "Improvidence thy name is artist" may be said of many of us, and because of this folly of ours people are inclined to forget that it is possible to live comfortably and yet be an inspired artist.

She was the daughter of a small touring actor-manager, and in his company she met a fellow artist who was, as far as we can know, the one man she really loved. This marriage was forbidden, perhaps her father knew actors too well. He may have felt marriage with an actor generally meant misery before long and almost certain poverty. Sarah cared enough for this young man for propinquity to be torture, so she decided to give up the stage altogether and see if absence made the heart grow fonder or otherwise, so she took the only work she could get and became a lady's maid for one year at Guy's Cliffe House in Warwick. She

kept her love and her art bright and the very capacity that made her endure this work brought her ultimate success and kept it for her. It is fortunate for our art that ambition and love over-ruled all other reasonings, and she came back to the stage and her lover, but consent to their marriage was still refused and this time she decided to elope. After this second bold decision she suffered many vicissitudes and knew her worst bout of poverty.

It is impossible here to give a full record of her work and life, and therefore we will come to a very important turning in her fortune, her coming to Drury Lane. Garrick sent for her. I like to know that so great an artist was the first to give Sarah Siddons a chance and introduce her to the world that talked and wrote. That she was not an immediate success was for her good, as it made her more determined, made her work and study when she might otherwise have rested, satisfied with success. She was to work and suffer for her art still further, she was to be tried in the furnace and found pure gold.

I have seen the original playbill* of her first appearance at Drury Lane when she played Portia in "The Merchant of Venice" at £5 a week. On this bill she appeared thus:—

Portia - - - A young lady.

One critic said, "Mrs. Siddons as Portia proved a terrible fiasco, her voice was weak, her movements awkward, her dress was old and patched and in bad taste"; and in *The Gazette and Daily Advertiser* of 30th December, 1775, we read: "But from the specimen she gave there is no room to expect anything but mediocrity. Her figure and face, though agreeable are nothing striking. Her voice—that great requisite of all public speakers—is far from being favourable to her progress as an actress. It is clear she possesses a monotony not to be got rid of. There is also a vulgarity in her tones ill calculated to sustain that line in a theatre she has at first held forth in."

I must include the end of this review, because I think it sums up the mentality of the critic. It says, "Lancelot was pleasantly and indeed chastely acted by Mr. Parsons." "Chaste" Mr. Parsons has vanished chastely into obscurity.

During this season we hear that she played one or two other characters with a similar result, there is no doubt she was a failure. Then she had the opportunity of playing Queen Anne to Garrick's Richard III and one can imagine the over-anxiety, the desire to satisfy herself and her manager, the result was this anxiety completely overpowered her, and

* This can be seen in the Gabrielle Enthoven collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum with many other items relative to her career and of great interest and some of her letters, 92 engravings all in various characters and poses. I was very interested to note that the same dress was used in many plays, for entirely different characters, so they evidently did not always change their wardrobe with the play.

the critics again pronounced the young actress a failure. They said she had best return to the country, as the size of those theatres were better suited to her *feeble voice!* That voice which became so powerful and tragic in quality, was to frighten shop-assistants when she asked for simple articles as well as electrify thousands of playgoers. The critics' advice would now be reversed because to-day theatres are bigger in the provinces than they are in London.

It has been said that Garrick only engaged her in order to smother her talent, that he was anxious no one else should exploit a personality which might rival his own. This seems to me absurd. He must have believed in her otherwise why did he at once give her important parts? We know he was not such a fool as to endanger a production by risking a poor presentation of a leading character, also he secretly declared that he was positive she "possessed tragic powers sufficient to delight and electrify the public."

I think myself that he took an instinctive personal dislike to her. He may, though fully realizing her powers, have felt he could not work with her—a thing that frequently occurs to-day when temperaments jar on one another. She perhaps felt this for she inferred that his influence stultified her, she could not do her best, indeed we are told she said: "Instead of doing me common justice . . . he rather depreciated my talents." And Horace Walpole explained to the Countess of Ossory, a little later, when Mrs. Siddons was famous, that she had complained that "Garrick did nothing but put her out; that he told her she moved her right hand when it should have been her left, etc. In short," she said, "I found I must not shade the tip of my nose." She had personality and was admired or disliked, never tolerated. She had determination and temperament, she believed in herself and undoubtedly resented interference or guidance. She knew what she could do and how she could best do it.

We hear that Reynolds thought Sarah Siddons and Garrick rather alike in appearance, perhaps they may have been something alike in temperament and like does not always go well with like, at least not in the theatrical profession.

It was most certainly adverse criticism which drove her back to the provinces, no one could have kept her at Drury Lane with the flood of adverse criticism which her appearance had created. She might easily have died artistically at this time, for no artist can survive without some encouragement and appreciation.

