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done to further improve it, the position of the masses is better than it once was, and the difference between classes is nothing like so great as formerly. The present generation of middle-class parents of young children are the people who have difficulties with which to contend. In spite of Board of Trade Returns and other statistics, it is the middle-class which has been the least prosperous of recent years. The income of the average middle-class man has been less of recent years than it was before. This state of affairs would continue under Free Trade. It is not the working class which has suffered, because it has protected itself by organisation. The average middle-class man has not been able to "afford" to have more than one or two children. The nations which succeed in increasing their birth-rate will be the nations to prosper after the war. . . . If we do not materially increase our birth-rate we shall be seriously handicapped. Proposals are now being made to reform our divorce and marriage laws, but they will take a little time to develop. I submit that the first step to be taken is for an Act to be passed giving the right to forthwith re-marry to all persons who have been "separated," in any way, by decrees or orders. Will those in favour of that course being immediately adopted do one of the following things: (1) Send me a postcard supporting that proposal; or (2) send such a postcard to Mrs. Seaton-Tiedeman, Secretary, The Divorce Law Reform Union, 19, Buckingham Street, Strand, W.C.; or (3) send such a postcard to their local M.P.s, whether or not they are bachelors?

This point has surely been discussed enough to be dealt with at once. This is neither a political nor a religious question—it is a national question of great importance to be dealt with without further delay in order to begin to increase the birth-rate.

To avoid any possible misunderstanding I do not want any money sent to me, I only want communications. If anyone desires to assist financially, contributions will be gratefully acknowledged by Mrs. Seaton-Tiedeman, and any money so contributed will be usefully employed. Even small donations will be welcome for her Literature Fund.—Yours, etc.,

A. E. BALE.

45, Sudbourne Road, Brixton Hill, S.W.
August 5th.

WAR PENSIONS

To the Editor of THE NEW STATESMAN.

SIR,—The case, in your admirable article on War Pensions, against "the chaos of overlapping and duplicate authorities" is quite unanswerable, but I confess I find your new Minister for Pensions rather unspeakable. The Statutory Committee must, by all means, be merged, but surely, as far as Army pensions are concerned, in no one better than the Secretary of State for War.

In the first place, your tale of War Office mismanagement does not convince me. The War Office must interpret the regulations laid down by Parliament, and cannot be blamed if the regulations read otherwise than the soldier "has in many cases been expecting." Presumably, it cannot well continue a soldier's pay and allowances until pension is granted, because pension is not always granted. And certainly, from what is said to and by Mr. Forster in the House of Commons, the Chelsea Hospital Commissioners are not "reluctant to admit that any man is totally disabled." They always give the soldier the benefit of the doubt, and reconsider his case if he appeals. "Reluctance" is not of them.

More convincing, in the second place, are the reasons why the Secretary of State for War should embrace the Statutory Committee. Provided the rates of pension leave nothing for desire, few soldiers for associations' sake would not prefer the Army to pension them. It stimulates their *esprit de corps*. Nor, from the administrative point of view, does it make for economy if the War Office is to know that how many soever soldiers it has, and whatsoever it does with them, it will not have to give them pensions. For one department to spend, and for another to pay, is the first kind of administrative folly.

For once, I would defend the rights of the Secretary of State for War. Few people would weep over the grave of the Statutory Committee. But not a few would weep to see the scarlet of the Chelsea Pensioners changed to policeman's blue.—I am, yours, etc.,

E. H. DAVENPORT.

The Temple, August 8th.

Miscellany

ANTIPHON

The mind of man is a door:
A song will open, or close it.

A song will open, or close it.

Mother of Songs, secret mother,
Sitting by the reeded banks
Of bright waters,
Open, thou, our minds.

Open, thou, our minds.

We see clearly, and not darkly.
The clouds have crowned us
With mitres of understanding.
The ferns have set
Their gold croziers in our hands.
We are shepherds of thoughts.

We are shepherds of thoughts.

Death cannot touch us.
His quiver is arrowless
Against us.
Moon is our breathing,
And sun the beating of our hearts.
We live for ever.

We live for ever.

For ever through time,
And through the life that is not time,
But an endless folding and unfolding.

JOSEPH CAMPBELL.

