

the cinema, or the newspaper syndicates. But the reasonable dividends from his own profession, practised conscientiously, won't supply him with a change of galluses annually or any personal real estate more impressive than a lean-to. Unless he subsists on the government pay-rolls, a young writer must construe self-expression as something of a luxury—of no value economically and of scant interest to other beleaguered citizens outside his own kind.

Only the ablest can hope to survive indifference and the lack of cash. A literary tyro who expects a villa at Cannes or some private Vallambrosa in Beverly Hills as the result of one hastily spewed volume will, in the vernacular, get stung very badly. The youth with something important to say may experience the devil of a time while he says it, but his progress will be normal. His middle years of mature craftsmanship should provide reasonable security and stimulation sufficient for enviable accomplishment. Such writers may have to wait a decade before their names will mean anything in public libraries, but once there they will stick. They will be read because they have conceived something memorable, not merely a temporary gland stimulator.

One magazine has referred to the "incomparable richness" of Thomas Wolfe's work. Even his poorest pieces have vitality and his best, like "No Door", were conceived by a prodigious, untrammelled imagination and executed with such robust energy that one is forced to ponder again the source and resources of genius—an uncommon procedure in these days when we have flung at us the most provocative examples of what genius certainly is not.

The fate of a writer whose honesty and power prevent him from becoming a morbid fashion, whose creative sources are artesian rather than lightly sub-surface, who lacks critical coddling and the notoriety furnished by fraternal Peeping Toms, is currently a matter for intense speculation. Contemporary literary trends are as hard to chart as the ecstatic explorations of the New Deal. It is already a toss-up whether the work of the ascendant proletarian school or the intermittent swan songs of the writers who decorated the dreary post-war decade will be forgotten first. While the critics are sorting out the infant Whitmans and dolling up Iowa's Engle to be America's Rupert Brooke, Thomas Wolfe has the field of the traditional novel almost to himself. He projects no new formula and invents no dewy patois. He seems content to portray character, a love of earth and sky, and the troubled souls of men, all built into an impressive edifice by a poet's integration.

Can he be the real thing, at last?

## MUSIC DEPRECIATION

By DAVID EWEN

Author, "From Bach To Stravinsky," "The Unfinished Symphony," etc.

EVERY Friday morning the glucose voice of Mr. Walter Damrosch pours, like so much thick syrup, from the radio loud-speakers of America bringing what he so optimistically terms a "music-appreciation" course to some six million young and plastic minds. "Good morning, my young friends," is Papa Damrosch's weekly signal to an army of would-be music lovers that the distribution of musical lollypops is about to begin.

It has been said before by other critics that, with the incredible opportunity of shaping and developing the musical tastes of an entire country resting snugly in the palm of his hand, Mr. Damrosch, pathetically enough, resorts to a mere twiddling of thumbs and

old-wives' tales for his weekly discourse. The lament, however, should be an even more poignant one. For I have long been convinced, after listening to Mr. Damrosch's music hours for several years, that they are not quite so innocuous as these critics might lead us to believe; that, as a matter of fact, these weekly broadcasts are a decidedly pernicious influence. They will ultimately smother any incipient sensitivity for appreciating good music that his young listeners might possess, and make any intelligent approach to the musical art quite impossible in the future. It will take a strong emetic to purge Mr. Damrosch's listeners of all the sweetmeats, cream puffs and charlotte russes which he has given them for a musical diet—and, if they have not already been altogether poisoned in their tastes, it will probably require many years of a new and rigorous diet in order to restore them to a healthy appetite for music.

I refer, first of all, to the strange partnership between great music and music of an altogether pedestrian quality that comes into being at the majority of Mr. Damrosch's broadcasts. I am always suspicious of musical tastes which are broad enough to embrace a Bach and a Suppé, a Beethoven and a Sousa. The intelligent man must be able clearly to discriminate. Yet a lack of any such discrimination is one of the outstanding qualities of Mr. Damrosch's courses. Mozart becomes a bed-fellow of Victor Herbert; Thomas' "Overture to Mignon" is treated with the same humility and reverence as Beethoven's "Coriolanus;" a Sousa march will sometimes follow in the footsteps of Bach. What taste can the millions of young listeners possibly develop after listening each week to this amazing hodge-podge of sublime and jejune music, all treated with equal enthusiasm, zest and admiration?

