

On the side of the enemy he sees relatives and friends, and he is overcome with sadness and loses his will to fight. Krishna heartens him to do his duty; their dialogue becomes a comprehensive exposition of Indian religion and ethics. This long dialogue that reconverts Arjuna to the ruthless warrior contains material that haters of violence up to Gandhi have used as their inspiration and their text. The poem, considered as a gospel, has many sublimities; as literature, however, it has become turgid, accumulated rather than formed, and contributing to make the Mahabharata a spoiled story, the original epic having been both hidden and deformed by just such incrustations of religious and philosophic additions; precisely as Homer would be were segments of the philosophers wedged into the text. Mr. Mukerji's version, compared with three others, justifies his claim to a greater sensitiveness to the subtleties and vitalities of Hindu terminology. His interesting introduction furthers the ruin of the poem, as a poem, by insisting upon a religious symbolism obviously alien to its original nature.

Architecture

A Factory in Holland

Rotterdam, October 22

AT the Van Nelle factory here the American finds himself beaten to a frazzle at his own game. At a distance it looks a good deal like Long Island City—a gray factory with various buildings, sheds, and stacks; and yet from the very first there is a distinguishing difference. The city of Rotterdam crosses the Schie Canal on only one side of the works, which in consequence are bounded for the most part by flat Dutch pastures with grazing cows.

Now, this landscape is an integral part of the "set-up"; for in what other country could you expect a tobacco and coffee plant to be kept as spick and bright as a Dutch teakettle? From nearby the general gray breaks up into long horizontal bands of semi-lustrous iron and a vertical slab or two of concrete. The rest is all glittering, brilliant glass—not factory glass at all, as we know it, with a year's grime on it and with corrugations that keep you from looking in, but real glass such as you cannot be enjoying this minute in your New York or Chicago apartment unless you have just had it washed; this because the Van der Lieuwes have adopted the American device of a railing around the top from which is suspended a traveling car, with the window-cleaners in it constantly at work—a device we at home generally put to use only about once a year. But neither do we have such clean air all around.

To secure unbroken bands of windows, the supporting concrete columns are placed behind the wall inside the room, on a system which I explained in this column last February in connection with the New School. The total effect is hardly describable to one who has not seen it: it certainly does not say "building," since the associations are not at all with brick or stone, and the necessary heavy concrete columns are all seen through the glass shimmer; nor is it quite "ship" or "airplane," though more those than the other. It is weightless, open, bright gray, mechanical, exhilarating.

Our second visit was on a dark rainy day; and if you have not experienced it before, on such a day you are surprised by the sense of well-being that derives from the discovery that it is possible to read in comfort in the deepest part of a factory without turning on a single electric light. In the entire establishment there was not one in use, even in a hallway; the great curtains of the large central office were drawn back, that was all, and in the factory proper the men at the roasting machines,

who judge everything by an exact color and shade, were working at ease in daylight, as they will all winter long.

Now, I expound these simple matters in such detail mainly on account of our "modern" architects in New York, who maintain that the like is impossible, at least commercially. They will never believe, I suppose, that Mr. Van der Vlugt, the designer, has achieved fine air without artificial ventilation, mainly by laying out his buildings in the right direction with reference to sun and wind, and by managing so that insulation pockets and free air currents are both easily secured by simple manipulation of windows and shades.

For us I admit the problem would be more difficult. Our factory is built in the midst of smoke let loose all over the place; hence our own "modern" experiment is with a solid-wall, windowless type with which we shut the smoke out again, together with the sunlight; and then we say that natural air is not good enough for us anyway, nor natural light steady enough, and so we burn still more coal for the sake of electric light and "ventilation."