I like to think it was the generous appreciation of yet another artist, Henderson, which gave her renewed belief in the value of her work. He happened to be in Birmingham when she was playing and after visiting the local theatre, wrote to Palmer of the Bath Theatre in

a great state of excitement, he said he had discovered "an actress who never had an equal, nor would she have a superior." He advised Palmer to engage her immediately, but Palmer's company was full and she had to await another opportunity. John Palmer was a chandler, but he had artistic leanings, the result was he built the first theatre in Bath, in 1750, and he did eventually engage Sarah Siddons at the salary of £3 a week, but this was not until two years after Henderson's first recommendation, not until Henderson himself got to Bath and probably insisted upon her engagement. If an artist does believe in another he or she will move heaven and hell to get that artist recognition. She was then twenty-three and under Palmer's management she gained her first success.

Sarah made her first appearance in "The Provoked Husband" by Vanbrugh. She herself gives us a very excellent account of her engagement: "I now made an engagement at Bath. There my talents and industry were encouraged by the greatest indulgence, and I may say, with some admiration. Tragedies, which had been almost banished, again resumed their proper interest; but still I had the mortification of being obliged to personate many subordinate characters in comedy, the first being by contract, in the possession of another lady. To this I was obliged to submit, or to forfeit a part of my salary, which was only three pounds a week. Tragedies were now becoming more and more fashionable. This was favourable to my cast of powers; and whilst I laboured hard I began to earn a distinct and flattering reputation. Hard labour indeed it was, for, after the rehearsal at Bath, and on Monday evening, I had to go and act at Bristol (where Mr. Palmer owned a theatre) on the evening of the same day, and reaching Bath again, after a drive of twelve miles, I was obliged to represent some fatiguing part there on the Tuesday evening. Meanwhile I was gaining private friends as well as public favour; and my industry and perseverance were indefatigable. When I recollect all this labour of mind and body, I wonder that I had strength and courage to support it, interrupted as I was by the cares of a mother, and by the childish sports of my little ones, who were often most unwillingly hushed to silence, from interrupting their mother's studies."

Sheridan, who had settled in Bath, was persuaded to go and see this young actress; he found, to his astonishment, that she was the same actress who had made so little impression on him in "The Runaway" at Drury Lane, but, nevertheless, though he now realised her great gift, which he had failed to see before, he liked her personally as little as Garrick had done.

Bath was at this time a centre of fashion and the arts, and Sarah Siddons was soon acclaimed a great actress. Her success was electric. One of her devotees was the beautiful and fascinating Duchess of

Devonshire, and it was largely through her influence that Sarah was invited to return to Drury Lane. A benefit performance was now arranged for Sarah, and on the night of May 21st, 1792, she gave her farewell performance to Bath. The tragedy chosen was called "The Distressed Mother," and at the close of the performance Mrs. Siddons recited what she called a "Poetical Piece" in which she explained to the audience her reasons for leaving Bath. It was reported that this poem was her own composition, but I do not believe it—I should not like to believe that she was responsible for such poor stuff.

Half way through Sarah's recitation Master Henry, Miss Sally and Miss Maria Siddons, who had been hidden in their mother's dressing-room, were led on to the stage, and Mrs. Siddons declaimed these lines, which, one feels, would have served a Pantomime Queen better than a Tragic Queen:—

These are the moles that bear me from your side
Where I was rooted—where I could have died.
Stand forth ye elves and plead your mother's cause
Ye magnets whose soft influence draws
Me from a point where every gentle breeze
Wafted my bark to happiness and ease—
Sends me adventurous on a larger main,
In hopes that you may profit by my gain.
Have I been hasty?—Am I then to blame;
Answer all ye who own a parent's name?
Thus have I tried; you with an untaught muse
Who of your favour still most
That you for classic learning will receive
My soul's best wishes which I freely give—
For polished periods round and touched with art.

(To be continued)

In our "Actress-Manageress" series we shall conclude the Sarah Siddons' article in the May issue, which will be followed in June by Dusé.

THE STORY OF CULPEPER HOUSE

by

MRS. C. F. LEYEL

THE Society of Herbalists is the offspring of my book "The Magic of Herbs." When Culpeper House started as a little bright green shop in Baker Street eight years ago, it made an immediate appeal to a garden-loving but city-bound public. The very marks on the bottles and barrels and jars—Melilot, Comfrey, Lovage, Marjoram, Rosemary, Basil, Valerian, Rue—struck a lyrical note among the omnibuses that is as old as England and yet as fresh as the spring daffodils.

Herbalism revived: it had never really been dead, but though it had flourished quietly but healthily enough abroad, and in the north, the midlands and Wales, in London at any rate it had lingered or lurked in musty little shops in out of the way corners, and back streets in a muddling, apologetic, furtive way. Culpeper House was as gay and green as new paint could make it. We were flattered but not surprised when Mr. E. V. Lucas, one of our earliest visitors, described the shop as "radiant and alluring." What did rather take us by surprise was the re-action of the London public.

Invited in to buy scents, and lotions and creams made of cowslips and elderflowers, roses, lilies and quinces, Thyme and Pine Baths, and Balm, the public in effect, said: "Herbs? Certainly!"