But a lack of discrimination between the good and the mediocre is by no means the greatest fault of Mr. Damrosch's lectures. Much more serious, and even more lamentable, is the fact that Mr. Damrosch brings his listeners an altogether false and destructive approach to music. The most difficult problem in training a layman to appreciate great music fully and intelligently is to rid him of the infantile practise of searching in each piece of music for a story, of finding pleasure only in such musical works as may be translated in his mind from tones to pictures. True music-appreciation can come only when the layman has learned, at last, to hear "sound" alone, and to derive impressions, sensations and finally human experiences from different sound qualities, harmonic and contrapuntal effects, developments and enlargements of themes. This can only be done by purging the mind of the preconceived prejudice that music tells a story, and by acquiring the habit—either through concentration, experience, or through a knowledge of musical technique—of listening to music *as music*. This, I confess, is not an easy problem in music-education, but it should be the first and most important problem with which the educator must cope.

Mr. Damrosch, in his radio seances with music students, not only fails completely to solve this problem but, in his Dicky Dare school-reader explanations of musical works, merely further encourages his listeners in a practice they should avoid. He explains a sprightly scherzo not in terms of its form, but by sweetly explaining to his listeners to watch out for the patter of children's feet as they play ring-a-ring-a-rosy. He translates the sublimities of Bach and Beethoven in terms of Mother Goose rhymes. He invents the most puerile jingles to accompany great melodic passages. This, it is true, may have the effect of making the music more palatable to the listener at the moment; but it also teaches him the school-boy approach to music; the singling out of little pictures and stories in every composition he hears. And this is a lesson which can utterly destroy any intelligent approach to music on the part of Mr. Damrosch's young pupils—a lesson which, if they are fortunate, they can unlearn only after many years of grave effort.

## NOTES ON AN AMERICAN CELLAR-BOOK (1920-1933)

by M. LAY

NOW that all reason for keeping up my cellar has been transmuted by "Time with his stealing steps" into mere matter for Mark Sullivan to write another book about, there is a good deal of nostalgic satisfaction, not unmixed, alas!, with recurrent spells of dizziness, in turning over the yellowing leaves and faded entries of my cellar-book from those receding times, if only to discover how soft we have since become.

I began my cellar late in 1920, though there are several pages of entries in the book which date earlier—principally telephone numbers, with such comments as "Ask for Frank" or Al or Louie. After some of these first entries I find hastily scrawled marginal comments—for example, "m. e. s." which, as I recall, stood for "made everybody sick."

Literature sadly lags behind Life. No writer of the order of immortality seems ever to have noticed the solid merits of that dependable creature, White Mule, the backbone of my cellar throughout its entire period of usefulness. Vintages, it must be admitted, varied considerably. The 1919 output of the beautiful Mule Blanc district was, for example, inferior to the *cru* of 1923. The '22 vintage possessed far more scorch and twang than its sister of '27. I laid down forty dozen bottles that year. The marginal notation is "potent, take Listerine"—probably on account of the bouquet which was lingering and slightly sulphurous. It was not a delicate vintage. But who, in those days, wanted delicacy? This *cru* carried potency farther than any other—indeed, to the point of unpleasantness, according to the more delicate palates. But what were the generality of palates in those days? Little curtains to be neatly drawn while the celestial fires burned their way unhindered to the stomach. The Mule Blanc vintage did not allow liberties to be taken with it, but properly combined with extract of juniper or syrup of pepsin, what drink hit the spot quicker—or harder?