There was one objection I had heard in New York to the Van Nelle plans, and that concerned the loss of some three feet of space between the outermost columns and the wall, because the columns are not *in* the wall. This objection came from an architect who, I confess, is placid in the face of New York's building code, which compels him to make the wall itself from eight to twelve inches thick, where the "stolid" Dutch manage with four inches; and the two multiplications I now invite my friends to make and to compare. Yet were the whole of this objection true, instead of a third of it, I am afraid it would nevertheless all be thrown out, since, unlike us, the Dutch have no passion for crowding machinery and people. Throughout the entire factory as well as outside it, there is plenty of room; and that gets into you, too. I cared much more about that than about the combination of bright and restful colors, and the nickel-tube furniture in the offices (with American filing cabinets); it seemed almost more important than the thoroughbred style.

A good deal of the Van Nelle factory is pure swank. They use glassed-in conveyor shafts from factory to packing rooms, where metal would do; and their extra cleaning and heating cost something, in what corresponds to the advertising appropriation. It is all what we would do if we could, and dared! It is what, as you look at historical styles, you would so like to call American. They come out with it. They go the whole way.

I said a minute ago the "advertising appropriation"—no, it's the civilization fund.

DOUGLAS HASKELL

Music

Anton Bruckner

WHEN Toscanini played the Seventh Symphony of Anton Bruckner last year, the thing that struck most of us more than anything was the lack of anything striking. When Bruckner was through saying his very true things in his quite unexceptionable way, we were inclined, like the *New Yorker* after reading Mr. Coolidge, to wonder: "So what?"

Since then Bruckner has given us three more chances: one in Mr. Hoogstraaten's performance of the Fourth Symphony in the Great Hall of the City College last summer, and the others in the recent performances by Mr. Kleiber of a single movement from a student work and by the Friends of Music of the Mass in F-minor. Whatever the conclusions to be drawn from this increased acquaintance, I hope they will not be con-



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strued as ingratitude for the chances given us. Bruckner's reputation in Austria and Germany is so great that whatever the final verdict on the importance of his works may be, the neglect of them in other countries has been without any doubt exaggerated. Quite apart from their intrinsic value, we have profited by these performances, and we are indebted to the Friends and to Messrs. Van Hoogstraaten and Kleiber for satisfying (I had almost said, for allaying) our curiosity. But the conclusion to which many of us have come, if only tentatively, is that there was nothing to get very much excited about in either direction. There is certainly nothing in the Bruckner we have heard that is in any way offensive; nor have we received any very new, vital, or deeply consoling message.

In the three mature works we have heard there seems to me a fundamental fault in proportion: the protasis of his message is often startling, challenging, heroic; the apodasis seems too often insignificant. "If," one imagines Bruckner saying, for example, "Bach had lived in the nineteenth century [a stimulating supposition] he would not have been an eighteenth-century composer [true, but less interesting]." Bruckner starts with thematic material that seems to open the door to all sorts of interesting and stirring developments; his themes often have great vigor and individuality. But once having introduced them he finds nothing of any interest for them to do through the long pages that follow; his characters are strong, but their conversation is tepid and repetitious, and no plot connects them.

Perhaps something of this sort is what Mr. Bellamann, program editor for the Friends, had in mind when he wrote: "He is a romantic . . . because he looked upon this world, found it strange and filled with wonder, and sang of it in terms which he found adequate and uplifting"; and ten lines later: "This is the faith of a simple believer—the expression of the faith of one who is no explorer of heights or depths, no questioner, but a simple-hearted, whole-hearted participant. In the perfection of belief there is no residue of mystery." Yes, that is, and no.

Although the estimate I have implied is somewhat unenthusiastic—and I am frank to say that at the moment I doubt whether additional Bruckner performances will change it materially—it is only fair to remember that almost the whole French nation places a similar estimate upon Brahms, and in that case few of us would hesitate to pronounce it false and uncomprehending. Nor do I mean to imply that there are no passages of any duration in Bruckner that sustain a high level of inspiration. The Benedictus and the Agnus Dei of the F-minor Mass are, I think, thoroughly great music, able to stand comparison with many of the extraordinarily great works that the Friends habitually offer us.