"Excellent herbs had our fathers of old,

"Excellent herbs to ease their pain,"

and promptly demanded cures for their coughs, and aches and every ill that happened to be afflicting them.

It is the medical side of the work of Culpeper House that is astonishing. Some of the first cases cured were so drastic that without any advertisement people poured in, in an unending stream to "try herbs" for chronic complaints that no other treatment had been able to alleviate.

The cures seem startling to-day, for life has grown so elaborate that it is difficult for most people to realise that such simple wild flowers as celandine, daisies, speedwell, silverweed, plantains, clover, eyebright, cranesbill—to name only a familiar few, have the medicinal properties that do in fact appertain to them; or that rhododendrons, magnolias, camellias, hydrangeas, and water lilies have most practical therapeutic uses.

This knowledge, the oldest science in the world, has come down to us in a practically unbroken tradition from the ancient Sumerian and Assyrian civilizations.

Thousands of years ago the same herbs were used in the same way for the same purposes.

FRANCIS LEDWIDGE ANTHOLOGY

FRANCIS LEDWIDGE is one of our sweetest singers in verse, yet he is little known. Unless you are lucky enough to get a second-hand copy of his poems it is almost impossible to obtain them. One of the things I would like to do, if I were rich, is to have a reprint of his lovely work. I find a certain similarity between Keats, who worked in an apothecary's shop, and Francis Ledwidge, the Irish grocer's assistant. Both these poets died young, one killed by disease and the other by the machine of war.

There is an unsatisfied yearning in most poets—they see beauty passionately, they realise suffering acutely, their joy is in equal proportions, they ever desire to express that which is just beyond words, but they get nearer to it than any other men. Ledwidge would never have been heard of had it not been for another poet, Dunsany. He received Ledwidge's poems first of all in an old copy book with mistakes in grammar and spelling; that was the beginning.

Dunsany writes: "but out of these and many similar errors there arose continually, like a mountain sheer out of marshes, that easy fluency of shapely lines which is now so noticeable in all that he writes; that and sudden glimpses of the fields that he seems at times to bring so near to one that one exclaims, 'Why, that is how Meath looks,' or 'It is just like that along the Boyne in April,' quite taken by surprise by familiar things; for none of us knows, till the poets point them out, how beautiful things are close about us.

"There is scarcely a smile of Spring or a sigh of Autumn that is not reflected here, scarcely a phase of the large benedictions of Summer; even of Winter he gives us clear glimpses sometimes, albeit mournfully, remembering Spring.

"In the red west the twisted moon is low,
And on the bubbles there are half-lit stars.
Music and twilight: and the deep blue flow
Of water: and the watching fire of Mars.
The deep fish slipping through the moonlit bars
Make death a thing of sweet dreams,—"

"What a Summer's evening is here.

"And this is a Summer's night in a much longer poem that I have not included in this selection, a summer's night seen by two lovers:

"The large moon rose up queenly as a flower
Charmed by some Indian pipes. A hare went by
A snipe above them circled in the sky."

"And elsewhere he writes, giving us the mood and picture of Autumn in a single line:

"And somewhere all the wandering birds have flown."

"To every poet is given the revelation of some living things so intimate that he speaks, when he speaks of it, as an ambassador speaking for his sovereign; with Homer it was the heroes, with Ledwidge it is the small birds that sing, but in particular the blackbird, whose cause he champions against all other birds almost with a vehemence such as that with which men discuss whether Mr. — M.P., or his friend the Right Honourable — is really the greater ruffian. This is how he speaks of the blackbird in one of his earliest poems; he was sixteen when he wrote it."

He goes on to tell us how Ledwidge enlisted in his old regiment and that he soon earned a Lance Corporal's stripe. He writes: "All his future books lie on the knees of the gods, may they not be the only readers."

Still later he writes of him: "He has left behind him verses of great beauty, simple rural lyrics and may be something of an anodyne for this stricken age. If ever an age needed beautiful little songs our age needs them; and I know few songs more peaceful and happy, or better suited to soothe the scars on the mind of those who have looked on certain places, of which the prophecy in the gospels seems no more than an ominous hint when it speaks of the abomination of desolation."

Though the war revelled and wallowed in destruction around him, Francis Ledwidge stayed true to his inspiration.

It is impossible in a few verses to give an idea of the fresh beauty of his verse. In every poem there is something one wishes to remember—some new and lovely way of putting those things we see every day often with such blind eyes. I hope this short Anthology will give readers something of the pleasure it has given me to choose it for them.

—NANCY PRICE.

DESIRE IN SPRING

I love the cradle songs the mothers sing
In lonely places when the twilight drops,
The slow endearing melodies that bring
Sleep to the weeping lids; and, when she stops,
I love the roadside birds upon the tops
Of dusty hedges in a world of Spring.

And when the sunny rain drips from the edge
Of midday wind, and meadows lean one way,
And a long whisper passes thro' the sedge,
Beside the broken water let me stay,
While these old airs upon my memory play,
And silent changes colour up the hedge.