THE CONVERSION OF SUDERMANN

THERE seem to be a good many people in Germany who, unable to find any satisfactory justification for the war, are content to fall back on the comforting belief that, in some way, it has ennobled the national soul. This optimistic theory, whose chief supporters, it has been noted, are literary gentlemen over military age, has now gained the adherence of Herr Hermann Sudermann. It forms the leading motive of his latest volume of plays.*

Several years before the outbreak of war Sudermann had been summed up by the critics and pigeon-holed as a dramatist having a good stage-technique but no great intellectual or imaginative power or original genius. His plots were always well-knit, his "curtains" perfectly correct; but there was no vitality in his creations; they were merely stage-automata. "The Sardou of German drama" was the hackneyed phrase which concluded almost every criticism. And yet he had managed to acquire an "intellectual" reputation in Germany, and still more in this country.

When Sudermann, on the advice of his friends, turned from writing novels to writing plays, and produced his first drama, *Die Ehre*—an attack on duelling—he was greeted as the forerunner in a new era of the drama. The German

* *Die Entgötterte Welt: Szenische Bilder aus kranker Zeit.* Von Hermann Sudermann. J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, Stuttgart und Berlin.

stage, it should be remembered, was getting rather tired of the sentimentalities and melodrama of Dumas, Sardou and Paul Lindau, and Sudermann's vigorous attack on a Prussian convention was looked upon as a vital piece of work, a turning-point in the history of his art. We know now that his chief merit was that he seized upon the living portions of Ibsen's creations, which had not yet made their way into Germany, and adapted them to German audiences. All Sudermann's works on which his fame as an "intellectual" dramatist rests will be found to contain the stock figures of Ibsen's plays—the emancipated young lady (Magda in *Die Heimat*), the woman of anarchist ideas (Beata in *Es lebe das Leben*), and half-a-score more. Add to these facts the by no means insignificant fact that in the course of his career Sudermann has frequently been under the censor's ban, and it is not difficult to understand how he acquired the reputation which he enjoyed so long.

A few months before the outbreak of war Sudermann published a new play—*Die Lobgesange des Claudius Claudianus*, a dramatised version of the story of the poet Claudian and Stilicho, the Emperor Honorius's military commander, and their final assassination. For Sudermann enthusiasts, those that remained, it seemed to be the end, just as Hauptmann's play, *Das Bogen des Odysseus*, produced at about the same time, seemed to mark the end in the eyes of his supporters. When the war came and all the poets of the German Empire began pouring out their lyrics in thousands, Sudermann, comparatively speaking, remained aloof. The only poem by him which gained any prominence was in notable contrast with the bellicose utterances of his fellow-poets—Hauptmann, Dehmel, Lissauer, and the rest. It began:—

> Whether, O Father in Heaven, we still put our trust in You,
> Or whether You are but the dream of a sacred past,
> See now, we swear to You, Witness of Truth,
> We have not desired it—
> This murder, this world-ending murder,
> Which now, with blood-hot sighs,
> Stamps across the shuddering earth . . .

That has nothing in common with the innumerable poems which appeared in Germany during the first few months of the war, all in praise of war, abstractly considered, breathing belief that at last the great moment had come. Sudermann had not yet perceived the innate ennobling possibilities of the struggle. He was to do this about eighteen months later, in the volume of plays under review.

The dramatists of Germany have not achieved much during the war. They have not been inactive—Ludwig Thoma has written plays, patriotic in tone; Fritz Lienhard has published a mystery-play; Schmidtbonn had a play produced at Berlin, which was blamed by the critics for not being *deutsch* enough; Carl Hauptmann, brother of Gerhardt, out-Phillipsed Stephen Phillips' *Armageddon;* Wedekind (he of all men!) wrote a series of dramatic sketches based on the life of Bismarck. But there was no greatness in any of these, and very little talent. From the literary and dramatic point of view, Sudermann's three plays contained in this volume surpass them all.

The idea underlying this book is expounded in a poem by way of preface. Sudermann wishes to give a picture of the world before the war—a "godless," or better, "undivine" world, immoral, slothful, selfish—so that it may be better realised how great a transformation has been wrought by the war. He asks, What were we? and replies in effect, A divided nation, egoistic, quarrelsome, adulterous, spendthrift. Then he enquires, What are we? and answers, A consecrated nation, self-sacrificing, self-controlled.

> Denket daran immer, immer!
> Sagt es Kind und Kindeskind!
> Was wir waren, sank in Trümmer,
> Ewig blühe, was wir sind!

Now this may be an altogether wrong view; it may indicate that Sudermann is possessed by a fundamentally romantic and pernicious idea of the war. And, after all, in spite of the welcome changes which terrible events have brought about in individuals, it is a rather disquieting thing to find a talented writer speaking complacently of them: "We were attacked," should be the only excuse for this ghastly business. Nevertheless, putting aside Sudermann's deficient sense of reality in this respect, one cannot help acknowledging that he has produced the most noteworthy dramatic work that has appeared in Germany since August, 1914.