But what is there about Bruckner that makes all those in any way connected with him catch his extraordinary taste for the unimportant? It is, perhaps, from the over-active American Bruckner Society, ardent propagandists, that Mr. Bellamann absorbed the notion that vague description and detailed accounts of previous American performances—hardly very significant matter—were of more interest than detailed historical and biographical material about the Mass and its composer. It would have been of interest to know, for example, whether Bruckner had ever heard, as seems from superficial inquiry likely, parts of his adored Wagner's "Meistersinger," with which the F-minor Mass at times has noticeable melodic and harmonic similarities. But one had to go to sources* other than the program to learn that the Mass was finished in 1868 and revised between 1881 and 1883; that "Die Meistersinger" was finished in 1867; that Bruckner spent many evenings in Wagner's company during May and June, 1865, and may very possibly have heard considerable portions of "Die Meistersinger" played by Wagner at

* Among others, "The Life of Anton Bruckner," by Gabriel Engel, published by the Roerich Museum Press in collaboration with the American Bruckner Society—a helpful and informative monograph, though written with a very pro-Bruckner (that is, anti-Brahms, anti-Hanslick, anti-Bülow) bias.

that time; that Wagner had already played excerpts from the work in Vienna in January, 1863; and that in 1873, 1875, 1876, and 1882 Bruckner came into contact with Wagner and "felt just like a schoolboy while his teacher is correcting his notebook"—he went to Wagner as disciple four times, that is, between the original composition of the Mass and its final revision. Whatever these things prove, if they prove anything, they seem to me of distinctly greater value in understanding and placing the Mass than the record of Dr. Dumler's performance in Cincinnati in 1900, or Mr. Bellamann's lyric comments.

This is perhaps an appropriate place to mention the late Mrs. H. B. Lanier and the debt in which she placed all those to whom the concerts of the Friends of Music mean something. If there is one musical organization in New York more valuable than any other, I think it is the Friends of Music; it is greatly to be hoped that the continuance and development of the Friends will not be endangered by the loss of their strongest and most enthusiastic supporter.

ARTHUR MENDEL

Drama Our Electra

EXCEPT for a dinner intermission Eugene O'Neill's new trilogy, "Mourning Becomes Electra" (Guild Theater), runs from five o'clock in the afternoon until about eleven-fifteen in the evening. Seldom if ever has any play received a reception so unreservedly enthusiastic as this one was accorded by the New York newspapers and, to begin with, I can only say that I share the enthusiasm to the full. Here, in the first place, are those virtues—intelligence, insight, and rapid, absorbing action—which one expects in the best contemporary dramatic writing. But here also are a largeness of conception and a more than local or temporary significance which put to rest those doubts which usually arise when one is tempted to attribute a lasting greatness to any play of our generation. O'Neill, though thoroughly "modern," is not dealing with the accidents of contemporary life. He has managed to give his—I am almost tempted to say "our"—version of a tale which implies something concerning the most permanent aspects of human nature, and it is hard to imagine how the play could lose its interest merely because of those superficial changes which take place from generation to generation. For this reason it may turn out to be the only permanent contribution yet made by the twentieth century to dramatic literature.

As the title suggests, O'Neill's fable follows, almost incident for incident, the main outlines of the Greek story. Though he has set the action in New England just after the Civil War, his Clytemnestra murders Agamemnon and his Electra persuades Orestes to bring about the death of their common mother. Nor do such changes as are necessarily made in the motivation of the characters so much modify the effect of the story as merely restore that effect by translating the story into terms which we can fully comprehend. It is true that Electra loves her father and that Orestes loves his mother in a fashion which the Greeks either did not understand or, at least, did not specify. It is true also that the play implies that the psychological quirks responsible for the tragedy are the result of a conflict between puritanism and healthy love. But this is merely the way in which we understand such situations, and the fact remains that these things are merely implied, that the implications exist for the sake of the play, not the play for the sake of the implications. It is, moreover, this fact more than any other which indicates something very important in the nature of O'Neill's achievement.

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