GOD'S REMEMBRANCE

There came a whisper from the night to me
Like music of the sea, a mighty breath
From out the valley's dewy mouth, and Death
Shook his lean bones, and every coloured tree
Wept in the fog of morning. From the town
Of nests among the branches one old crow
With gaps upon his wings flew far away.
And, thinking of the golden summer glow,
I heard a blackbird whistle half his lay
Among the spinning leaves that slanted down.

And I who am a thought of God's now long
Forgotten in His Mind, and desolate
With other dreams long over, as a gate
Singing upon the wind the anvil song,
Sang of the Spring when first He dreamt of me
In that old town all hills and signs that creak :—
And He remembered me as something far
In old imaginations, something weak
With distance, like a little sparking star
Drowned in the lavender of evening sea.

HOME

A burst of sudden wings at dawn,
Faint voices in a dreamy noon,
Evenings of mist and murmurings,
And nights with rainbows of the moon.

And through these things a wood-way dim,
And waters dim, and slow sheep seen
On uphill paths that wind away
Through summer sounds and harvest green.

This is a song a robin sang
This morning on a broken tree,
It was about the little fields
That call across the world to me.

EXTRACT FROM A DREAM OF ARTEMIS

God, who lights the little stars,
And over night the white dew spills.
Whose hand doth move the season's cars
And clouds that mock our pointed hills.
Whose bounty fills the cow-trod wold,
And fills with bread the warm brown sod.
Who brings us sleep, where we grow old
'Til sleep and age together nod.

Reach out a beam and touch the pain
A heart has oozed thro' all the years.
Your pity dries the morning's tears
And fills the world with joy again!

SOLILOQUY

When I was young I had a care
Lest I should cheat me of my share
Of that which make it sweet to strive
For life, and dying still survive,
A name in sunshine written higher
Than lark or poet dare aspire.

But I grew weary doing well,
Beside, 'twas sweeter in that hell,
Down with the loud banditti people
Who robbed the orchards, climbed the steeple
For jackdaws' eggs and made the cock
Crow ere 'twas daylight on the clock.
I was so very bad the neighbours
Spoke of me at their daily labours.
And now I'm drinking wine in France,
The helpless child of circumstance.
To-morrow will be loud with war,
How will I be accounted for?

It is too late now to retrieve
A fallen dream, too late to grieve
A name unmade, but not too late
To thank the gods for what is great;
A keen-edged sword, a soldier's heart,
Is greater than a poet's art.
And greater than a poet's fame
A little grave that has no name.

THE COMING POET

"Is it far to the town?" said the poet,
As he stood 'neath the groaning vane,
And the warm lights shimmered silver
On the skirts of the windy rain.
"There are those who call me," he pleaded,
"And I'm wet and travel sore."
But nobody spoke from the shelter.
And he turned from the bolted door.
And they wait in the town for the poet
With stones at the gates, and jeers,
But away on the wolds of distance
In the blue of a thousand years
He sleeps with the age that knows him,
In the clay of the unborn, dead,
Rest at his weary insteps,
Fame at his crumbled head.

EVENING IN ENGLAND

From its blue vase the rose of evening drops.
Upon the streams its petals float away.
The hills all blue with distance hide their tops
In the dim silence falling on the grey.
A little wind said "Hush!" and shook a spray
Heavy with May's white crop of opening bloom,
A silent bat went dipping up the gloom.
Night tells her rosary of stars full soon,
They drop from out her dark hand to her knees.
Upon a silhouette of woods the moon
Leans on one horn as if beseeching ease
From all her changes which have stirred the seas.
Across the ears of Toil Rest throws her veil,
I and a marsh bird only make a wail.

THE RESURRECTION

My true love still is all that's fair,
She is flower and blossom blowing free,
For all her silence lying there
She sings a spirit song to me.
New lovers seek her in her bower,
The rain, the dew, the flying wind,
And tempt her out to be a flower,
Which throws a shadow on my mind.

WAITING

A strange old woman on the wayside sate,
Looked far away and shook her head and sighed.
And when anon, close by a rusty gate
Loud on the warm winds cried,
She lifted up her eyes and said, "You're late."
Then shook her head and sighed.

And evening found her thus, and night in state
Walked thro' the starlight, and a heavy tide
Followed the yellow moon around her wait,
And morning walked in wide.
She lifted up her eyes and said, "You're late."
Then shook her head and sighed.

THE SHADOW PEOPLE

Old lame Bridget doesn't hear
Fairy music in the grass
When the gloaming's on the mere
And the shadow people pass:
Never hears their slow grey feet
Coming from the village street
Just beyond the parson's wall,
Where the clover globes are sweet
And the mushroom's parasol
Opens in the moonlit rain.
Every night I hear them call
From their long and merry train.
Old lame Bridget says to me,
"It is just your fancy, child."
She cannot believe I see
Laughing faces in the wild,
Hands that twinkle in the sedge
Bowing at the water's edge
Where the finny minnows quiver,
Shaping on a blue wave's ledge
Bubble foam to sail the river.
And the sunny hands to me
Beckon ever, beckon ever.
Oh! I would be wild and free
And with the shadow people be.