One of the soundest cordial wines of the era was Dr. Smog's Indian Root Bitters. Slightly coarse, but rich and heady, I laid down three dozen bottles of this truly splendid growth, and I have never regretted it. I was sorry, indeed, to see the last bottle go, which it did one January morning, at a man who conceived the idea of running a woodsaw under my window. Whether one preferred this tippie to the more publicized Beef, Iron and Wine Tonic was, I believe, a matter of personal taste. The principal reason for my own preference was that Doctor Smog's preparation contained eighty per cent alcohol, whereas the darker and richer compound scarcely ever ran over twenty-five per cent, and sometimes as low as twelve. Nevertheless, I cellared six dozen bottles of the Tonic, vintage of '26, and always censured myself for not laying down more. Afterwards, they made them stop selling it.\*

Among the lighter table wines, the venerable Home-made Blackberry of the years '27 and '28 will perhaps never be surpassed. Well I remember its fragrance as I sat crouched in our cellar (tunneled into the earth behind the furnace, so there was not room to sit up straight), decanting it through a muslin cloth to catch the fruit-flies that had drowned themselves in it during fermenting and bottling.

A growth more dependable than Home-made Blackberry (which many times insisted on turning to vinegar, when it was useful only for salads, or for polishing copper) was Livery-Stable Port, used in gallons by members of our summer colony. It was made by an elderly groom at the renting-stables back in the woods, and the operation of selling a demijohn-full would terrify him so that he usually went away and hid in a hollow tree, sometimes for so long as two days

This abbreviated catalogue would not be complete without mention of that urbane, but not very suave concoction, Dago Red, although my cellar-book contains no reference to it. In truth, it was never a cellar wine, the liquor having a tendency, when kept over three weeks, to accumulate green mould on top and eat the corks out of the bottles. It was by no means a despicable fluid, however, and was often preserved by standing the bottles upright in the bin. It could be used either as a beverage or a liniment.

The turn of those times from early experiments to solid accomplishments is registered in my cellar-book by a series of entries made during a couple of winters in Arizona. The first of these entries read simply "Corn" and are endorsed "p. g." which meant, of course, pretty good. Later endorsements are less grudging, and run from "v. g." all the way up to "v. d. g."

Many entries are given to consignments of that hearty old liqueur, or *pousse*, which West Coast peasants then manufactured by boring through the bottom staves of a silo, draining off the grass-juices in a high state of fermentation, and distilling them for retail. They were sold under several different flavorings and trade-names. Touched up with cider, they became Martell's V. S. O. P. Brandy, and cost six dollars a quart. With creosote, burnt sugar and a little ether, they were known as White Horse or Black and White Scotch Blended Whiskey, and cost from five to nine dollars a fifth. You could buy them straight, and even, if you were a man, drink them. Those, alas!, were the days.\*\*

Of household flavoring extracts (lemon, vanilla and the rest) my book contains no record. I never cared to cellar them, nor the various massaging-compounds containing denatured alcohol, nor yet Bay Rum and its derivatives, nor the solidified alcohol known as "canned heat". All these things had their place in the elegant living of those days, as did New England Stone Fence, or Applejack. But occasion never drew me to them, so I simply name them as exemplifying the ruggedness of the period, and pass on.

Mulled drinks of the day required both courage to drink and caution to make. Fortunate were the guests whose hostess had attained such a proficiency in the art of hospitality that she could prepare them without setting fire to her clothes, as very few of the contents of the average cellar in those days could be brought near heat without tending to burst into flames. Many a mild-mannered person, to keep abreast of the times, became a fire-eater. Who forgets Blue Blazers, poured, flaming, from goblet to goblet?

Very few brands of the wine of that era failed to mull well if they were sufficiently fireproof to mull at all. One of the credos of the times was that the hotter they were the easier they were to swallow.

Of wine-bricks, which came near the end of the manly era, I have little to say. They were pressed pellets of nasty-looking substance supposed to be grape-pulp, and they were supposed, when mixed with sugar and water, to turn themselves into wines of specified and lofty species. But I found the results weak, and the making and drinking of the stuff alike mawkish and effeminizing. Better far was it to put one's complete trust in Heinz' 57 Double-black Quick-Action Stout.

\* I may be pardoned for inserting an anecdote. At a small party, I once served some of the Tonic, '29. Later, having fallen asleep, I was taken up from the lawn and carried some twelve miles away by the other guests, who had forgotten whose house they were visiting and who imagined they were taking me home. Incidents of this laughable character are, of course, no longer possible.

\*\* I distinctly remember a friend of mine sitting before an open fire in the Fall of '25, draining off what the poets would have called a "beaker full of the warm South." This was silo juice.