

Patty Pierce is a flaming rose and she does not waste her sweetness in any desert, but in her hopes and desires, in her inner self is she essentially different from the erstwhile modest violet of our mothers and grandmothers? Or were they tucked away in hiding, praying for pursuit because they didn't dare to break through? One wonders whether the outspoken candor of young people nowadays, their frank comradeship, the equality with which they give and take, is only the first exuberance of a new and more honest attitude toward life or if Patty Pierce and Billy are actually symbols of unregenerate youth.

FLORENCE GUY WOOLSTON.

## Back to Creation

*Back to Methuselah, the first three scenes, by George Bernard Shaw. The Garrick Theatre, February 7, 1922.*

THAT third scene of *Back to Methuselah* where the Brothers Barnabas argue their doctrine of creative will and length of life with the two statesmen, was easy enough to place. It was the same Shaw, with his argument, his infectious animation of words, his way of being now in earnest and now posing a little; the same Shavian social comedy, delightful, insistent, witty, insolent, eloquent, overlong, tiresome before it is over, but better after all than anything else of its kind. And the production of this scene at the Garrick, with Mr. Kaye's keen and fluent Lloyd George, showed the same intelligent and even hand that gave us *The Madras House* at the Neighborhood Playhouse earlier in the season. But in the first two scenes of the play I was curiously conscious most of the time of something retributive about it all. The mingled success and failure of these scenes seemed to me to sum up and to pay out on him with a peculiar balance and finality Bernard Shaw's longstanding attitude toward his art.

Certainly any good reading of Shaw's plays or of his more than vigorous defences of himself, will lead one to the conclusion that, whatever else he may know better than any man alive, Shaw has never understood the infectious and creative power of sheer beauty. The truth is, all too often he has shied at that power like some witty but nervous Puritan who thinks of all beauty as undesirable seduction. And there is another thing that Shaw has never seemed to know. Which is this: great form in art is not a showing off, a strutting rodomontade of puffed-up vanity and nonsense; it is, on the contrary, the natural and inevitable result of carrying the quality of a thing to its ultimate essence. Great form in art is a consummation, an immortalizing of the matter. It is the duty that the soul feels under the highest excitement to render this excitement in terms of its last perfection and almost abstract finality. Form in art is nothing to be shy about, or to mistrust as a kind of exhibitionism. It is natural and inevitable wherever life is driven to perpetuate itself and to separate what it wills to be its incorruptible and pristine part from the incidental and corruptible. This Shaw has never quite believed. He will not believe that form alone, over and above its literal contents, though sublimated from them, is in itself a mode of speech.

And precisely as Shaw has mistrusted the inevitability of art, he has ignored the inexorability of it. You know that if occasion demands he will sacrifice the quality of a scene to carry a point that he wishes to impress; that he will

insist beyond all tact and taste; and that he will repeat and underscore until no doubt remains that the simplest soul in the house has caught the idea, though at every expense of the play's good taste and proportion. But for this mistrust and this obstinacy—which are really kinds of egotism—art, which is long, takes its revenge, exactly as nature, which is the basis of art, will do when we flout her; and such insistence, wilfulness and indulgence as Shaw's and such drum and trumpet and Hyde Park methods as he sometimes uses to carry his ends, come high at the final reckoning. Already many of Shaw's plays, because he insisted on overstressing his idea or hobby at the expense of artistic invention and the pure drama of them, are as dead as doornails. So that now with its decline in power and brilliance but not in zeal or combativeness, this last play of his, or the first two scenes at least, seem to afford an illustration of what are some of the artistic defects and vagaries that accompany Shaw's great gifts.

These two opening scenes in *Back to Methuselah* have something in them that their author is plainly bent on saying—his old idea of the Life Force it is in fact, the inner creative will to live and to evolve new and better forms of life—but they never seem able to find for themselves a body. They do not find a form in which to come alive; nor a vital and simplifying rhythm or pattern. They remain essentially uncreated, however diverting or tedious their main drift may be.

The first scene begins with Adam and Eve before the tree, and carries their groping thoughts along through the ideas of death and birth and will-power and sin to the love that will bring new beings into the world. For this the setting, very much stylized, was a luminous tree at the back of a semi-circle of steps. On these steps the action took place. Miss Lewisohn and Miss Morgan in producing this scene had taken great pains, it was clear, to centre these two human figures around that central passion of life beginning, that source of knowledge and revelation. But though they managed to force on it something more unified and plastic than it possessed, the whole scene as Shaw wrote it scattered around in a kind of poetic, argumentative, witty, dogmatic exegesis, with now a flash of imagination, now biological prose and now rather cheap humor. In the course of which Adam and Eve worked hard for their creator: "What is hope?" they asked stalely enough "What is a vow?" "What is wicked?" "What is damned?" like the end-man in a minstrel show, before the answer is sprung. Eve—Miss Lascelles—was at least good enough. Certainly her voice, which in its present usage appears at times to be about to bellow at us, is not badly suited to the surprises of Eden. Mr. George Gaul's Adam had less imagination than his lines even. And they both lacked style. But it is ungrateful to criticize the interpreters of something that the author himself has not seen in imaginative terms.