SPRING

Once more the lark with song and speed
Cleaves through the dawn, his hurried bars
Fall, like the flute of Gannymede
Twirling and whistling from the stars.

The primrose and the daffodil
Surprise the valleys, and wild thyme
Is sweet on every little hill,
When lambs come down at folding time.

In every wild place now is heard
The magpie's noisy house, and through
The mingled tunes of many a bird
The ruffled wood-dove's gentle coo.

Sweet by the river's noisy brink
The water-lily bursts her crown,
The kingfisher comes down to drink
Like rainbow jewels falling down.

And when the blue and grey entwine
The daisy shuts her golden eye,
And peace wraps all those hills of mine
Safe in my dearest memory.

MAY

She leans across an orchard gate somewhere,
Bending from out the shadows to the light,
A dappled spray of blossom in her hair
Studded with dew-drops lovely from the night
She smiles to think how many hearts she'll smite
With beauty ere her robes fade from the lawn,
She hears the robin's cymbals with delight,
The skylark in the rosebush of the dawn.

For her the cowslip rings its yellow bell,
For her the violets watch with wide blue eyes.
The wandering cuckoo doth its clear name tell
Thro' the white mist of blossom where she lies
Painting a sunset for the western skies.
You'd know her by her smile and by her tear
And by the way the swift and martin flies,
Where she is south of these wild days and drear.

BEHIND THE CLOSED EYE

I walk the old frequented ways
That wind around the tangled braes,
I live again the sunny days
Ere I the city knew.
And scenes of old again are born,
The woodbine lassoing the thorn,
And drooping Ruth-like in the corn
The poppies weep the dew.
Above me in their hundred schools
The magpies bend their young to rules,
And like an apron full of jewels
The dewy cobweb swings.
And frisking in the stream below
The troutlets make the circles flow,
And the hungry crane doth watch them grow
As a smoker does his rings.
Above me smokes the little town,
With its whitewashed walls and roofs of brown
And its octagon spire toned smoothly down
As the holy minds within.
And wondrous, impudently sweet,
Half of him passion, half conceit,
The blackbird calls adown the street
Like the piper of Hamelin.
I hear him, and I feel the lure
Drawing me back to the lonely moor,
I'll go and close the mountains' door
On the city's strife and din.

EXTRACT FROM A MEMORY

No, not more silent does the spider stitch
A cobweb on the fern, nor fogdrops fall
On sheaves of harvest when the night is rich
With moonbeams, than the spirits of delight
Walk the dark passages of Memory's hall.
We feel them not, but in the wastes of night
We hear their low-voiced mediums, and we rise
To wrestle old Regrets, to see old faces,
To meet and part in old tryst-trodden places
With breaking heart, and emptying of eyes.

WHAT THRILLS ME IN MY PROFESSION

by

K. KIRTON

THERE is a song by Bach, the words of which begin "Stone beyond all jewels shining." I would like to carve these words on an unshaped stone because every stone of good quality contains within itself those things "which are not beautiful relatively like other things, but are beautiful always, naturally and absolutely." Every shape which ever has been, or ever will be is already in the stone, waiting, not to be created, but to be discovered. The "order, symmetry and clarity" of Aristotle's definition of beauty, the "wholeness, harmony and radiance" of James Joyce's.

I had an interesting experience some time ago which made me wonder how much art is a matter of discovering truths rather than of creating something new.

I was modelling a head of Christ, and every evening when I had finished for the day I found the face had a curiously prominent and enormously strong chin, too large I thought, and every morning I cut it down and started it again. This happened a great many times until finally I got it the size I wanted. Some weeks later I opened *The Times* and there, to my astonishment was a picture of a faded portrait of the face that kept trying to come on the model, an unusual looking face with a great projecting chin. I read the article to see what the picture was, and found that it was a copy of one of the greatest and most jealously guarded treasures of the Roman Catholic Church—the earliest known portrait of Christ. It is so old that it is thought possible that it was painted from a description given by St. Peter.

I suppose one of the greatest thrills in carving is the knowledge that in the stone is the face of Christ, the Virgin and everything that Pheidias or Michael Angelo would have carved if they had had time; as well as every strange shape of abstract beauty that will be produced by the great sculptors of the future.

Second to this, is the wonder of the extraordinary age of the stones. The harder stones such as granite and agate may have been created while the earth was still in a volcanic condition. I have just opened a block of African Wonder Stone and in it is the petrified bole of a tree still showing plainly the larger and smaller concentric rings, caused by the wet and dry summers of some incredibly distant age.

I think stones develop their characteristics very much the same way that people do. The soft chalky stones were created by being comfortably silted up by water. The hard and more beautiful marbles are these same stones after they have been subjected to great heat and pressure.

The hardest and most beautiful were created by fire, while the brilliant polish that these take is produced by caustic acids.

The finer stones have many of the qualities of well-bred animals, and are difficult and delicate to handle at first, but later on respond in quite a different way from the softer and commoner kinds.