The first play is a four-act drama entitled *Die Freundin*. And here at once we meet the old Sudermann. Juliane, the false "friend," whose intrigues ruin three lives, is the "emancipated" young lady we knew so well in *Die Heimat*, with this difference, namely, that Sudermann has now taken sides against her. She is no longer the misunderstood heroine, but a type of Germany's decadence—the decadence which prevailed until a great war came to purge the land. And when Sudermann, with his customary desire for a happy ending, makes the play end in Juliane's discomfiture, we perceive that the transformation is complete; from being a tilter at convention he has become the firm upholder of social morality. Thus does he usher in the newer, purer age in which Ibsenesque heroines are taboo.

There is no such artificiality about the next play, and it is by so much superior to the first. It is the story of a Berlin city councillor's intrigues to get a *Volkstheater* built with the object of making his son director. The old man's scheme is defeated by the efforts of various people—another councillor, who is jealous because his plot of land has not been selected; and a picture-gallery owner (with a preference for Futurist paintings; note Sudermann's scorn of the moderns!) who wants his mistress to be given a conspicuous place in the management. And the play ends as it should, with meanness and decadence triumphant. One or two minor incidents are not quite convincing; it is difficult, for example, to believe that so drastic a means as a world-war was needed to do away with the immorality of bare-foot dancing or that, in pre-war Germany, Frenchified conversation always went hand in hand with decadence. Sudermann seems to have joined the "*echt deutsch*" devotees, to whom Stefan George is now repugnant—for the simple reason that he imitated Mallarmé. But these are small blemishes. The play, as a whole, is dramatically sincere and moving. The scene where Brandstetter, the ambitious and intriguing old councillor, meets Friese, his opponent, and each gives his view of modern Germany, is worked to a climax in the best Sudermann style.

> *Friese*: Germany has become too narrow; that's what it is. Infinite energy is lying unused. . . . And so men play and act the æsthete and speculate and turn to knavery just to get more air. . . . May God give us a good storm soon, which will scatter everything.
>
> *Brandstetter*: I see nothing but splendour and prosperity. The cities are growing. The fountains are rippling in the market-places. Halls and palaces are shooting up from the ground and statues stand round about. The people crowd into the theatres and laugh or cry just as the poet wills. Scholars and wise men bring us new miracles every day. Millions of chimneys are smoking throughout the land and even the poor have abundance.
>
> *Friese*: So that's what you see? Indeed?

It is obvious that Sudermann's sympathies are with the first speaker; Treitschke's doctrine—"the living God will see to it," &c.—seems to have gained a new supporter.

The last play in the volume, which bears the satirical title of *Das Höhere Leben*, is a somewhat farcical comedy of light, amorous intrigue and fashionable fatuity. Except for the character of Von Seltzer, an inane person who falls in love easily and is inclined to moralise in a rather

amusing manner, there is nothing particularly remarkable in the play. It is a capably written *Sittenstück*—that is all.

And that, perhaps, is the chief interest of the volume as a whole. In it Sudermann has returned to the form in which his principal dramatic triumphs were made—the satirical comedy of manners. As in *Sodom's Ende*, *Die Heimat* and his first dazzling successes, he has used the play to castigate false ideas and sham moralities. His views have changed considerably in many respects, as I have indicated; the reason, no doubt, is to be ascribed to the growing conservatism of age. There are signs that Sudermann has not remained unaffected by the German super-nationalist aberration of this present time. It is obvious, too, that his technique is not so sure as it was, say, in 1894. Nevertheless, these plays are well worth attention. Apart from their intrinsic interest as pictures of pre-war German life, not to be taken as quite photographically accurate, they are proof of two noteworthy facts, namely, that Sudermann's mind has undergone conversion; while, as regards technique, he has found himself again. ALEC W. G. RANDALL.

Music

THE SERAGLIO

THE correct title of this earliest but one of Mozart's operas is *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, which does not mean, as was inexactly stated in the *Times* the other day, "The Escape from the Harem," but "The Abduction from the Seraglio"—the German word *entführung* meaning abduction or elopement, not escape, and seraglio having really a larger meaning than harem, being applicable to the whole palace, which includes the harem. I cannot understand why there should have been any objection to Sir Thomas Beecham's advertising this opera as *The Seraglio* seeing that it was Mozart's first attempt to write not an Italian but a national (German) opera, and as it is being sung in English it would be most illogical to use the Italian title. If advertised, as suggested by Mr. Colles in the *Times*, as "The Escape from the Harem," it might reduce the attendance at some of the West End music-halls, and introduce a number of people to their own astonishment to perhaps the most charming production Sir Thomas Beecham has yet given us.