The second scene is better; and Miss Lascelles, with her fine sense of scorn and old patience and passion for reality, takes a long stride forward. The scene opens with Adam digging in the ground and Eve near by grinding corn. Cain—Mr. Dennis King and so impossible that one wishes him in Abel's shoes or out on the hills with Enoch—comes to pay his father and mother a visit. He is Shaw's old-time victim, the military man, come obligingly back now all over again to make a fool of himself, to boast, and to give our first parents a chance to say diverting and sometimes stirring things. But it is to Eve, to the woman from whose body is to be created the future race of men, that the one really compelling motif in the whole scene belongs: her

dream of what creation in the widest sense will come to mean.

There is still hope, she says, of the coming true of your dreams and mine. Of better things. There will be men who can remember their dreams, who can dream without sleeping. They may not have will enough to create instead of dreaming, but the serpent said that every dream could be willed into a creation by those strong enough to believe in it. There have come those who bind reeds together, making lovely patterns of sound and raising her soul to things for which she has no words. And those who make forms of clay; those who think in numbers; those who watch the sky at night and give names to the stars. And Tubal who made the wheel for her and saved her so much labor. And Enoch who walks on the hills and hears the Voice continually, and has given up his will to do the will of the Voice, and has some of the Voice's greatness. When such as these come to her there is not the weariness of hearing over and over again the same old idle stories of children and of pride, but always some new wonder, or some new hope; something to live for. They never want to die because they are always learning and always creating either things or wisdom, or at least dreaming of them.

This magnificent motif of the woman and mother, the giver of life, the prophetic and creative force, lends unity to the whole event. But this motif has to emerge, it must be said, from a vast quantity of talk; and it must be said, too, that what does most to establish in our imaginations its moving eloquence is not the dramatist's control of the scene but Mr. Simonson's design for it:

At the back a dun stretch of cloud, shutting down upon a low vista of evening light, faintly golden and crimson. On the ground, rocks, each one of them a few hard, flat angular surfaces, lying about everywhere and shutting the paths in. At the sides the foolish, crude hurdles that the man has made of wood. Adam leans and digs in the ground. Eve—in heavier clothing than the directions call for, and not at her wheel—sits to one side among the rocks, moving the slow pestle around the mortar. Her still and ancient figure sits there, the heavy folds of her mantle running from her head down to the ground, like a sibyl's; the mass of it is the color of the stone in the mortar where she grinds her sons' bread. And what gives that sudden beautiful power to her words is the unity of her figure with that hard and enduring world about her; the unity of her life and thoughts with those rocks that are like the first crystals to be achieved in nature, and with that angularity of sky above them; a world that has willed and labored and cleaved and strained its way and come at last to beginnings of idea and form.

STARK YOUNG.

## Somewhere a Lonely Bird

Somewhere a lonely bird makes incoherence lovelier  
Than song of knitted gold:

O I have never heard  
Slim water beating in white-birch thicket  
Or deftly-syllabled sin ; bird  
So frail, so fugitive, controlled!

I will not speak, nor the shadow of my listening  
Affront your loneliness.  
Let me the rather go  
To mine, the agony of stammered words  
Your wild dark throat can hardly guess,  
Your wild dark music never, never know.

JOSEPH AUSLANDER.

## Daniel H. Burnham

*Daniel H. Burnham, Architect; Planner of Cities, by Charles Moore. Boston: Houghton and Mifflin Co. \$20.*

THE rise and progress of American architecture during the last half-century constitute a study of exceeding interest, by reason both of the circumstances and the personalities which it brings into view. One does not have to be very old to remember a time when our architecture was a subject of not unmerited derision and even contempt in the eyes of competent critics, both at home and abroad. The upward movement, which began to assume importance in the years following the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia in 1876, was largely due to a comparatively small number of men of remarkable ability and force of character, comprising among others, such names as the Upjohns, father and son, Thomas U. Walter, James Renwick, Henry Hobson Richardson, Richard M. Hunt, and Peter B. Wight, who is still living, the Dean of American architects today. All of these men were concerned in the earlier part of the movement of revival and rehabilitation of their art after the artistically dark days of the mid-century period. A later group of men of equal distinction, building upon the foundations laid by these pioneers, several of this group having been pupils of the elder men and younger contemporaries of their later years, carried on the work of architectural reform and lived to develop American architecture into the splendid and vital art which today elicits the admiration of foreign critics and sometimes their enthusiastic praise.

As the first period of revival, though it did not begin with the Philadelphia Centennial, was greatly helped and stimulated by it, so the second period was in like manner marked by the tremendously stimulating influence of the Columbian World's Fair at Chicago in 1893. Two of the most conspicuous names in this later phase of the upward movement are those of Charles F. McKim and Daniel H. Burnham, intimate friends and associates in many important enterprises, and of neither could the life-work be recounted without frequent mention of the other. Of these two, McKim was preëminently the artist, the man of polished culture, of exquisite taste; Burnham the man of action, of big views, practical and forceful, lacking the advantages of a university education and of foreign travel and study in his formative years, but possessed of rare judgment, strong initiative, a keen appreciation of the abilities of others and a remarkable capacity for assimilating the influences of his later travels and associations. His practice from insignificant beginnings developed into what was probably the largest in the United States; the list of the buildings designed by him and the successive firms of which he was the senior and directing member, is astonishingly long, and represents an accomplishment in the number, variety, cost and importance of buildings erected, greater than that of any other American office, unless it be possibly that of McKim, Mead and White. Until the later years of his career Burnham's greatest contribution to American architecture was in the field of commercial buildings, chiefly though not exclusively at Chicago; during the later years his greatest service was in the field of great collaborative enterprises and city-planning.

Of certain phases of the career of this really extraordinary man Mr. Charles Moore of Washington has presented an interesting picture and record in two