I think the finished polish of a fine stone is like the courtesy of a fine character, it is something which is not put on from the outside like the wax, with which inferior stones are polished, it is inherent in the stone itself, and is the result of all that the stone has gone through to become compact and fine enough to be capable of that polish.

There is a shape running through the vegetable and animal kingdoms, the shape of the Greek letter ψ Psi—the first letter of the word “psyche” the soul. It is shown where some new kind of consciousness develops. It is very strongly shown in tulips in early bud. I used to think tulips in bud, stretching up their leaves and heads to the sun, waiting for it to bring them their beautiful colours were like the children who waited for Christ when they said “Blessed is He that cometh.” A Greek statue called “The Praying Boy” is standing in this position and it is interesting that in the animal kingdom only a human being can hold this position, that is with knees braced, the arms held above the head, and the eyes looking up. The monkeys can take the position for an instant but cannot hold it. The muscles which hold this position are the latest developed in the evolutionary sequence.

Some people go to Exhibitions of Art without the slightest idea of what the painter or sculptor is aiming at, and thinking only of themselves, rather like a man who was heard saying, as he looked at Rodin’s “Finger of God,”—“Well, I think it’s rotten, it’s not a bit like *my* finger.”

Looking at a work of art the questions are not “Are its fingers like my fingers, and is it like me?” But “What is the ideal at which this sculptor is aiming—has he got behind the appearance of things to some kind of spiritual essence—has he succeeded in any measure in getting into his work wholeness, harmony and radiance?”

BUDDY’S TAILWAG

I was staying for the week-end with Lord Bugbear. His Lordship came to me one afternoon in a state of great agitation and told me that his tenants were saying that he was not fit to feed with the pigs. I told him that he should not worry, he should assure himself that he was!

THE ART OF ACTING

by

ESMÉ PERCY

DEFINITIONS are seldom satisfying and nearly always devitalizing. What is acting? Shall I say the incarnation of the dramatic vision and conception. The actor's art is an illuminative impersonation and presentation of men and women in all their activities, intellectual, moral, emotional, physical. It is often urged that acting is not an art at all, but, at best, skilful interpretation. I most emphatically disagree. All art is interpretation. The actor uses the human soul and body as the sculptor stone, the painter colour, the musician sound—but the actor has the drawback of the medium he uses, himself, the lord of creation, but the slave of all the ills that flesh is heir to, and death. However, thanks to the screen and gramophone, the tragic ephemeral nature of the actor's art has, to a great extent been conquered. But acting, as an art, is in a precarious state. It needs the utmost fostering and unless we tend it carefully, protect and guard it jealously, it will soon be but a memory. Actors are not made, they are born. I do not blush to utter this platitude because we have reached a stage when, owing to the short sighted policy or entire lack of policy of the powers that be, nearly everybody is convinced that he "could and if he would" become an actor. Above all an actor must be gifted with the power of expression. He must be able to play with his thoughts, imagination, emotions, and bring them within reach of the spectator through the medium of his voice, eye, poise, gestures. He must be capable of projecting the character he is portraying so as to elicit a complete and harmonious response in the consciousness of the spectator, be it a vast audience, a scattered few or just himself only; that is, his ego as a critical spectator of his own creation. An actor should have a voice of immense range and variety. Though some very considerable actors have had poor voices, they have always been telling voices. In fact I would say it is the voice that is the essential difference between the great and the ordinary actor.

Fortunately, since the drama uses the whole human race as its *dramatis personæ*, at this stage of human development, we need not all be Venuses or Apollos! His memory should be prodigious, his vitality unimpaired; all this should be his birthright. But the art of acting consists in the co-ordination and discipline of his mental and physical being. To suit the action to the word is an easy matter; to suit the whole attitude of body to the attire and the word is not so simple. To be equally at home in a Roman Toga, doublet and hose, in fact in the sartorial decrees of each particular age; to have sufficient literary flair to suit one's delivery to each particular author; to do nothing to disturb the harmony of the whole play however real such action may seem; never to be out of