The setting, which was thoroughly delightful, was done by Mr. A. P. Allinson, who designed both the scenery andt he costumes, and on this occasion did full justice to his opportunity. Each of the four scenes was a joy to eyes wearied by the drab or fussy colour schemes of most of our theatres, and it is difficult to say which was the best; let me, however, just draw attention to the beautiful way that, in the garden scene, Costanza's dark jacket harmonised with the upper border of the background so that when, after moving about the stage in a sort of colour-rhythm, she sat down on the bench, it was as if she had suddenly stepped into a canvas by some modern master. The dressing was as good as the scenery, which is saying a great deal; perhaps the finest creation was the Pasha, whose make-up was one of the best I have ever seen. Mr. Allinson's costumes have none of the over-luxurious ornateness of Leon Bakst's, they are more economical as to means and severer in line, which is to say that though Eastern, as was necessary, they are at the same time Mozartian, for Mozart was the most economical, direct and the least "fluffy" composer who ever lived. Having paid this tribute to Mr. Allinson, let us turn to the singers. Mr. Robert Radford has never done anything better than Osmin the Pasha's servant; vocally all that could be desired, his comedy acting was of the highest order. As Pedrillo, Mr. Alfred Heather was also good, his singing of the fascinating serenade outside Blonde's window was extraordinarily comic, and could not have been bettered, but he is occasionally somewhat vaguely exuberant, and he needs to remember carefully that for the highest comedy every touch must be intelligent and exact. As Blonde, Miss Bessie Tyas was absolutely right, both her singing and acting have the true Mozartian spirit. She should, however, pay more attention to her enunciation and to her diction; the former is not as clear as it might be: she has a trick of not finishing her words, and the latter is marred by such pronunciations as "raptcher" for rapture, which is abominable. Technically Miss Mignon Nevada is beyond reproach; she handles her voice exquisitely, though it is rather "tight" in the upper register; she has also much personal charm, and you can hear every word she sings, as is the case with Mr. Maurice D'Oisly, who was excellent as Belmonte. The concerted singing was very good. Sir Thomas Beecham conducted and the opera as a whole was one of the best productions we have ever had in London.

The Seraglio was the last novelty of the season, which closed last week. It is to be hoped that Sir Thomas Beecham will be able to reopen in the autumn and give us more new Mozart productions. *Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, or *Cosi fan tutte* await Sir Thomas Beecham and Mr. Allinson. I must confess to an appetite for all three, but I would manage to be content with one. Might one also suggest that Sir Thomas Beecham turn his attention to modern French works for the stage. It would be a great achievement, for instance, if he were to produce Ravel's beautiful *L'Heure Espagnole*. *L'Heure Espagnole* is a modern landmark because it is an attempt by a composer of the highest gifts to write a modern comic opera. Now I am convinced that the opera of the future will be comic opera; not the comic opera of the past, but an opera ironical, satirical, humorous and grave. Rimsky-Korsakov's *Le Coq d'Or* is an example of the tendency I mean. The operatic melodrama is dead, for the simple reason that music is too fine and exact a medium for the dull, banal obviousness of melodrama; it gives it away, reveals all its hollowness, its essential unreality. I know the general belief is against me here. I know that many who would scorn to frequent drama of *The Girl Who Took the Wrong Turning* type go again and again to hear this sort of thing made into an opera, as if music were a sort of stock finery to exhibit which "any old thing would do." In fact, music has the same effect on most Europeans that beads and brilliant colours have on savages. This is because they are musically so uneducated that there is little genuine sensitiveness to music as music. The same ear which would be offended by a Cockney rhyme or a metrical sing-song will listen admiringly to the most vulgar musical phrases and to the cheapest rhythmic devices, and there is not one person in ten thousand capable of discriminating between a good melody and a bad one, though this is the very heart of criticism. Can one imagine a good Repertory Theatre playing *Hamlet* on Monday, *The School for Scandal* on Tuesday, *The Wild Duck* on Friday, and *The Bad Girl of the Family* on Thursday and Saturday? Yet this is what constantly occurs with opera, and even a specialist body conducted by highly cultivated musicians like The Oriana Society is capable of something very like it. What explanation can there be except that good taste in music is rarer than in drama and much rarer than in literature. The only cure is to perform the best continually, and any composer who puts a melodrama to music except to burlesque it should be straightway ridiculed out of existence, for it is like using a razor to cut butter or asking someone to come and take away the manure, in the form of a sonnet. W. J. TURNER.