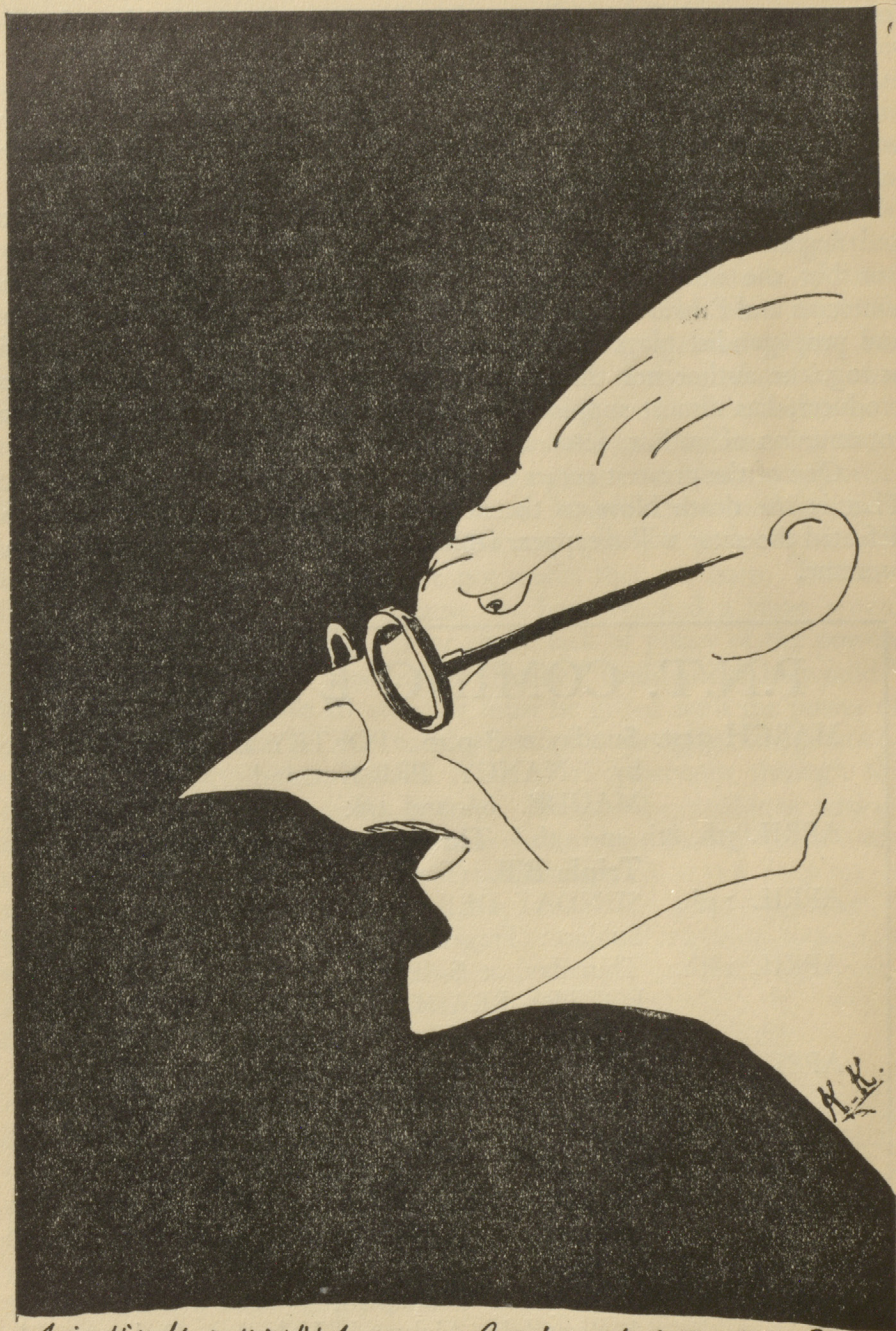
the play though silent; to know how to make an effective entrance and exit, yet never getting outside the truth of the character, and never to lose consciousness of the audience. The late Coquelin Aîné, whom I considered a perfect actor, used to say under his breath, referring to the audience—"now I will make them cry," "now I am going to make them laugh"—he played with the emotions of his audience like a conjuror with a pack of cards, in fact the actor should have much of the conjuror in him.

So-called realistic acting is often but the refuge of the incompetent and negative. The photographic play of the beginning of the century was but the inevitable reaction of the machine made plays of late Victorian and Edwardian days. The advance of the purely literary drama and propagandist plays has done much to minimize the importance of acting, the author nor the actor, became the chief person latterly, the producer, has almost supplanted both. The ideal state is the complex communion of author, actor and producer.

One of the greatest curses of the modern stage is the casting to type. That is *the* death blow to the actor's art and unless this is speedily defeated the actor will disappear from the stage and the screen will reign supreme.

P.N.T. COMING EVENTS.

- MARCH 31st. Sunday at **3 p.m.** POETRY and MELODY
by NANCY PRICE—and CHARLES
MAUDE. 6/- and 3/6.
- APRIL 7th, 8th and 9th. **Three special performances of
Triple Bill.** (For particulars see Patchwork.)
- APRIL 14th. SUNDAY DEBATE at **3 o'clock.**
Subject: Tragedy as an inspiration.
- APRIL 18th. Thursday, at **5-45 p.m.**
POETRY READING: NANCY PRICE will
read from the New Testament.
- APRIL 19th. GOOD FRIDAY at **4 o'clock.**
A Reading of John Masefield's play, "Good
Friday."
- APRIL 22nd. EXTRA MATINEE EASTER MONDAY of
"LADY PRECIOUS STREAM." No per-
formances on Thursday and Friday of Holy
Week.
- APRIL 28th. SUNDAY at **8-30 p.m.**
A Recital by Aleksandr Helmann. Ordinary
Theatre Prices, Members half price. (See
Patchwork.)



Min Hils! Min Hils! Where are my Confounded Spectacles?!

PATCHWORK

Special Performances.—Although the receipts of **Lady Precious Stream** have gone down during Lent the drop in the Theatre has been universal, and we have such good bookings after Easter we do not feel justified in withdrawing the play. Therefore for the Members' further interest we are putting on three special performances of four One-Act Plays: **Sunday, April 7th at 8-30; Monday, April 8th, Matinee at 2-30; and Tuesday, April 9th, Matinee at 2-30.**

The programme will include:

Plays by St. John Ervine,
and Lady Gregory.

I particularly want ALEKSANDR HELMANN'S recital in this theatre on **Sunday, April 28th, at 8-30 p.m.**, to be a big success, and hope the Members will help to make it so.

Poetry Readings.—It is our policy to actively encourage the reading of poetry. **Horace Shipp** read his own poems on Thursday, March 21st, at 5-45 p.m., and all who were there were full of the refreshment and pleasure they had been given, and the P.N.T. is grateful to him.

It is our hope that Members will avail themselves of these readings **the third Thursday in every month at 5-45.**

Though these poetry readings are open to Members and their friends they are reminded that the collections must cover the cost of light and of the extra hands compulsory whenever the Theatre is open.

Lady Precious Stream.—I have heard from one of our members that she has already been sixteen times to "Lady Precious Stream" and hopes to come another sixteen. She tells me it was suggested to her she was evidently insuring against fire! I suggest to our members that they might consider insuring this continual water supply.

Donations received from the Annual Dinner. Total:
£88 10s. 6d.

Donations received from a Hampstead Drawing-room Meeting. Total: £146 3s. od. From this Members will appreciate the value of Drawing-room Meetings. It is hoped that further meetings will be arranged during April and May, so that a five thousand Membership may be attained. If this Membership is reached and **every Member rejoins and brings one other**, the desired ten thousand Members for the opening of the P.N.T. year in October will be gained. This would enable a Theatre to be taken for a longer period on better terms. As with all work

for Art in this country, the difficulty is to overcome apathy and to make theatre-lovers realise that some definite effort on their part is needed, to help the Theatre to exist in this time of greatest difficulty, for never has it had to face such rivals as at present. The Theatre is of inestimable importance in the life of a Nation, and so our Members are urged to press on in their efforts to increase the membership, subscription **now 3s. 6d. for the half year.** As it is so apt we quote from an article that is endeavouring to overcome the apathy in pictorial art: "We therefore beg our subscribers not to slacken their efforts to find those who are not only in sympathy with our aims, but ready also to stake the ruinous sum of three shillings and sixpence on the principles with which they sympathise. This is less easy than it at first appears. There are so many people who talk in a gushing way about art and yet care not a farthing for it—much less three and six. They will invite us for a week-end and spend many three and sixes on us; but asked for that sum in the cause of art they weigh up what advantage would be in it for them and decide that it would be better to spend it on a lunch or add it to the price of a pair of shoes. But we beseech our helpers not themselves to become apathetic on this account. There are hundreds of thousands who would rejoice to know of 'Art and Reason,' and only those who know it already will find them."

Membership

February: 506. March (to date): 149.

The poem "Down Downe" was sent to us by one of the Stage Staff at the Duke of York's. I think our Members will agree that it is very well worth while printing.

DOWN DOWNE.

The flowers and trees
Coloured and tall,
That move in the breeze,
I love them all.
Gold and silver light,
The moon and the sun,
Each day and night,
Their toil never done.
Storm clouds and shadows;
The wind and the rain;
The thirsty meadow,
Life for the grain.
There's a shady arcade
Nearby a pool;
The forest and glade
So fragrantly cool.
I lay and dream
In this peaceful domain—
This countryside green—
By footpath and lane.
The clouds in the sky,
Floating above;
Watch them sail by,
Or scarcely move.
'Pon inclined plain recline
The creatures that neigh;
There's shelter for kine
Near stacks of bronzed hay.
Columns of scattered hedgerows
Make a natural boundary
For fields, where scarecrows
Reign with calm complacency.
At sunset there's a hush
Oft times broken by a hoot;
From a copse or bush
Swiftly the owl will shoot.
Ah, what a beauteous scene is there;
The moon's soft light is shed;
Tall firs and poplars form a screen
For everything going to bed.
The land's harrowed ruts,
Spring to the Fall,
Blackberries and woodnuts—
I love them all.

—*Sidney A. Knapman.*

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- (1) To come at least once to every play.
- (2) To enrol Members as often as possible.
- (3) To wear their badge. It provokes enquiry and is our best advertisement.
- (4) To see that by making a contribution their name is either in the Endowment Book, which is honoured by the names of H.R.H. the Duke and Duchess of York, or in the Brick Book kept in the foyer of the Theatre. Many bricks are necessary to stabilise this theatre, and if these bricks are laid with affection and enthusiasm, it will endure.

Date.....

To Hon Sec., EDITH NEVILLE,
17, Great Russell Mansions, W.C.1.

*I should like to become a member of the People's National Theatre, and enclose P.O. for 3/6 for a half-yearly Membership Card to October 1st, 1935.
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Name

Title and Initials

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Membership No.

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